

ANTH 5010

Anthropological Theory

Spring 2023

Time: Thursday 6:30 pm – 9:15 pm,

Location: WMY_505

Instructor: **Leilah VEVAINA**, NAH 303, leilah.vevaina@cuhk.edu.hk , 3943 7716

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to the history of anthropological theory. Starting with classic texts on Liberalism, we will begin our travel through time in the 17th century, ending the semester with the “ontological turn.” We will begin with the liberal notion of civil society, as a form of interdependence among what would otherwise be naturally independent individuals. Then we examine alternative understandings of society that arose as critiques of liberalism and went on to shape the three schools of anthropological thought that dominated the discipline for most of the 20th century. The organization of this course is somewhat chronological, but it is not meant to suggest a teleological progression. Instead, the course is organized to show how ideas grow out of debates.

While these theoretical texts allow us to see the ways in which our ideas about society and our places within them have shifted over time and have shaped the discipline of anthropology. Over the semester you are encouraged to connect these thinkers to other ethnographies you are reading in other courses, and to the world around you.

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will acquire familiarity with major theoretical approaches in anthropology.
2. Students will have a better understanding of the relativity of perspectives.
3. Students will sharpen their analytical skills by observing how professional thinkers think.
4. Students will acquire tools for questioning common sense.

Required Readings

Readings will be posted on Blackboard, but I encourage you to get your own copy of *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, available at the CU Bookstore and available online at the Library.

Resources

The following titles are not required reading, but they may be helpful in clarifying concepts and ideas.

Moore, Jerry. 2012. *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists*. 4th edition. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. (eBook available)

Perry, Richard. 2003. *Five Key Concepts in Anthropological Thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. (Course reserve at UL)

Ingold, Tim (ed). 2005. *Key Debates in Anthropology*. London. Routledge

Problematics and themes to track:

To help you focus your reading, in the first class you will be given some problematics to track through the readings for the semester. This will help you to navigate these sometimes-complex texts and, if done throughout the course, will make the short essays much easier to write. A great way to read is to literally track problematics throughout the text. Further strategies will be discussed in class.

the body/embodiment
solidarity/conflict
power/authority/the State
materiality/humans-nonhumans
history/time
the sacred/ritual/religion

Suggestions

The readings for this course are all original texts and some in difficult language. The most important thing is to try to get through them and ask questions about passages or references you do not understand. Attendance and active participation in the course are crucial.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance and Participation is a huge part of this seminar-style course. This does not just mean showing up, but actively asking questions, giving comments, etc. Emailing and posting questions on blackboards is a great way to participate if you are shy about speaking in class.

Evaluation

Grade Item	Percentage	Due Date
Reading Response	10%	TBD
Short Essay 1	15%	TBD
Short Essay 2	20%	TBD
Final Paper	35%	May 5

Attendance and Participation	20%	---
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Assignments

- 1. Reading Response:** Write a short response (300-400) examining one text through one problematic. Due TBD, Times New Roman, 12pt font. 1.5 Spacing.
- 2. Short Essay 1:** Write a short paper (800-1000 words) comparing how issues based on your chosen problematic are treated in two texts we have read to that point. Due TBD. Times New Roman, 12pt font. 1.5 Spacing.
- 3. Short Essay 2:** Write a short paper (800-1000 words) comparing how issues based on a problematic are treated in two texts we have read to that point (not same texts as Essay 1). Due TBD. Times New Roman, 12pt font. 1.5 Spacing.
- 4. Final Paper:** Your final paper (2500-2800 words) should trace the transformations of a problematic through the course readings using at least 3 authors, and their contribution to the discipline. Due May 5. Times New Roman, 12pt font. 1.5 Spacing.

Assignment Submission is in a few steps.

1. All assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide. Assignments without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded.
2. Sign your VeriGuide certificate
3. Then please upload the assignment with the signed VeriGuide certificate to Blackboard under the correct assignment tab.

Late Papers will be marked down by at least 1/3 of a grade. Example: A- goes to B+

Week 1 (January 12)

Introductions

Introduction and Overview of Course

We will go over the Marx and Engel's excerpt from *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) to work through the problematics as an exercise.

Week 2 (January 19)

Marx, Engels and Weber (ways of understanding history and change)

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology: Part I," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (1845-46). Start reading from bottom of page 155 on: 1. History. (skim 155-175; focus on 176-200)

Max Weber, "Introduction" and "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism," in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905)

Lunar New Year Holiday

(January 26 no class)

Week 3 (February 2)

Social Solidarity

Émile Durkheim, "Progressive Preponderance of Organic Solidarity" and "Division of Labor in Society: Consequences," in *On Morality and Society* (1893)

Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Intro., Bk. 1 Chapters. 1 & 4, and Book 2, Chapter 7 Selections ([1912], 1995).

Marcel Mauss, Excerpts from *The Gift*, in *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (1925) (pp.85-97).

