

Anthropology 370: Theory in Anthropology
Fall 2008: Monday, 1:30 – 4:20, Chambers B22

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Office Hours: M, W, F 9:30 – 10:30 am
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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 2007. *Anthropological theory : an introductory history*, 4th ed. Mountain View, Calif. : Mayfield Pub. Co.. ISBN: 0073405221
- 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

Additional articles will be available on Blackboard.

Course Requirements

The most important work in this course is to be prepared for each seminar meeting; this means having thoroughly read the material and being prepared to discuss particular points from the reading. Readings are due on the day listed in the class schedule. Your engagement with the material is vital for the success of this learning experience.

Seminar Participation: (25%) Students are expected to attend all classes, do the readings prior to class, and **discuss the implications of the issues** in the classroom. This includes your leading two seminar meetings (10%; we will schedule this on the first day of class).

Discussion Board: (10%) **Each week**, students will write a brief reaction towards an idea prompted by the reading; I will help initiate reactions on the discussion board, but you should

feel free to write whatever you feel is relevant. They are due prior to the start of each seminar meeting. I expect you to have also reviewed you're your peers have written – you may respond to what they have written, but I expect all exchanges to be as civil as if they were said in person during the seminar meeting. **LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Short Essays: (total: **30%**) There will be two short essays (15% of the total grade each) due on **22 September 2008** and **27 October 2008**. 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 later in the term.

Term Paper: (**35%**) Based on individual interests, students will select a particular theoretical perspective and apply this model to a particular contemporary topic. Use of ethnographies are not only permitted, but encouraged. In addition, students should use documentary sources, including newspaper clippings, web sites, past fieldwork, or fieldwork conducted specifically for this project. The paper will be due on **10 December 2008**.

While we will work together on various issues and projects, your papers are 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
Reading: Herzfeld's essay (on Blackboard)

Week 2, 1 September: Evolutionism, Marx
Readings: Warms and McGee: Spencer, Tylor, Marx and Engels, Marx excerpt (available on Blackboard)
Start reading Weber's *Spirit of Capitalism*

Week 3, 8 September: Durkheim
Readings: Warms and McGee: Durkheim (both), Mauss, Durkheim excerpt (available on Blackboard)

Week 4, 15 September: Weber and Rationalization
Readings: Warms and McGee: Weber article; Weber book *Spirit of Capitalism*;

Week 5, 22 September: American Cultural Anthropology: The Boasians
Readings: Warms and McGee: Boas, Kroeber, Radin, Benedict, Mead (last two in Culture and Personality section)
Assignment: First Short Essay Due

Week 6, 29 September: British Social Anthropology: Functionalism
Readings: Warms and McGee: Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard

Week 7, 6 October: Structuralism

Readings: Warms and McGee: Levi-Strauss (both), Ortner

Week 8, 20 October: Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology

Readings: Warms and McGee: Douglas, Turner, Geertz

Week 9, 27 October: Culture, Power, and History

Readings: Dirks, Eley, and Ortner: Introduction

Assignment: Second Short Essay Due

Week 10, 3 November: Foucault

Readings: Dirks, Eley, and Ortner: Chapter 5; Foucault articles; Foucault essay (available on Blackboard)

Week 11, 10 November: Postmodernism

Readings: Harvey excerpt, Jameson essay (available on Blackboard)

Week 12, 17 November: More on Postmodernism

Reading: Warms and McGee: Rosaldo, Crapanzano, D'Andrade, Geyh selection (available on Blackboard)

Week 13: 24 November: Practice and Process

Readings: Dirks, Eley, and Ortner: Chapter 4, Chapter 12; Falk Moore article (available on Blackboard)

Week 14: 1 December: Choice of theoretical subfield

10 December 2008: Final Paper Due

Schedule of Presentations

Week 2, 1 September: Evolutionism, Marx	
Week 3, 8 September: Durkheim	
Week 4, 15 September: Weber and Rationalization	
Week 5, 22 September: American Cultural Anthropology: The Boasians	
Week 6, 29 September: British Social Anthropology: Functionalism	
Week 7, 6 October: Structuralism	
Week 8, 20 October: Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology	
Week 9, 27 October: Culture, Power, and History	
Week 10, 3 November: Foucault	
Week 11, 10 November: Postmodernism	
Week 12, 17 November: More on Postmodernism	
Week 13, 24 November: Practice and Process	