

ANTHROPOLOGY 280: Theories of Culture
Spring 2009

Instructor Dr. Brigittine French

Office: 306 Goodnow

Office Hours: M/F 9:00-10:00

W 11:00-12:00

M/W 1:15-2:15

*and by appointment

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"It is in the moment when epistemology seems at its most frail that new insights are generated." Michael Herzfeld 2001

Description

This course provides a broad overview of the development of theory and application of it in anthropological thought and scholarship. Through readings and assignments, I have designed the course to be an intellectually engaging and hands-on approach to the use of theory in the history of anthropology.

Throughout the semester, we will consider various anthropological epistemologies—their assumptions, their applications, their efficacies, and their critiques. We will be guided by Herzfeld's pedagogical approach to theory, embracing a "militant middle ground," in order to straddle the on-going and productive tensions in the discipline. Throughout the semester, we will move between positivistic/deconstructionist, emic/etic, synchronic/diachronic, and scientific/humanistic approaches to social understanding in anthropological theory.

Texts

Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy. 2008. A History of Anthropological Theory Third Edition. Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press.

Michael Herzfeld. 2001. Anthropology: Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

R. Jon McGee and Richard L. Warms. 2008. Anthropological Theory: AN Introductory History Fourth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Margery Wolf. 1992. A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Preparation

- 1) The reading for this course is challenging; the authors' are intellectually ambitious and the prose are dense. For these reasons, it is imperative that you read in advance of our class meetings. Be sure to read footnotes and consult bibliographies for every reading as they will help contextualize the material we're covering.
- 2) Think about and formulate informal answers to questions that are circulated on blackboard, both those by the professor and classmates, so that you are prepared for every discussion.
- 3) Read for main points and central concepts. In other words, try to avoid getting bogged down in the intricacies of specific ethnographic points or theoretical musings. Once you have a sense of the overall argument and perspective, and then return to the readings in more detail a second time.
- 4) The formal assignments are based upon substantive written work. This means that you should build in time for revision. In other words, the course is writing intensive and should be done in advance of the deadline. I will be happy to look at drafts of assignments, provided you ask me to do so 48 hours before the assignment is due.

Assignments

Exams: There will be two take home exams (8-10 pages). The exams will be broad essay questions that ask you to explain and synthesize various theoretical orientations using course materials.

Papers: There will be two formal papers. The first paper will help you develop an overview of the course material (7-8 pages). The second paper is an independent research project (10-12 pages) that involves an empirical investigation of contemporary theory as it has been applied and represented in major anthropological journals in recent years.

Discussion: I expect active, engaged participation. Both questions and silences are essential components of a successful class. Listen, speak, question, and work toward developing a scholarly community for discussing anthropological theory this semester.

Blackboard questions: Approximately once a week students will be required to post questions for our collective consideration. A schedule will be assigned the first day of class. The questions will be used to assess student comprehension, to track common areas in need of explanation, and to structure class discussion.

Grading and Evaluation

Synthesis Paper	20 percent	40 points
Midterm Exam	23 percent	46 points

Abstract/Annotated Bib	5 percent	10 points
Research paper	25 percent	50 points
Blackboard questions	15 percent	30 points
Discussion	10 percent	20 points
Informal Response	2 percent	4 points
Final Exam (optional)		40 points

Students and Accommodations

Anyone who needs some modification in seating, testing, or other class requirements should inform me so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. Please see me after class or during my office hours.

Late Assignments

No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval.

BACK TO THE FUTURE: ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Mon, Jan 19 Assumptions and Orientations: Contemporary "Isms"
Wolf, A Thrice Told Tale.
 INFORMAL RESPONSE DUE.

Wed, Jan 21 *Wolf, A Thrice Told Tale*
 Erickson and Murphy, "Conclusion"
 Herzfeld, "Foreword and Preface"

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY

Fri, Jan 23 Erickson and Murphy, Introduction and Part One pp. 21-74

Mon, Jan 26 Erickson and Murphy, Part One pp. 75-90 and Part Two

Wed, Jan 28 Erickson and Murphy, Part Three pp. 141-202

THE MILITANT MIDDLE GROUND: ANTHROPOLOGY AS THE PRACTICE OF THEORY

Fri, Jan 30 Herzfeld, "Orientations: Anthropology as a Practice of Theory"

Mon, Feb 2 Herzfeld, "Epistemologies"

FOUNDATIONAL THINKERS

- Wed, Feb 4 McGee and Warms, "Nineteenth Century Evolutionism"
Darwin and Wallace, "On the Tendency of Species to Form
Varieties" in e-reserves/pioneerweb.
Spencer, "The Social Organism" in McGee and Warms
- Fri, Feb 6 Tylor, "The Science of Culture" in McGee and Warms
Morgan, "Ethnical Periods" in McGee and Warms
- Mon, Feb 9 Marx and Engels, "Feuerbach" in McGee and Warms
- Tues, Feb 10 OVERVIEW OF TRENDS PAPER DUE IN MY OFFICE BY 3:00 PM
- Wed, Feb 11 McGee and Warms, "Foundations of Sociological Thought"
Durkheim, "What is a Social Fact" in McGee and Warms
Durkheim, "The Cosmological System of Totemism and the Idea of
Class" in McGee and Warms.
- Fri, Feb 13 Mauss, "Excerpts from The Gift" in McGee and Warms
- Mon, Feb 16 Weber, "Class, Status, Party" in McGee and Warms

