

**ANT 471: THEORY IN ANTHROPOLOGY**  
**Fall, 2009**

**Class meets: M, W, F, 12:00 – 1:00 PM**  
**Location: Cooper Hall, Room C-3**

Professor: Neal Keating  
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Office Hours on M & W: 1:30-2:30  
& T: 4:00-5:00  
- and other times by appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course provides a historical and global survey of some of the main ideas that have shaped the discipline of Anthropology over the last several centuries, and examines them within their social and cultural contexts. As with all such surveys, this one is selective, here focusing largely on the history of theory in American Anthropology, with less room given for British and French Anthropology. However, in the last quarter of the course, we will examine how Anthropology has historically developed as a discipline outside of "The West." Theory in anthropology involves statements, assertions, and propositions about human beings and the worlds they create and inhabit. Over the course of the semester, we will investigate a range of theoretical propositions concerning such topics as cultural evolution, agency, structure, subjectivity, history, social change, power, culture, and the politics of representation. We will approach each theoretical perspective or proposition on three levels: (1) in terms of its analytical or explanatory power for understanding human behavior and the social world; (2) in the context of the social and historical circumstances in which they were produced; and (3) as contributions to ongoing dialogues and debate.

The first portion of the course follows the development of social and cultural theory in American anthropology, and combines key theoretical statements by leading proponents, with an historical account of the sociocultural conditions in which these statements are produced. This section concentrates on interpreting structure, agency, and the "nature" of actors (subjectivity). If, as Marx proposes, humans make their own history, but not under circumstances of their own choice, what are the forces and structures that shape and constrain our ideas and our acts? How do social actors create themselves and the circumstances of their lives? How do they transform these? Following these basic topics, we examine contemporary theoretical debates about and within anthropology, focusing on how new insights into the politics of representation, post-modern theory, and transnational relations influence how anthropologists theorize and represent "culture" in their work today. Finally we will consider the development of non-western anthropologies in the global south, and the possibilities for world anthropological theory and practice.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

This is an upper level course that is required for the Anthropology minor and major. The goal is to be able to use, in writing, the concepts of anthropological and social theory to interpret cultural phenomena. Students will learn to write closely reasoned analyses of theoretical texts. They will learn to connect examples with categories, to distinguish processes of observation, interpretation, and critique, and to represent these processes through their own writing. We will emphasize revision and rewriting.

3 short papers (40%).

1 research paper (30%).

oral/visual presentation of paper (10%).

participation in peer review (10%).

participation in class discussions (10%).

*3 short papers (40%).*

Each student will write three short papers (ca. 5 pp.) analyzing the assigned readings in terms of their theoretical content as well as their social context, with different students taking responsibility for a different week's assignment. This will start in Week 3. Each paper will be distributed to the rest of the class at least 36 hours before class; students will provide oral and written comments on each other's papers.

*1 research paper (30%).*

The research paper is a semester-length project in which you choose and develop the topic, based on consultation with me, as well as through peer interactions and review. A number of target dates are to be met: initial thesis, bibliography, rough draft, and final draft.

*oral/visual presentation of paper (10%).*

The oral/visual presentation will take place during the last week of the semester, in the form of a 10 minute powerpoint presentation.

*participation in peer review (10%).*

During the course, you will be asked to respond to and evaluate the research projects of 4-5 of your peers.

*participation in class discussions (10%).*

You will be expected to participate in structured and unstructured classroom discussions of the readings, projects, etc.

Each student should meet with the instructor within the first two weeks of class to discuss a topic for a final paper and to set up a schedule for submission of short papers.

## ASSIGNED TEXTS

There are two books specifically ordered for this seminar, and a third on the way. The rest of the readings are provided electronically, and may shift as we develop paper topics. This is a provisional list of readings from which we can adapt, add or subtract, as we go along. Specifically, for this course on theory, I suggest that you approach each reading with the following questions in mind:

1. Putting the work in the tradition of social theory. Try to get the big picture.
  - \* What is the phenomenon being explained?
  - \* What is the explanation offered?
  - \* How does this apply to a specific observable phenomenon in social relations, in other words, what examples can you generate to illustrate the explanation offered?
  - \* With whom (or what alternative point of view) might the author be arguing? Or, how does this explanation differ from other explanations for the same phenomenon?
2. Close textual reading.
  - \* Find some portions of the text you want us to discuss for close reading and interpretation.
  - \* Find portions that are difficult or unclear to you.
  - \* Find portions that you think exemplify the author's most important insights.

1. *A Social History of Anthropology in the United States*. by Thomas C. Patterson. Berg Publishers. ISBN 185973-494-4

2. *World Anthropologies: Disciplinary Transformations within Systems of Power*. edited by Ribeiro and Escobar. Berg Publishers. ISBN 184520191-4

3. *The Gift: The Form and Reason For Exchange in Archaic Societies*. by Marcel Mauss. Routledge Publishers. ISBN 0-393-30698-4

## COURSE SCHEDULE:

### Week 1: Introduction: human theory

8/31 (Monday): overview of course.

