

Anthropological Theory

ANTH 311, Fall 2012

Th 1:30-3:20, 10 Sachem Street, Room 212

Professor Sara Shneiderman
10 Sachem Street, Room 126

Office Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 10:30-11:30am
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Course Description:

This class will explore key texts and issues in the theoretical development of sociocultural anthropology in the twentieth century. Following a discussion of religion and ritual in Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, and economics and exchange in Marcel Mauss' *The Gift*, we will consider the sources of structuralism along with various anthropological concepts of structure and function (Ferdinand de Saussure, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Claude Levi-Strauss), move to mid-century interpretive and symbolic anthropology (Victor Turner, Clifford Geertz), consider some 'post-structuralist' and processual approaches (Sherry Ortner, Pierre Bourdieu, Marshall Sahlins, Michael Silverstein), and address the problems of culture, gender, sexuality and history in anthropology (Ortner again) and in broader social theory (Joan Scott and Michel Foucault). We finish with a consideration of the frictions of contemporary anthropological theory and ethnography (Tsing).

The central term we will query this year is the concept of **structure**, which was developed in considerations of linguistics, applied broadly and productively to the analysis of society and culture, and challenged in the latter part of the twentieth century with issues of power and history.

Course Requirements:

Classroom participation (15%). This course is designed as an upper-level seminar involving instructor-led discussion throughout the term. Participants will read and come prepared to discuss all assigned materials in the class/discussion sessions for which they are assigned.

Written work (85%). Participants will write four short (ca. 1,000 word) critical responses to assigned readings and seminar discussions and one somewhat longer (ca. 1,500-2000 word) final paper.

Short Papers: 60% (15% x 4)

Final Paper: 25%

Assignment topics for the responses will be distributed one week prior to their due date. Please meet the deadlines noted on the syllabus; late papers will lose 1/3 grade per day.

All papers are due electronically by 5pm on the dates below:

September 19 * October 10 * October 31 * November 29 * December 12 (FINAL PAPER)

Books to purchase:

Durkheim, Emile 1965 [1915]. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940. *The Nuer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Also available as a PDF on Classes v2).

Foucault, Michel 1978. *History of Sexuality*, Vol. I. New York: Vintage Books.

Levi-Strauss, Claude 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mauss, Marcel 2000[1967]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason of Exchange in Archaic Society*. New York:

Norton. [ISBN: 039332043X] **NB: A Routledge Classics edition (2002[1990, 1950]) is available as electronic text in the Yale Library's Ebrary system.**

Tsing, Anna. 2004. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

All other assignments available on the ClassesV2 Server.

CALENDAR OF READINGS

I: Introduction: Culture and the foundations of structural anthropology

Thursday, August 30

****Please read assignment prior to first meeting**

Douglas, Mary. 1996[1966]. "The Abominations of Leviticus." In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, pp. 41-57.
<http://fontes.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/douglas.htm>

Thursday, September 6

Durkheim, Emile 1965 [1915]. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.

'Introduction,' pp. 1-18 (**everyone read**)

Book 1: secs. 3 and 4 of Chapter 1, pp. 33-44; Chapter 2, pp. 45-81 (**Group 1**)

Book 2: Chapters 1-3, pp. 99-157; Chapters 6 and 7 pp. 190-241 (**Group 2**)

'Conclusion,' pp. 418-448 (**everyone read**)

Thursday, September 13

PAPER 1 Questions distributed

Malinowski, Bronislaw 1922 'The Essentials of the Kula,' pp. 81-104 and 'The Meaning of the Kula,' pp. 509-18.

Mauss, 'Introduction,' Chapters 1, 2, pp. 1-47; 'Conclusion,' pp. 83-107.

NB: Also available as electronic text in Yale Library's Ebrary system.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/yale/docDetail.action?docID=10053848>

II: Structuralisms

Wednesday, September 19 by 5pm **PAPER 1 DUE**

Thursday, September 20

Evans-Pritchard 1940. *The Nuer*

'Introductory' (**all read**)

Chapter 1, pp. 1-50 (**all read**)

Chapter 2, 'Oecology' pp. 51-93 (please skim)

Chapter 3 'Time and Space,' pp. 94-138. (**Group 1**)

Chapter 4, 'The Political System,' secs. 1-3 ONLY, pp. 138-50 (**Group 2**)

Chapters 5, 'The Lineage System,' pp. 192-248 (**Group 3**)

'Summary' (Chapter 6, part V), pp. 261-266. (**all read**)

Thursday, September 27

Culler, Jonathan 1986. Chapter 2, 'Saussure's Theory of Language,' in Ferdinand Saussure. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 27-64.

Jakobson, Roman 1971[1956]. 'Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances.' On Language. Eds. Waugh, Linda R. and Monique Monville-

August 29, 2012. DRAFT SYLLABUS – Subject to change

Burston. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 115-133.

Jakobson, R. 1987[1960]. 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics.' *Language in Literature*. Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap/Harvard University Press, pp. 62-94.

Thursday, October 4

PAPER 2 Questions distributed

Levi-Strauss, Claude 1966. *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Visit to Peabody Museum

III: Interpretive Approaches, Symbolic Processes

Wednesday, October 10 by 5pm PAPER 2 DUE

Thursday, October 11

Geertz, Clifford 1973 [1966]. 'Religion as a Cultural System,' in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 87-125.

Geertz, Clifford 1973. 'Ethos, World View and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols,' in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, pp 126-141.

Asad, Talal 1993. Chapters 1 and 2, in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pp.27-79.

Thursday, October 18

PAPER 3 Questions distributed

Turner, Victor 1967b [1964]. 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage.' In his *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 93-111.

1969. 'Liminality and Communitas.' Chapter 3 in his *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, pp. 95-130.

Guha on negation

FALL BREAK

Wednesday, October 31 by 5pm PAPER 3 DUE

IV: Process, Practice, Praxis

Thursday, November 1

Ortner, Sherry 1986. 'Theory since the 1960's.' *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 26(1):126-66.

Bourdieu, Pierre 1977[1972]. Chapters 2 and 4, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 72-95, 159-97

Thursday, November 8

Sahlins, Marshall 1976. Chapter 3, 'Anthropology and Two Marxisms: Problems in Historical Materialism,' *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. C.f. pp. 126-165.

Silverstein, Michael. 1976. "Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description," in *Meaning and Anthropology*, Basso and Selby, eds. New York: Harper & Row, pp. 11-56.

V: Gender, Culture, History, and Power

Thursday, November 15 PAPER 4 Questions distributed

Ortner, Sherry 1998[1974]. 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' In Landes, Joan, B., ed., *Feminism, the Public and the Private*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 21-44.

Ortner, Sherry 1996. 'So, Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' In *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 173-180.

Scott, Joan 1999. 'Gender: A useful category of historical analysis.' *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 28-50.

THANKSGIVING

Wednesday, November 28 by 5pm PAPER 4 DUE

Thursday, November 29

Foucault, Michel 1978. Parts I-III, *History of Sexuality*, Vol. I. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 3-73.

Foucault, Michel 1978. 'Right of Death and Power over Life,' Part Five, *History of Sexuality*, Vol. I. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 133-59.

VI: Frictions

Thursday, December 6

Tsing, Anna. 2004. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 12