CULTURE THEORY IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: HISTORICAL PARTICULARISM, FUNCTIONALISM, AND CULTURE AND PERSONALITY

- Wed, Feb 18 McGee and Warms, "Historical Particularism"
Boas, "Methods of Ethnology" in McGee and Warms
Boas, "Introduction to the Handbook of American Indian
Languages" in e-reserves/pioneerweb
- Fri, Feb 20 Kroeber, "Eighteen Professions" in McGee and Warms
Starn, "A Compromise between Science and Sentiment" and "Ishi,
Alfred, and Theodora" in e-reserves/pioneerweb
- Mon, Feb 23 Film: *Ishi: The Last Yahi*
- Wed, Feb 25 McGee and Warms, "Functionalism"
Malinowski, "The Essentials of the Kula" in McGee and Warms

Mon, Mar 2 Radcliffe-Brown, "On Joking Relationships" in McGee and Warms

Wed, Mar 4 Arensberg, "The Interpretation of Custom" and "The Family and the Land" in e-reserves/pioneerweb

Fri, Mar 6 McGee and Warms, "Culture and Personality"
Benedict, "Psychological Types in the Cultures of the Southwest" in McGee and Warms
TAKE-HOME EXAM HANDED OUT IN CLASS

Mon, Mar 9 French, "Partial Truths and Gendered Histories: Ruth Bunzel in American Anthropology" in e-reserves/pioneerweb
Hernandez, "Multiple Subjectivities and Strategic Positionality: Zora Neale Hurston's Experimental Ethnographies" in e-reserves/pioneerweb

THEORETICAL DIVERSIFICATION: BUILDING UPON EVOLUTIONS, STRUCTURES, SYMBOLS, AND MATERIALITY

Wed, Mar 11 Mead, "Introduction to Sex and Temperament" in McGee and Warms
Documentary video: *Margaret Mead and Samoa*

Fri, Mar 13 McGee and Warms, "The Reemergence of Evolutionary Thought"
Steward, "The Patrilineal Band" in McGee and Warms
EXAM DUE IN MY OFFICE BY 2:00 PM.

SPRING BREAK

Mon, Mar 30 White, "Evolutionary Stages, Progress, and the Evaluation of Cultures" in e-reserve/pioneerweb

Wed, Apr 1 McGee and Warms, "Neomaterialism"
Harris, "The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle" in McGee and Warms

Fri, Apr 3 Rappaport, "Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People" in McGee and Warms
Herzfeld, "Environmentalisms"

Mon, Apr 6 McGee and Warms, "Structuralism"
Benveniste, "A Look at the Development of Structural Linguistics"
in e-reserves/pioneerweb

Wed, Apr 8 Levi-Strauss, "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in
Anthropology" in McGee and Warms
Levi-Strauss, "Four Winnebago Myths" in McGee and Warms

Thurs, Apr 9 ABSTRACT AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE FOR
FINAL PAPER IN MY OFFICE BY 3:00

Fri, Apr 10 Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture" in McGee and
Warms

Mon, Apr 13 McGee and Warms, "Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology"
Douglas, "External Boundaries" in McGee and Warms

Wed, Apr 15 Turner, "Symbolism in Ndembu Ritual" in McGee and Warms

Fri, Apr 17 Geertz, "Deep Play" in McGee and Warms

RECENT TRENDS IN THE PRACTICE OF THEORY: SOCIOBIOLOGY,
HISTORIES, FEMENISMS, POST-MODERNISM, AND POST-STRUCTURALISM

Mon, Apr 20 McGee and Warms "Sociobiology, Evolutionary Psychology, and
Behavioral Ecology"
Wilson, "The Morality of the Gene"

Wed, Apr 22 McGee and Warms, "Postmodernism and Its Critics"
Rosaldo, "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage" in McGee and Warms
and "After Objectivism" in e-reserves/pioneerweb

Fri, Apr 24 McGee and Warms, "Globalization, Power, and Agency"
Bourdieu, "The Economics of Linguistic Exchanges" in e-
reserves/pioneerweb

Mon, Apr 27 Bourgois, "From Jibaro to Crack Dealer: Confronting the
Restructuring of Capitalism in El Barrio" in McGee and Warms

Wed, Apr 29 Herzfeld, "Histories" and "Politics"

- Fri, May 1 McGee and Warms, "Anthropology and Gender: The Feminist Critique"
Stoler, "Making Empire Respectable" in McGee and Warms
TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM HANDED OUT IN CLASS
- Mon, May 5 Herzfeld, "Sufferings and Disciplines"
- Wed, May 6 Sanford, "Introduction: Engaged Observer" e-reserve/pioneerweb
- Fri, May 8 Course synthesis
- Mon, May 11 THEORETICAL TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY
ANTHROPOLOGY PAPER DUE IN MY OFFICE BY 4:30
- Wed, May 13 OPTIONAL FINAL EXAM DUE IN MY OFFICE BY 9:00 AM