9/2 (Wednesday): Karl Marx, part 1 of *The Communist Manifesto*; & chapter 1 of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

9/4 (Friday): *A Social History of Anthropology*, preface and introduction.

### Week 2: Anthropology in the New Republic, 1776-1879 / language, race, and evolution

9/7 (Monday): *Labor Day* - NO CLASS.

9/9 (Wednesday): *A Social History of Anthropology*, Chap 1.

9/11 (Friday): L. H. Morgan, excerpts from *Ancient Society*; & E. B. Tylor, excerpts from *Primitive Culture*.

**Week 3: Anthropology in the Liberal Age, 1879-1929 / culture: diffuse, relative, and particular**

9/14 (Monday): *A Social History of Anthropology*, Chap. 2.

9/16 (Wednesday): Franz Boas, "On the Limits of the Comparative Method," "Anthropology," & "The Mind of Primitive Man."

9/18 (Friday): Franz Boas, "The Methods of Ethnology."

**Week 4: Anthropology and the Search for Social Order, 1929-1945 / sociocultural function and structure**

9/21 (Monday): *A Social History of Anthropology*, Chap 3.

9/23 (Wednesday): excerpts from Edward Sapir.

9/25 (Friday): excerpts from Ruth Benedict.

**Week 5: French contributions to Functionalism and Structure-Functionalism**

9/28 (Monday): excerpts from Emile Durkheim.

9/30 (Wednesday): Marcel Mauss, "Body Techniques."

10/2 (Friday): Marcel Mauss, "The Gift."

**Week 6: Anthropology in the PostWar Era, 1945-1973 /**

10/5 (Monday): *A Social History of Anthropology*, Chapter 4.

10/7 (Wednesday): excerpts from Leslie White.

10/9 (Friday): excerpts from Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner.

**Week 7: Structuralism**

10/12 (Monday): excerpts from Levi-Strauss.

10/14 (Wednesday): excerpts from Marshall Sahlins.

10/16 (Friday): excerpts from Edmund Leach.

**Week 8: Anthropology in the Neoliberal Era, 1974-2000**

10/19 (Monday): Fall Break - NO CLASS

10/21 (Wednesday): *A Social History of Anthropology*, Chapter 5.

10/23 (Friday): peer review session (students to meet and critique paper #2).

**Week 9: post-structuralisms**

10/26 (Monday): excerpts from Sherry Ortner.

10/28 (Wednesday): excerpts from Marcus and Fisher.

10/30 (Friday): excerpts from Appadurai.

**Week 10: world anthropologies**

11/2 (Monday): WA- 1: "World Anthropologies: Disciplinary Transformations Within Systems of Power" (Ribiero and Escobar).

11/4 (Wednesday): WA-2: "Reshaping Anthropology: A View From Japan" (Yamashita).

11/6 (Friday): WA-4: "In Search of Anthropology in China: A Discipline Caught in a Web of Nation Building, Socialist Capitalism, and Globalization" (Smart).

**Week 11: world anthropologies**

11/9 (Monday): WA-5: "Mexican Anthropology's Ongoing Search for Identity" (Krotz).

11/11 (Wednesday): WA-6: "How Many Centers and Peripheries in Anthropology? A Critical View of France" (Archetti).

11/13 (Friday): WA-7: "The Production of Knowledge and the Production of Hegemony: Anthropological Theory and Political Struggles in Spain" (Narotzky).

**Week 12: world anthropologies**

11/16 (Monday): WA-8: "Anthropology in a Postcolonial Africa: The Survival Debate" (Nkwi).

11/18 (Wednesday): WA-10: "The Production of Other Knowledges and Its Tensions: From Andeanist Anthropology to *Interculturalidad?*" (Cadena).

11/20 (Friday): WA-11: "A Time and Place Beyond and of the Center: Australian Anthropologies in the Process of Becoming" (Toussaint).

**Week 13: Thanksgiving Break**

11/23 (Monday): WA-14: ""World Anthropologies": Questions" (Fabian)

11/25 (Wednesday): HOLIDAY

11/27 (Friday): HOLIDAY

**Week 14: AAA & SVA conference week /students to meet & critique**

11/30 (Monday): students 1-5

12/2 (Wednesday): students 6-10

12/4 (Friday): students 11-15

**Week 15: Student presentations of research projects**

12/7 (Monday): students 1-5

12/9 (Wednesday): students 6-10

12/11 (Friday): students 11-15

**Week 16: FINALS WEEK**

Final Draft of Research Papers Due

