

Anthropology 370: Theory in Anthropology
Fall 2003: Monday 1:30 – 4:20, Chambers 213

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Office Hours: M, W, F 10:30 – 11:30 am
T, Th 10:00 – 11:15 am or by appointment

This seminar provides an overview of historical and contemporary anthropological theory. In this class, we will read samples of major theoretical works by anthropologists and other social and cultural theorists, and examine how they continue to inform both academic cultural theory and popular understandings of social life today. The goal of this seminar is to ground us in a wide variety of theoretical perspectives so that we can apply them to social issues of major concern to us today.

Our emphasis will be on understanding the premises and perspectives of different theorists and critically evaluating their assumptions and their reasoning. What were the historical and social positions that shaped the development of a particular theoretical perspective? What did they illuminate, and what did they obscure? Are they useful for us in understanding contemporary issues such as globalization, environmental issues, ethnic conflict, or social justice?

Course Readings

R. Jon McGee, Richard L. Warms 2000. *Anthropological theory : an introductory history*, 2nd ed. Mountain View, Calif. : Mayfield Pub. Co.. ISBN: 0767411668

Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner, eds 1994. *Culture/power/history : a reader in contemporary social theory*. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press. ISBN: 0691021023.

Weber, Max 2001. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Routledge. ISBN: 041525406X

Lyotard, Jean-Francois 1985. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. ISBN: 0816611734

Additional articles will be available on electronic reserve. Other ethnographies will be selected by seminar participants.

Course Requirements

Seminar Participation: (25%) This course is a seminar – I will **not lecture** at all on the material, and will participate as any other member. Students are expected to attend all classes, do the readings prior to class, and **discuss the implications of the issues** in the classroom. Student participation is crucial to the success of this seminar, and is a key part of the learning process in this class.

Response papers: (10%) Each week, the student will write a response paper: one page, double-spaced. I will have a handout on response papers in class, but in general they are individually ungraded and require only timely submission for full credit. **LATE RESPONSE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Public Anthropology Project: (10%) We will be participating in a nationwide project to make available on the internet summaries of all articles in the journals *American Anthropologist* and *Current Anthropology* from 1888 to the present. This project, undertaken by advanced undergraduate and graduate students, will be described in more detail in a later handout. Your name and college affiliation will be posted at the internet site (<http://publicanthropology.org>) under the articles that you summarize.

Short Essays: (30%) These essays of no more than five pages will be critiques on the material that we have read; **outside research is not required, expected, or desired.** I will have a handout about these short essays

Term Paper: (25%) Based on individual interests, students will select a particular theoretical perspective and apply this model to a particular contemporary topic. Use of ethnographies are permitted, but the bulk of the analysis should be from newspaper clippings, web sites, past fieldwork, or fieldwork conducted specifically for this project. The paper will be due on 8 December 2003.

While we will work together on various issues and projects, such as the public anthropology project, your term paper is your own individual work. All work is subject to the Davidson College Honor Code as stated in the student handbook. If there are individual accommodations for special needs, please let me know and authorize the Dean of Students to contact me so that we can work something out.

Course Schedule (subject to modification)

Week 1, 25 August: Seminar Introduction

Week 2, 1 September: Evolutionism

Readings: Warms and McGee: Spencer, Tylor, Morgan, Marx and Engels
Start reading Weber's *Spirit of Capitalism*

Week 3, 8 September: Sociological Theory

Readings: Warms and McGee: Durkheim (both), Mauss, Weber

Week 4, 15 September: American Cultural Anthropology: The Boasians

Readings: Warms and McGee: Boas, Kroeber, Radin, Benedict, Mead (last two in Culture and Personality section)

Week 5, 22 September: British Social Anthropology: Functionalism

Readings: Warms and McGee: Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard

Week 6, 29 September: Cultural Ecology and Neomaterialism

Readings: Warms and McGee: Steward, White, Fried, Harris
Assignment: First Abstract Due

Week 7, 6 October: Structuralism

Readings: Warms and McGee: Levi-Strauss (both), Ortner
Assignment: First Short Essay Due

Week 8, 13 October: Fall Break

Week 9, 20 October: Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology

Readings: Warms and McGee: Douglas, Turner, Geertz

Week 10, 27 October: Culture, Power, and History

Readings: Dirks, Eley, and Ortner: Introduction
Start reading Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*

Week 11, 3 November: Foucault

Readings: Dirks, Eley, and Ortner: Chapter 5; Foucault articles

Week 12, 10 November: More on Postmodernism

Reading: Warms and McGee: Rosaldo, Crapanzano, D'Andrade

Week 13, 17 November: Practice and Process

Readings: Dirks, Eley, and Ortner: Chapter 4, Chapter 12; Falk Moore article
Assignment: Second Short Essay Due

Week 14, 24 November: Student Choice (from Culture/Power/History)
Assignment: Second Abstract Due

Week 15: 1 December: Student Choice (from outside of assigned readings)

8 December: Final Paper Due