ANTH 5015

Anthropology: A Postgraduate Introduction

Fall 2019

Seminar time: Monday, 1830-2115hrs
Location: NAH 114
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Office hours: NAH 411, Monday 1600-1800hrs, or by appointment
Language of instruction: English

Course Description

Anthropology - *anthro* (human) and *logia* (the study of) - refers to the study of humankind. This is an ambitiously broad, all-encompassing field. In North America, the discipline of anthropology is typically broken into the four subfields of physical or biological anthropology, archaeological anthropology, linguistic anthropology and socio-cultural anthropology. Taken together, these four subfields give anthropology a unique, “holistic” perspective on the human experience, stressing the contribution of the biological as well as the cultural – “nature” as well as “nurture” - in the formation of the human past and present.

Yet, for reasons that will be elaborated, we will primarily be examining the many themes and sub-fields of sociocultural anthropology. This course can be regarded as a general introduction to the major currents within sociocultural anthropology.

It is not unreasonable to argue that the concerns of sociocultural anthropology can be traced to the distant past, when questions concerning social life first emerged (i.e. to the Ancient Greeks in the West, or to the time of Confucius in China). But we shall begin our discussion of the story of anthropology closer to our time (i.e. the modern period), when the production of social knowledge started to take on a more systematic and disciplinary guise. So, we will begin our story of the development of anthropology when the discipline took on elements of its current disciplinary constitution in the West. In fact, it is the aim of this course to help students see the relevance of anthropological knowledge and analysis for understanding present-day realities.

While the analytical focus is on the present, the present inevitably calls for an appreciation of the past. Analysis in anthropology thus involves the deployment of the conceptual to reflect upon empirical phenomena unfolding across time and space, along varying scales. As we inquire how the present is connected to the past, we are also compelled to ask how the local is related to the global. The empirical in turn informs and modifies the conceptual in an ever-iterative process of knowledge-and-reality-making. In keeping with this, our discussions in this course will involve a simultaneous focus on:

i. Major anthropological concerns

ii. The contemporary human predicament and how we got here.
Required Texts


Evaluation

**Paper 1:** 1500-word review of either texts. 25%. **Due: October 14.**

**Paper 2:** 1500-word review of any particular week’s theme. 25%. **Due: November 25.**

Paper 3: 2500-word essay/proposal focussing on an intended research area of one’s interest. 50%. **Due: December 2.**

Students may have already existing interests; if not they can select from any one of the week’s topics. The purpose of this exercise is to give the student the experience of conceiving of a research project, build a case for it, then demonstrating how they will go about it. In this process, they will tell what the project is, why it is important in view of existing research, then how they will accomplish it.

Learning outcomes:

Upon completing this course, students should be able to:

- competently demonstrate what anthropology is;
- apply anthropological concepts in the analysis of current social realities; and
- understand the strengths and limits of anthropological methods and analysis.

Grade Descriptors

Grades will be issued as follows for the assessment of this course:

A: Exceptional performance demonstrated on all learning outcomes

A-: Very good performance demonstrated on almost all learning outcomes

B: Competence demonstrated on all learning outcomes. This includes good performances in some areas, which offset weaker performances in others.

C: Satisfactory performance demonstrated on most learning outcomes.

D: Barely satisfactory performance demonstrated on majority of learning outcomes.

F: Unsatisfactory performance on most learning outcomes, or failure to meet assessment requirements.
Assessment policies:

Late submission: will suffer a fraction of a grade per day. Hence, an A will become an A-.

Academic honesty: you are required to cite properly (guidelines: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/tstyle.doc).

Also, students are required to upload every piece of work to VeriGuide for plagiarism check and then sign their receipts sent by the system and submit with their assignments. VeriGuide: https://veriguide1.cse.cuhk.edu.hk/portal/plagiarism_detection/about.jsp

Seminar and Reading Schedule

Week 1 (September 2): INTRODUCTION

The nature of the course, what to expect from the course, assessment requirements etc.

Week 2 (September 9): CULTURE and HUMANITY

Topics: The Physical, Life, and the Human Sciences; Distinctiveness of Human Sciences; Cultural products vs. Cultural process; The Culture-Scale Approach

Readings:


It is also recommended that students begin reading either texts (Tsing 2015 and Han 2012), which set the contexts for our discussion about contemporary realities. A book review of either book is due: October 14.

Week 3 (September 16): BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY / COMPARATIVE ZOOLOGY

Topic: What differentiates us from our primate cousins? Or, what makes us human?

Readings:


Week 4 (September 23): ECOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Readings:


**Week 5 (September 30): POLITICAL and ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY**

Readings:


**Week 6 (October 7): NO CLASS – Chung Yeung Festival**

**Week 7 (October 14): GENDER and PATRIARCHY**

Readings:


Recommended readings:


**N.B.: Paper 1 - your book review - is due today!**
Week 8 (October 21): THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM, Part I: PAX-BRITANNICA and MERCANTILISM

Topics: The Modern World-system; the Enlightenment; Modernity and the Scientific Revolution; Industrialisation; Nationalism; Capitalism; Socialism; The Cold-War; The West and the Rest; the North and the South; Developmentalism

Readings:


Week 9 (October 28): THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM, Part II: PAX-AMERICANA and FORDISM

Topics: Fordism; Vietnam War and the U.S. Civil Rights Movements; OPEC oil crisis; Collapse of Gold Standard; Keynesianism in West; East Asian miracle; Fall of Berlin Wall in 1989; End of History; Neo-liberal Washington Consensus; Major multi-lateral institutions embrace Washington Consensus in 1990s; TINA

Readings:


Week 10 (November 4): THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM, PART II: NEO-LIBERALISM and FINANCIALIZATION

Readings:


Week 11 (November 11): THE MODERN WORLD-SYSTEM, PART III: 21st C PAX-SINICA?

Readings:


**Week 12 (November 18): KNOWLEDGE-MAKING and DECOLONIAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Topic:** The HAU Debacle: Crisis in Anthropological and Knowledge-making

**Readings:**


**Week 13 (November 25): RITUAL and RELIGION / MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Readings:**


N.B.: Paper 2 is due today, November 25!

Week 14 (Make-up class): ETHNOGRAPHY

Date: December 2 or 3, to be confirmed

Readings:


