

Department of Anthropology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

香港中文大學人類學系

Term 2, Academic Year 2021/22 二零二一至二二學年度 春季學期

ANTH 2510/UGEC 2662 Culture and Business 文化與商業



Replica of Thai traditional market in ICONSIAM, Bangkok. (Photo: Siu-hei Lai)

Lecture: Wednesday 09:30-11:15 (Venue: YIA 502)

Tutorial: Wednesday 11:30-12:15

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Course Description

Culture is ubiquitous in every aspect of societies, including how we do business. This course will examine the role of culture in contemporary business and study work and management in industrial societies anthropologically. Students will be introduced to the cultural logics of business practices, particularly business operations, organization and management through ethnographic explorations of different cultures, locales and sociohistorical settings. The aims of the course are twofold. First, it reveals cultural aspects and the cultural mechanisms of business. It shows the significance of culture in the business world, as well as the cultural significance of business. Second, it attempts to put anthropology into business practice. It demonstrates to students how anthropological knowledge and methodologies can apply to business operations and help to achieve business goals. **The course attends to the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): No Poverty (SDG 1), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).**

The course is structured in three parts. *Part I Culture in Business* explores the cultural dimensions of workplaces and corporate management. We begin with an overview of the temporal and spatial reconfigurations since industrialization in order to discern modern work ethics, followed by explorations of dynamics in the workplace. Next, we will explore discourses in shaping corporate operations and management, and consider (and challenge) the ideas of economization, maximization, auditing and accountability. This part decodes life in business settings, and practices in corporations. *Part II Business Ventures in the Globalizing World* situates the discussions in current trends of capitalism. We will look into what makes us buy and spend, and how traditional values and modern business practices mingle. It raises the question of whether we are really emancipated under the fashion of decentralization by exploring the gig economy and the phenomenon of self-enterprising. We will also examine how we can build a more inclusive, diverse and equal society by finding a new way out from the existing business ideologies and practices. *Part III Anthropology and the Business World* discusses how to apply anthropology in business settings, looking into how and why anthropology and anthropologists are important to the private sector, and broadly speaking, to the modern capitalist world. The course concludes by contemplating whether business really business.

Class activities include a ninety-minute lecture and one forty-five-minute tutorial per week. Lectures and tutorials will be conducted in English. Fieldtrip maybe arranged. Students will read mostly primary texts selected from ethnographic monographs, journal articles and chapters in edited volumes. Prior knowledge of anthropology, economic and business is not necessary. **Students from other disciplines are welcome to enroll in this course for fulfilling the University General Education (UGE) requirements.**

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will:

1. Understand and appreciate the cultural dimensions of business operations and organization in different historical, political, and social settings;
2. Acquire the necessary ethnographic skills to study diverse aspects of business operations and organization;
3. Be able to rethink and challenge the existing assumptions regarding business practices in the modern world;
4. Gain the analytical tools to examine issues of over-consumption, over-production, dispossession, oppression, and other relevant discontent under global capitalism;
5. Be able to examine critically the role SDGs could play in addressing social disparities and injustices;
6. Understand the importance of building a more inclusive, equal and diverse society.

Course Requirements[^]

1. Class Participation 20%
2. Mid-term Test 30% (2nd March)
3. In-class Quiz 10% (20th April)
4. Take-home Final Exam 40% (softcopy due 3rd May; 2,000 words)

[^]Arrangements are subject to change in view of the pandemic.

Weekly Topics and Schedule

- Week 1 12th Jan Course Introduction (No tutorial)
- Week 2 19th Jan Seeing Business Anthropologically
- PART I CULTURE IN BUSINESS**
- Week 3 26th Jan Space, Time and the Work Ethics
2nd Feb *Holiday: Chinese New Year* (No class; no tutorial)
- Week 4 9th Feb Communication and Sub-groups in the Workplace
- Week 5 16th Feb Corporatization, Economization and Maximization
- Week 6 23rd Feb Audit Culture, Evaluation and the Logics of Management
- Week 7 2nd Mar **Mid-term Test** (No tutorial)
- PART II BUSINESS VENTURES IN THE GLOBALIZING WORLD**
- Week 8 9th Mar The Making of Consumers
- Week 9 16th Mar Fieldtrip to HATCH (合廠)**
- Week 10 23rd Mar The Gig Economy and Self-enterprising
- Week 11 30th Mar Ethical-Political Consumerism and Social Entrepreneurialism
6th Apr *Holiday: Reading Week* (No class; no tutorial)
- PART III ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE BUSINESS WORLD**
- Week 12 13th Apr Applying Anthropology to Business Practice
- Week 13 20th Apr Conclusion: Is Business Really Business? (Quiz; no tutorial)

Readings

This course does not adopt any single textbook or companion as required text. Readings are selected from a wide range of ethnographic monographs, chapters in edited volumes and journal articles of anthropology as well as researches in other cognate disciplines. In some of the weeks, documentaries or other visual materials maybe assigned as required course materials to help students to gain a better picture of the respective topics we discuss. Students are expected to finish the assigned readings before class meetings. Students may find the following texts and companions to be useful:

- Jordan, A. T., 2012. *Business Anthropology*. 2nd ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.
- Mir, R. & Fayard, A.-L. eds., 2021. *The Routledge Companion to Anthropology and Business*. New York: Routledge.
- Denny, R. & Sunderland, P. eds., 2016. *Handbook of Anthropology in Business*. New York: Routledge.
- Trompenaars, F. & Hampden-Turner, C., 2021. *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Global Business*. 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill. (Also various editions)

Students may also refer to the following periodicals for up-to-date research on business anthropology and other relevant issues of business and cultures:

- Journal of Business Anthropology*
International Journal of Business Anthropology
Journal of Organizational Ethnography
Human Organization

Notes on Course Assessments

Course assessment is comprised of four components: *class participation* (20%), *a mid-term test* (30%), *an in-class quiz* (10%) and *a take-home examination* (40%). **Class participation** is a continual evaluation of students' performance in tutorials. Tutorial attendance is mandatory, but students will not earn much credit by just showing up to the classroom. Instead, students need to prepare for tutorials in advance by doing the readings, preparing questions and notes. Students may take this opportunity to raise questions on what they do not understand in both the assigned readings and lecture, and get clarifications through discussion with classmates and the teacher/tutor. (Mutual help is a key to success in university education!) Class participations will be evaluated in terms of how active students engage and make contributions during tutorial discussions.

The mid-term test is an in-class closed-book, timed assessment (90 minutes) that will be held on 2nd March. It covers the lectures and required readings from Week 2 to 6. In this test, students are asked to write answers to several questions about definitions of key terms, concepts, and the main ideas and arguments discussed in the readings. A make-up test will not be given except for illness (appropriate medical proof required) or emergency, and prior approval must be obtained from the teacher. Otherwise, students will get a zero if s/he fails to attend the test.

The in-class quiz will be held on the last class meeting, i.e., 20th April. The quiz will check students' reading progress using multiple-choice questions and/or true/false questions. The final course assessment will be a **take-home examination**. The question paper will be handed out on the second-last class meeting, i.e., 13th April. Mingle the answer carefully with the course readings. Students may wish to consult readings beyond the required reading list when completing the take-home examination. Students are encouraged to talk to the teacher before writing their paper. Students should use *in-text citation* (vs. footnote format) and provide *a list of references* at the end of their paper (this will not count toward the word limit). Write no more than 2,000 words. The take-home exam is due 3rd May, 11:59pm. Submit the paper together with the signed VeriGuide receipt to Blackboard.

All written assignments should follow the format of double-lined spacing with font size 12.

Policy for late submission: Please turn in all the written assignments on time unless permission is obtained from teacher in prior. Permission might be granted to specific circumstances, e.g., medical needs (with medical proof) and bereavements. Otherwise, **a sub-grade per day will be penalized**, i.e., A to A- for one day late, and A to B+ for two days late. Late submission over three days will not be accepted, e.g., the latest date for turning in the final take-home exam is 6th May.

Grade Descriptors[±]

Grade	Overall course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

[±] Detailed descriptors can be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/assessment/SOLO-descriptors.pdf>.

Notes on Academic Honesty and Copyright

It is CUHK's policy to require all written assignments be submitted to VeriGuide (https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jsp). An assignment without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded. The University adopts a policy of zero tolerance on plagiarism. Using someone else's ideas or words, including materials available on the Internet, without citing the source is plagiarism. Students must cite any sources they used. Please familiarize yourself with the CUHK academic honesty policy at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>, and follow the Anthropology Department citation style at <https://www.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~ant/links/department-thesis-style/>.

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ANTH 2510/UGEC 2662 Culture and Business
Term 2, Academic Year 2021/22 List of Required Readings

Week 1 12th Jan Course Introduction

Recommended reading:

Lyon, S., 2021. Business Anthropology. In: L. Pedersen & L. Cliggett, eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Cultural Anthropology*. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 364-382.

Week 2 19th Jan Seeing Business Anthropologically

Nakamaki, H., 2016. Enterprise as Cultural Community. In: H. Nakamaki, K. Hioki, I. Mitsui & Y. Takeuchi, eds. *Enterprise as an Instrument of Civilization: An Anthropological Approach to Business Administration*. Tokyo: Springer, pp. 17-28.

Jordan, B. & Lambert, M., 2009. Working in Corporate Jungles: Reflections on Ethnographic Praxis in Industry. In: M. Cefkin, ed. *Ethnography and the Corporate Encounter: Reflections on Research in and of Corporations*. New York: Berghahn, pp. 95-133.

PART I CULTURE IN BUSINESS

Week 3 26th Jan Space, Time and the Work Ethics

Crawford, R., 2018. Office space: Australian advertising agencies in the twentieth century. *Journal of Management History*, 24(4), pp. 396-413.

Ferguson, T., 2013. Introduction. In: T. Ferguson, ed. *Victorian Time: Technologies, Standardizations, Catastrophes*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 1-15.

Week 4 9th Feb Communication and Sub-groups in the Workplace

Tannen, D., 2012. Conversation Style: Talking on the Job. In: J. P. Spradley & D. W. McCurdy, eds. *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. 14th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, pp. 61-68.

Wong, H.-W., 2013 [1999]. *Japanese Bosses, Chinese Workers: Power and Control in a Hongkong Megastore*. New York: Routledge. [Read Ch. 8, pp. 159-193] [Chinese trans.: 王向華, 2015。《友情與私利：一個在香港的日資百貨公司之民族誌》。新北：華藝學術出版社。〔閱讀〈第七章：日本員工和香港員工的關係〉、〈第八章：香港員工之間的關係〉〕]

Week 5 16th Feb Corporatization, Economization and Maximization

Foster, R. J., 2008. *Coca-globalization: Following soft drinks from New York to New Guinea*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. [Read Ch. 2, pp. 33-73]

Ho, K., 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [Read Ch.4, pp. 169-212] [Chinese trans.: 何柔宛, 2018。《清算：華爾街的日常生活》（翟宇航等譯）。上海：華東師範大學出版社。〔閱讀〈第四章：股東價值的敘事起源及其新古典主義經濟學基礎〉〕]

Week 6 23rd Feb Audit Culture, Evaluation and the Logics of Management

Strathern, M., 2000. Introduction: New Accountabilities. In: M. Strathern, ed. *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability and the Academy*. London: Routledge, pp. 1-18. [Read pp. 1-7 (first half, before the subsection *The volume*; can skip the rest)]

Chong, K., 2018. *Best Practice: Management Consulting and the Ethics of Financialization in China*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. [Read Ch. 2, pp. 64-90]

Week 7 2nd Mar Mid-term Test

No tutorial.

PART II BUSINESS VENTURES IN THE GLOBALIZING WORLD

Week 8 9th Mar The Making of Consumers

Robbins, R. H., 2011. *Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. [Read Ch. 1, pp. 11-32]

Bosco, J., 2001. The McDonald's Snoopy Craze in Hong Kong. In: G. Mathews & T. Lui, eds. *Consuming Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, pp. 263-285.

Week 9 16th Mar Fieldtrip to HATCH (合廠)

Information about HATCH: <https://www.hatch.com.hk/>.

Week 10 23rd Mar The Gig Economy and Self-enterprising

Bieber, F. & Moggia, J., 2021. Risk Shifts in the Gig Economy: The Normative Case for an Insurance Scheme against the Effects of Precarious Work. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 29(3), pp. 281-304.

Gray, M. & Suri, S., 2019. *Ghost Work: How to Stop Silicon Valley from Building a new Global Underclass*.

New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. [Read Ch. 3, pp. 67-93] [Chinese trans: 瑪莉·葛雷、西達爾特·蘇利, 2020。《你不知道的線上零工經濟》。台北：臉譜。〔閱讀〈第三章：演算法的殘酷及幽靈勞工看不見的成本〉〕]

Week 11 30th Mar Ethical-Political Consumerism and Social Entrepreneurialism

Chan, D. S. W. & Pun, N., 2020. Economic power of the politically powerless in the 2019 Hong Kong pro-democracy movement. *Critical Asian Studies*, 52(1), pp. 33-43.

Sydow, J., 2016. Global concepts in local contexts: CSR as “anti-politics machine” in the extractive sector in Ghana and Peru. In: C. Dolan & D. Rajak, eds. *The Anthropology of Corporate Social Responsibility*. New York: Berghahn, pp. 217-242.

PART III ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE BUSINESS WORLD

Week 12 13th Apr Applying Anthropology to Business Practice

Lee, S.-P., 2021. Ready for Business: An Anthropology Graduate as Change Management Consultant. *Journal of Business Anthropology*, 10(1), pp. 161-181.

McCurdy, D. W., 2012. Using Anthropology. In: J. P. Spradley & D. W. McCurdy, eds. *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. 14th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, pp. 371-381.

Week 13 20th Apr Conclusion: Is Business Really Business?

Wong, H.-W., 2021. It is Not that All Cultures Have Business, but that All Business Has Culture. In: R. Mir & A. Fayard, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Anthropology and Business*. New York: Routledge, pp. 453-472.