Week 4 (February 9)

Early Anthropology – Understanding Difference

E. B. Tylor, "The Science of Culture," (1873), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Lewis Henry Morgan, "Ethnical Periods," (1877), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Franz Boas, "The Methods of Ethnology" (1920), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Week 5 (February 16)

Structure and Function (British Social Anthropology)

Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Introduction & Chapter 1 (1952).

Malinowski, Bronislaw, *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, (1960), Selections.

Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Introduction to *African Political Systems* (1940).

Week 6 (February 23)

The Social Subject (American Cultural Anthropology)

Margaret Mead, Introduction to *Coming of Age in Samoa*, in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (1928)

Ruth Benedict, "The Individual and the Pattern of Culture," in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (1934)

Zora Neale-Hurston, *Mules and Men*, (1935), Selections.

Week 7 (March 2)

Structuralism

Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 70-88.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology," in *Anthropology in Theory* (1963)

Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Structuralism and Ecology" in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (1984)

Week 8 (March 16)

Post Structuralism, Power and Practice

Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures and the habitus," in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1972), skim first part.

Michel Foucault, "Docile Bodies" in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975)

Pierre Bourdieu, "The Berber House" in *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, ed. By Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003).

Week 9 (March 23)

Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology

Mary Douglas, "Secular Defilement" and "The Abominations of Leviticus," in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966)

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" and "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Optional: Victor Turner, "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual," in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Week 10 (March 30)

Anthropology and the Encounter

Asad, Talal, "Anthropology & the colonial encounter" Introduction. (1973), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, and "Two European Images of Non-European Rule"

Wolf, Eric, "Europe and the People without History" Introduction. (1982), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Mintz, Sidney. 1985. "Chapter 1: Food, Sociality, and Sugar" *In Sweetness and Power*. Pp. 3 - 18, New York: Viking

Week 11 (April 6)

Gender and Power

Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, "Women, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," (1974) *Women, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press,

Ortner, Sherry, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" (1974) in *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*, Ellen Lewin (ed). 2006.

Optional: Lila Abu-Lughod. "Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others." *American anthropologist* 104.3 (2002)

Week 12 (April 13)

Writing Culture

James Clifford, "Partial Truths." *Writing Culture*, (1986). in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Writing Against Culture," in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present* (1991)

Recommended: Ortner, Sherry, "Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol 26, No. 1. (1984).

Week 13 (April 20)

The Ontological Turn and New Materialisms

Bruno Latour, "How to Resume the Task of Tracing Associations," "Action is Overtaken," and "On the Difficulty in Being an ANT," in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2005)

Arjun Appadurai. "Mediants, materiality, normativity." *Public Culture* 27.2 (76). (2015)

Optional: Bessire, Lucas, and David Bond. "Ontological anthropology and the deferral of critique." *American ethnologist* 41.3 (2014): 440-456.

Final Exam Due May 5

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Criteria for 1) the course and 2) for coursework</i>
A (> 95%)	1) Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. 2) The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original way. The argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims.
A- (90-94%)	1) Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes. 2) The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement.
B-range B+ = 87-89% B = 84-86% B- = 80-83%	1) Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. 2) The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence.
C-range C+ = 77-79% C = 74-76% C- = 70-73%	1) Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses. 2) The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged. The argument and the writing is not clear, and/or there is no evidence for statements and claims made.
D- Range 60-69%	1) Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. 2) The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing.
F <60%	1) Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements. 2) The work has failed respond to the assignment prompt.

More Suggestions

Participation

Participating in class is extremely important. Asking questions and making comments not only contributes to generating a class discussion, it is also a way of trying out ideas and working through the material for your own sake. Getting comfortable with speaking up in class is important in learning how to think. Us professors are not here to “transmit” ideas to you. We are not here to “pour” content into your brain. We would like for you to go beyond

regurgitation of course materials in your written assignments, and learning to contribute to class discussion, learning to integrate multiple perspectives during class discussion, will help you strengthen your independent thinking skills. I fully encourage questions and comments, because your questions and comments will serve both the class as a community, as well as yourself.

Opinions vs. Arguments

There is a difference between opinion and argument. Your personal viewpoints are welcome during class discussion, but your papers will be evaluated based upon your ability to formulate an argument rather than your ability to express an opinion.

An argument is analytical. Arguments propose relationships between variables, and they support assertions being made with empirical evidence – either ethnographic data, or, in the case of studying theory, passages from original texts that illustrate how a particular theorist formulated an idea.

There is also a difference between opinion and perspective. An opinion usually contains some kind of judgment about how the world should or should not operate. A perspective, on the other hand, is a way of looking at the world. In other words, having perspective involves the ability to see patterns and themes, or differences and divergences, which may not be obvious at first glance. Having an opinion is easy. Having the insight that comes with perspective is much harder.

Late Submissions

Papers submitted after the due date will suffer a fraction of a grade deduction for every day it is late. For example, an A- will become a B+, a B will become a B-, et cetera.

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating in examinations and plagiarism. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Students should read the detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources in the University's website at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>. Students are required to submit all papers through VeriGuide, which is also explained at the above website.