Anthropological Thought and Theory  
SOAN 331  
Spring 2014

Carleton College  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Professor Jerome Levi  
Office: Leighton 227  
Office Hours: T/Th 1:00-2:00 PM and by appt.  
Tel: 222-4110

Course Objectives and Description
What is anthropology? The introductory textbook answer is that it is “the study of humankind” and indeed this is the definition offered by the Oxford English Dictionary. But is this study a kind of science or is it instead more like the humanities? Does it rely on objective or subjective understandings? Is it concerned with the past or the present, with other cultures or one’s own? Does it study humans as biological organisms or as creatures shaped by language, society, and culture? If the discipline of anthropology addresses itself to all of these issues, as indeed it does, how is it really a discipline after all rather than simply an undisciplined assemblage of competing ideas, schools, and interests?

The best way to answer this question is to trace the development of the core issues, central debates, and internecine battles that have animated anthropology since it first emerged as a distinct field of inquiry in the nineteenth century. When viewed as the product of an ongoing dialogue among its various practitioners, synchronically as well as diachronically, with later anthropologists not just upstaging but sometimes dusting off, retooling, and recontextualizing the ideas of their predecessors, the growth of anthropology as a unique and complex discipline with a vital intellectual history readily takes shape. From this perspective, the history of anthropological thought and theory reveals itself not as a seamless, magisterial Rise of Anthropological Theory (pace Marvin Harris and his monumental book by this title), but rather unfolds as the outcome of a long and mesmerizing conversation. The objective of this course is not just to have students eavesdrop passively on these conversations, but to invite them to actively enter into them, interrogating the authors, and building upon their revolutionary ideas. This course therefore asks that you talk back – think, argue, get involved – because you are the next generation of anthropologists!

The “long conversation” that comprises the structure of the course is organized chronologically along five historical horizons:

1) Foundational Perspectives  
2) National Anthropological Traditions  
3) Symbolic, Materialist, and Integrative Anthropologies  
4) Poststructuralist Anthropologies
Readings:
The textbooks required for this course are:


All readings not in the textbooks above will be placed on reserve in the library.

Pedagogy and Mechanics:
This course will run as if it were a first year seminar in graduate school. A premium will be placed on presentation, writing, and analytical skills. The course entails a substantial amount of reading, approximately 100-150 pages for each meeting, although in some cases readings can be skimmed to garner the main ideas. This in itself is an important skill to acquire, especially in an age of information overload, and even if one is not heading to graduate school where hefty reading lists are routinely encountered.

Course Requirements and Grade Breakdown
Each student will:
1) attend all classes, complete the readings, and participate in discussions (10%),
2) lead two presentations/discussions (30%, 15% each),
3) write a take-home midterm exam (25%) and
4) sit a one-on-one twenty minute comprehensive oral final exam with me (35%)

Participation and Presentations
This course requires critical reading and active participation, and not just when it is your turn to present. Students will present and lead discussion during the first half of each period. I will lecture and lead discussion during the second half. Discussion leaders should meet in advance to orchestrate their presentation. Work together. You will be graded as a team. Presenters will jointly prepare a handout to be distributed in class consisting of 1) a précis summarizing and integrating the main points of the readings, 2) a thoughtful response to or critique of the material, and 3) several discussion questions. I will try to arrange a Moodle page so that this can be posted in advance, enabling other members of the class to read the material in advance and prepare responses to these discussion questions. In order to help stimulate discussion and formulate your questions, presenters are encouraged to use and build upon the “Queries” and “Connections” sections in *Visions of Culture: An Annotated Reader.* Look for themes that run through that week’s readings, connections with other weeks, and/or comparisons and contradictions within and between the readings. This is your class. Make it count.

Primary and secondary readings
All students are required to complete all the primary readings for each class meeting. Secondary readings provide additional information but are optional. Presenters may wish to consult these readings to provide additional insights and perspectives not covered in the primary readings but which would be helpful in generating questions and discussion.
Videos
In addition to the readings, some days also have videos that are listed. These will be on reserve at the library if they are not available to be viewed online. Technically these are not required but it is highly recommended that you watch these if possible as they add an important dimension to understanding the readings. The only exception to this pattern is the day you hand in your take home midterm, when the video will be watched in class and there are no assigned readings.

Note: Please let me know if there are any special needs that would affect your performance in this class.

Student Learning Objectives
SOAN majors may like to know that this class meets the following student learning objectives, it that it should help majors

· Apply sociological and anthropological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.
· Describe how sociology and anthropology interact with one another, interact with other liberal arts disciplines, and contribute to various interdisciplinary conversations.
· Draw upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena to engage the world.

I. FOUNDATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Tues 4/1 (Week 1)
En/visioining anthropology

Primary reading
Geertz, Clifford. “Common Sense as a Cultural System.” The Antioch Review Vol. 33, No. 1, (Spring 1975), pp. 5-75

Thurs 4/3
Victorian evolutionary anthropology (and its predecessors)

Primary reading
Barnard, A “Visions of anthropology,” “Precursors of the anthropological tradition,” and “Changing perspectives on evolution” pp. 1-46 in HATIA
Tylor, E. B. Primitive Culture pp. 3-12 in VOC-Reader
Tylor, E. B. pp. 5-16 in VOC-Intro
Morgan, L. H. Ancient Society pp. 13-24 in VOC-Reader
Morgan, L. H. pp. 17-29 in VOC-Intro

Secondary reading
Marcus, G. and M. Fischer, pp. vii-16 in Anthropology as Cultural Critique
Stocking, G. W. “The Darwinian Revolution and the Evolution of Human Culture (1858-1871) pp. 144-185 in Victorian Anthropology
II. NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL TRADITIONS

Tues 4/8 (Week 2)
American cultural anthropology (Franz Boas and historical particularism)

Primary reading
Barnard, A. “Diffusionist and culture-area theories” and “From relativism to cognitive science,” pp. 47-60 and 99-119 in HATIA
Boas, F. “The Methods of Ethnology” pp. 25-36 in VOC-Reader
Boas, F. pp. 30-41 in VOC-Intro
Boas, F. “Decorative Designs of Alaskan Needle-cases” pp. 564-592 in Race, Language, and Culture (on reserve)

Video: Franz Boas 1858-1942 from the Odyssey series (1980)

Secondary reading

Thurs 4/10
American cultural anthropology (Boasians, culture areas, & patterns of culture)

Primary reading
Kroeber, A.L. “Disposal of the Dead” and “Eighteen Professions” pp. 51-62 in VOC-Reader
Kroeber, A.L. pp. 59-70 in VOC-Intro
Benedict, R. “Configurations of Culture in North America” pp. 63-88 in VOC-Reader
Benedict, R. pp. 71-80 in VOC-Intro

Video: Ishi, The Last Yahi (1992)

Secondary reading (other Boasians)
M. Mead in VOC-Reader and VOC-Intro
E. Sapir in VOC-Reader and VOC-Intro

Tues 4/15 (Week 3)
British social anthropology (functionalism & structural-functionalism)

Primary reading
Barnard, A. “Functionalism and structural-functionalism” pp. 61-79 in HATIA
Malinowski, B. “The Functional Theory” pp. 147-174 in A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays (on reserve)
Malinowski, B. “The Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders” 137-152 in VOC-Reader
Malinowski, B. pp. 122-133 in VOC-Intro
Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. pp. 134-145 in VOC-Intro

Video: Savage Memory (2011)

Secondary reading
Young, M. “Malinowski and the Function of Culture” pp. 124-140 in D. J. Austin-Broos, ed. Creating Culture
Stocking, G. W. “Radcliffe-Brown and British Social Anthropology” pp. 131-191 in Functionalism Historicized

Thurs 4/17
**British social anthropology (functionalisms and their critiques)**

*The second half of this class, starting at about 11:00 AM we will have a conversation with the distinguished anthropologist John Comaroff on the current state and future of anthropology.*

Primary reading
Leach, E. “Rethinking Anthropology” pp. 1-27 in Rethinking Anthropology (on reserve)
Gellner, E. “Concepts and Society” pp. 18-49 in B. R. Wilson, ed. Rationality (on reserve)
Geertz, C. “Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example” pp. 315-342 in VOC-Reader
Rosaldo, R. “The Erosion of Classic Norms,” “After Objectivism” and “Imperialist Nostalgia” pp. 25-90 in CAT

Secondary reading
Evans-Pritchard, E. E. “Social Anthropology: Past and Present” in VOC-Reader
Leach, E. “Introduction” pp.1-17 in Political Systems of Highland Burma (on reserve)

Tues 4/22 (Week 4)
**French structuralism (linguistics, exchange theory, social structure)**

Primary reading
Barnard, A. “Structuralism, from linguistics to anthropology” pp. 120-138 in HATIA
Lévi-Strauss, C. pp. 209-223 in VOC-Intro
Lévi-Strauss, “Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology” and “Social Structure” pp. 31-54 and 277-323 in Structural Anthropology (on reserve)

Secondary reading
Mauss, M. The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies and “The origins of the concept of money” in VOC-Reader
Mauss, M. in VOC-Intro
Thurs 4/24
French structuralism and critiques (symbols, totemism, and myth)

Primary reading
Lévi-Strauss, C. “The Effectiveness of Symbols” pp. 186-205 in Structural Anthropology (on reserve)
Geertz, C. “The Cerebral Savage: On the Work of Claude Lévi-Strauss” pp. 345-360 in The Interpretation of Cultures (on reserve)

Secondary reading
Lévi-Strauss, C. Totemism or The Savage Mind (selections)

III. SYMBOLIC, MATERIALIST, AND INTEGRATIVE ANTHROPOLOGIES

Tues 4/29 (Week 5)
Symbolic, semiotic, and interpretive anthropologies

Primary reading
Douglas, M. “Animals in Lele Religious Symbolism” pp. 343-360 in VOC-Reader
Douglas, M. pp. 247-266 in VOC-Intro
Turner, V. “Symbols in African Ritual” pp. 299-314 in VOC-Reader
Turner, V. pp. 224-234 in VOC-Intro
Geertz, C. pp. 235-246 in VOC Intro
Geertz, C. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” and “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight” in The Interpretation of Cultures pp. 3-30 and 412-453 (on reserve)

