CORE SEMINAR IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
Winter 2016: Anthropology 511, CRN 44775
Ondine 203; Tuesday and Thursday 12:00 – 1:50

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Office Hours: TR 2:00-3:00 Email: gamburdm@pdx.edu
and by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course offers a graduate-level introduction to key areas of historical and contemporary theory in socio-cultural anthropology. The class asks how anthropologists think about land and nature, money and things, categories and characteristics of people, and state power. It also asks, “When, why, and under what constraints do people act?” It concludes by offering a historical road-map to connect the dots. Emphasis is placed on techniques of critical thought, such as how to identify paradigmatic statements, read “against the grain,” and uncover underlying assumptions. Students will gain experience in exploring how theory informs ethnographic practice and shapes analysis of data. They will also have the opportunity to apply theoretical perspectives to their own research and/or applied projects. Students will interact with texts through reading responses, discussions, presentations, and essays.

READINGS
Most class readings are available on D2L (see below).
Required texts (available at the PSU bookstore)
Ortner, Sherry B.
Strunk, William and E.B. White
Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
By the end of the quarter, students will be able to
- Recognize and understand the basic tenets of key theories in socio-cultural anthropology
- Understand the evolution of theory within the field of anthropology and the social sciences in general
- Analyze ethnographic work to uncover and identify the theoretical frameworks in use and understand how theory has shaped the research and writing
- Use theories to think critically about contemporary social issues (e.g., on topics related to their thesis research or applied project)
- Write with increased awareness of structure, logical flow, and argument and with increased mastery of stylistic niceties
D2L (Desire 2 Learn – Online Learning Management System)
Students can access D2L using an Odin username and password to login at
https://d2l.pdx.edu. Use of D2L will be demonstrated on the first day of class. Please run
a system check (as prompted by D2L when logging in) if you encounter difficulties in
accessing this resource. If problems persist, contact the instructor or the OIT Help Desk
immediately.

The course syllabus, assignment sheets, discussion forums, and links to class
readings will be available on D2L. Students may read the materials online or print copies
for use during class discussions. All student work will be submitted online through D2L.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS
Assignments
The final grade will be evaluated based on reading responses (35%); two essays
(30% each); and classroom participation, discussion leadership, and attendance (5%).

Reading responses (35%)
Regularly (at least once a week) throughout the term, students are asked to engage
with the course materials in writing and post their musings on D2L in discussion forums.
Students will articulate their understandings of key points in particular readings and put
the readings into conversation with each other. Reading responses on particular readings
will be due before class (i.e., by 11:59 AM) on the day that those readings will be
discussed. Responses will be evaluated on a check/ check plus/ check minus bases, with a
‘check’ indicating full credit. Late responses will receive half credit.

Essay #1 (30%) – Critical Reflective Book Review – Due Tues 9 February
Choose an ethnography to review related to a topic from sections two, three, or
four. Write a 4-6 page critical reflective essay discussing how the author talks about and
uses theory in the book. What theories and theorists are referenced? How have those
theories informed the methods and research questions? How does the author present the
theory to the reader? In which chapter(s) does it show up explicitly? Do you see it at
work even when it is not highlighted? How does the author put the theory into
conversation with the data? How might a different theoretical perspective have changed
the nature of the research and publication on this topic?

Suggested books for review are listed at the end of each section; if you wish to
review a book not on the list, please run it by the instructor before starting work on the
essay. (Further instructions will be posted on D2L.)

Essay #2 (30%) – Critical Reflective Book Review OR Apply Theory to Project
Essay due: Thursday 17 March; Presentation to class Tuesday 15 March
For the second essay, students may choose between writing a second critical
reflexive book review (as described above) or writing a 5-8 page paper exploring how to
use theories discussed during the term in designing and implementing his or her own
research and analyzing the data gathered. What sorts of methods would work well in
generating data for the project, what types of data would be analyzed, and how might the
chosen theory/ theories speak to those data?
Students are welcome to dovetail the “apply your theory” essay with ethnographic projects that they are doing in a research methods course or performing for their thesis or applied endeavors. The essay can either contemplate how theory could or would be used in the future, or it can undertake an analysis of primary data already gathered. (Further instructions will be posted on D2L.)

Students are asked to give a brief (5 minute) informal presentation on their book review or applied theory project in class on Tuesday March 15.

Discussion leadership, participation, and attendance (5%)

Regular attendance and active participation in class is expected and required. (See policy statement below for information on absences). All students should come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for the day. Students will also be asked to lead discussion on particular articles throughout the term.

A note on time commitment and effort: in general, graduate students are expected to spend three to five hours outside of class for every hour that they spend in class. This means that each week, a student can expect in addition to the four hours in class to spend another twelve to twenty hours working on class activities, including reading, writing reading responses, and working on essays.

Policy on illness, emergencies, extensions, and plagiarism

During the winter, viruses spread through many colleges and universities across the country. If you feel ill (fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, cough, aches), please stay home until you have been without fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication. Let the instructor know about your illness. You will not be penalized for illness-related absences, and you will have the opportunity to make up missed assignments.