Secondary reading
Roseberry, W. “Balinese Cockfights and the Seduction of Anthropology” in Anthropologies and Histories pp. 17-29 (on reserve)

Thurs 5/1
Political economy, Marxist, and historical anthropologies

Primary reading
Barnard, A. “Action-centered, processual and Marxist perspectives” pp. 80-98 in HATIA
Wolf, E. pp. 308-326 in VOC-Intro
Wolf, E. pp. 3-23 in Europe and the People Without History (on reserve)
Sahlins, M. pp. 327-345 in VOY-Intro
Sahlins, M. “Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia
and Polynesia” pp. 457-474 in VOC-Reader
Sahlins, M. pp. 1-32 Islands of History (on reserve)
Obeyesekere, G. pp. 3-22 in The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific (on reserve)

Secondary reading
Marcus G. and M. Fischer, pp. 17-76 Anthropology as Cultural Critique

**Hand out take-home midterm**

**Tues 5/6 (Week 6)**

**Hand in take-home midterm**

Video: Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial (from the NOVA series, 1983)

**Thur 5/8**

**Human sociobiology, cultural materialism, and neo-evolutionary approaches**

**Primary reading**
Sahlins, M. “A Critique of Vulgar Sociobiology” in *The Use and Abuse of Biology* pp. 3-16 (on reserve)
Harris, M. *VOC-Intro*
Harris, M. “Anthropology and the Theoretical and Paradigmatic Significance of the Collapse of Soviet and East European Communism” pp. 229-244 in *VOC-Reader*
Harris, M. “Theoretical Principles of Cultural Materialism” and “Sociobiology and Biological Reductionism” pp. 46-76 and 133-137 in *Cultural Materialism* (on reserve)

Video: Secrets of the Tribe (2012) on Veoh.com

**Secondary readings**

**IV. POSTSTRUCTURALIST ANTHROPOLOGIES**

**Tues 5/13 (Week 7)**

**Practice, experience, agency, and emotion**

**Primary readings**
Ortner, S. “Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties” pp. 372-411 in *Culture/Power/History* (on reserve)
Bourdieu, P. pp. 292-308 in VOC-Intro
Bourdieu, P. “The Berber House of the World Reversed” pp. 405-417 in VOC-Reader
Bourdieu, P. “Structures and Habitus” (selections from *Outline of a Theory of*
**Practice** pp. 407-416 in H. L. Moore and T. Sanders, eds. *Anthropology in Theory* (on reserve)

Bourdieu, P. “From Rules to Strategies” pp. 59-75 in *In Other Words* (on reserve)

Rosaldo, R. “Grief and the Headhunter’s Rage,” “Putting Culture into Motion” and “After Objectivism” pp. 1-24 and 91-126 in *CAT*

**Secondary reading**

Marcus G. and M. Fischer, pp. 77-110 *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (on reserve)

**Thurs 5/15**

**Hegemony, domination, and resistance**

**Primary reading**

Scott, J. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* pp. 304-350 (on reserve)


**Secondary reading**


**Tues 5/20 (Week 8)**

**Postcolonialism, postmodernism, and their critiques**

**Primary reading**

Barnard, A. “Interpretive and postmodernist approaches” pp. 158-177 in *HATIA*


Clifford, J. “Introduction: Partial Truths” pp. 1-26 in J. Clifford and G. Marcus *Writing Culture* (on reserve)


Rosaldo, R. “Narrative Analysis” pp. 127-146 in *CAT*

**Secondary reading**

Marcus, G. “The Postmodern Condition and the Teaching of Anthropology” pp. 103-112 in *The Teaching of Anthropology* (on reserve)

**Thurs 5/22**

**Feminist and “native” anthropologies, part I**

**Primary reading**

Barnard, A. “Poststructuralists, feminists, and (other) mavericks” pp. 139-157 in *HATIA*

Leacock, E. pp. 196-208 in *VOC-Intro*

Leacock, E. “Women’s Status in Egalitarian Society: Implications for Social
Evolution” pp. 245-276 in VOC-Reader
Ortner, S. pp. 277-292 in VOC-Intro
Ortner, S. “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” pp. 67-88 in M. Z.
Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds. Woman, Culture, and Society (on reserve)
Rosaldo, R. “Changing Chicano Narratives” pp. 147-167 in CAT

Secondary reading

Tues 5/27 (Week 9)
**Feminist and “native” anthropologies, part II**

**Primary reading**
Rosaldo, R. “Subjectivity in Social Analysis” and “Border Crossings” pp. 168-217 in CAT

**Secondary reading**

Thurs 5/29
**Globalization and the project of culture**

**Primary reading**
Appadurai, A. “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy” pp. 27-47 in Modernity at Large (on reserve)

**Secondary reading**

Tues 6/3 (Week 10)
**Conclusion and wrap up**
Barnard, A. “Conclusions” pp. 178-184 in HATIA
“Postscript: Current Controversies” pp. 346-352 in VOC-Intro
Rosaldo, R. “Epilogue: A Raging Battle” pp. 218-224 in CAT