Attendance will be taken once, at the beginning of class. Unexcused absences count against you, and students who have any unexcused absences will receive grade deductions for class participation. Having more than three unexcused absences will earn the student a zero for participation for the term. Legitimate reasons to miss class are few and dire.

Requests for extensions on deadlines and notification of unavoidable absences should be made in written or electronic media, and should if at all possible be reported to the instructor ahead of the due date and before the start of the class period.

Students with a documented disability needing accommodations in this course should immediately inform the instructor.

All written work must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class. Please retain for your own records a copy of all the work you submit. Late work will lose one letter grade for each day past due. In the event of severe illness or other emergency, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange an alternative deadline.

Plagiarism (intellectual theft) is a serious academic offense. Any assignment containing plagiarized material will receive a failing grade. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the department handout on plagiarism, which is posted on the class D2L site. Please ask the instructor if you have any questions.
COURSE OUTLINE:

Section 1: Introduction – Why study theory?
Lowie, Robert H.

Perry, Richard J.

Section 2: How do we think about land and nature?

Nature and Power
On the ethnographic end – read Cronon or Spoon
Cronon, William

Spoon, Jeremy, Richard Arnold, Brian Lefler and Christopher Milton

On the theoretical end – read both Escobar and Vayda & Walters
Escobar, Arturo

Vayda, Andrew P and Bradley B. Walters

Critical Political Ecology
On the ethnographic end – read either Thornton or Muehlmann
Thornton, Thomas F.
2008 Being and Place among the Tlingit. Seattle: University of Washington Press. [Introduction: Place and Tlingit Senses of Being]

Muehlmann, Shaylih

On the theoretical end
Vaccaroa, Ismael and Karma Norman

Forsyth, Tim
Section 3: How do we think about money and things?

On the ethnographic end: Read 3 of the following

Singer, Merrill

Goody, Jack

Farmer, Paul

Schuller, Mark

Ho, Karen

On the theoretical end (read all of the following)

Giddens, Anthony

Marx, Karl

Baudrillard, Jean

Carrier, James G. and Josiah McC. Heyman

Ong, Aihwa

Suggested book review options
Chang: Disposable Domestics: Immigrant Women Workers in the Global Economy
Gardner: City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain
Holmes: Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States
Mintz: Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History
Schuller: Killing with Kindness: Haiti, International Aid, and NGOs
Stoller: Money has no Smell: The Africanization of New York City
Taussig: The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America

Section 4: How do we think about (categories and characteristics of) people?

On the ethnographic end: Read Said

Said, Edward

Read any 2 among the many following options

On Nationality

Gellner, Ernest

Anderson, Benedict (If you choose Anderson, please read both of these pieces)

On Gender

Butler, Judith

Di Leonardo, Micaela and Roger N. Lancaster

Lynch, Caitrin

On Age

Taylor, Janelle S.

On Race

Crowfoot, Silas

Biolsi, Thomas

On Class

Ortner, Sherry B.

On the theoretical end (read all of the following)
Douglas, Mary
Goffman, Erving
Hall, Stuart
Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper
Kuper, Adam

Suggested book review options
Crowfoot: rest of the dissertation
Huberman: Ambivalent Encounters: Childhood, Tourism, and Social Change in Banaras, India
Ortner: New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of ‘58
Raj: Where Are You From? Middle-Class Migrants in the Modern World
Said: Orientalism (rest of the book)

Section 5: When, why, and under what constraints do people act?

On the ethnographic end: Read 2 of the following 4
Hill, Jane H.
Gamburd, Michele

Kulick, Don

Muehlmann, Shaylih

Agency: On the theoretical end (read all of the following)
Ortner, Sherry

Williams, Raymond

Bourdieu, Pierre

Ahearn, Laura M.

Ortner, Sherry

Resistance: On the theoretical end (read all of the following)
Scott, James C.

Gal, Susan

Mitchell, Timothy

Foucault, Michel
Abu-Lughod, Lila  

Ortner, Sherry B.  

*Suggested book review options*
Abu-Lughod: Veiled Sentiments  
Ahearn: Invitations to Love: Literacy, Love Letters and Social Change in Nepal  
Jean Comaroff: Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance  
Ortner: Making Gender (the rest of the book)

**Section 6: How do we think about (state) power?**
*On the ethnographic end: Read 3 of the following many options*

Feldman, Allen  

Gledhill, John  

Ngalamulume, Kalala  

Massumi, Brian  

Mahmood, Saba  

Heyman, Josiah M. and John Symons  

Makley, Charlene  

*On the theoretical end (read all of the following)*
Weber, Max

Rose, Nikolas

Foucault, Michel

Agamben, Giorgio

Scott, James C.

Suggested book review options
Feldman: Formations of Violence
Foucault: Discipline and Punish (the rest of the book); The History of Sexuality, Volume I; another book by Foucault (check with instructor)
Gupta: Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India
Schep-Hughes: Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil
Scott: The Art of Not Being Governed (rest of the book)

Section 7: A Historical Roadmap
Ortner, Sherry B.

Dirks, Nicholas, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner

Ortner, Sherry B.
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