

ANTH 5010
Term 2, 2025/26
Lecture: Thursday 6:30 – 9:15 PM
Location: TBA

Lecturer: Dr. Tim Rosenkranz
Office: NAH324
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Office Hour: By appointment

Anthropological Theory

How do Anthropologist's see, interpret, discuss, and understand the world they study? That is the question of Anthropological Theory. We will chronologically trace the main concepts, ideas, and explanations that have influenced, made, and sometimes challenged the discipline. While this course does not aim to be all-encompassing, it will offer a basic understanding and chronology of the most common abstractions of reality, which we call theory. Such a selection of anthropological theory has to start and end somewhere: We will move from the classic social theory to theories of practice. Yet, such an order does not imply a teleology, a necessary or even logical progression of one idea replacing another, or a latter system of thought being better than its predecessor. While some foundational theories might be problematic today, other "old" ideas remain or have become relevant again to explore today's issues and events of social order, transformations, and struggles. This course therefore will follow the debates – some settled, some open – that are the foundation of Anthropological knowledge production!

Learning Outcomes

1. Students will acquire familiarity with major theoretical approaches in anthropology.
2. Students will have a better understanding of the relativity of perspectives.
3. Students will sharpen their analytical skills by observing how professional thinkers think.
4. Students will acquire tools for questioning common sense.

Course Format:

This course is conducted as one seminar combining lecture and interaction. The lecture part of the seminar will introduce the required readings and discuss key passages, but it will not give a detailed summary of the readings. It is therefore essential that you do the required readings before class and come prepared. The seminar will be interactive with more room for your questions and discussion.

Physical presence is a basic requirement for this course. Excused absences are generally only permitted with a medical doctor's note or in case of a personal emergency. If you have to miss class, please e-mail me beforehand. It is your responsibility to obtain notes from your fellow students about the missed sessions. There will be no transcript or recording of the lecture or tutorial provided afterwards, so please take notes.

Readings:

All required readings will be made available as PDFs on Blackboard.

Suggestions

The readings for this course are all original texts and some in difficult language. The most important thing is to try to get through them and ask questions about passages or references you do not understand. Attendance and active participation in the course are crucial.

Additional Resources:

The following titles are not required reading, but they may be helpful in clarifying concepts and ideas:

Moore, Jerry. 2012. *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists*. 4th edition. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press. (eBook available)

Perry, Richard. 2003. *Five Key Concepts in Anthropological Thinking*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. (Course reserve at UL)

Ingold, Tim (ed). 2005. *Key Debates in Anthropology*. London. Routledge

Requirements and Assessment:

The following are the required assignments that will be graded:

Participation + Reading Responses (20%): Participation includes doing the readings (as required, see below), coming to all the lectures and tutorials, asking questions, joining in on class-discussion or posting in the discussion board (on blackboard). --- **Reading Responses:** You need to do three reading responses. Each is a response to one of the readings. They should be no longer than 150 words and pose a question or critique you have about the reading (no summary). Each response has to be posted before the corresponding lecture in the discussion section on blackboard.

2x Take-Home-Exams (40% each): The take-home exams will require you to use the readings to write a paper (1200 - 1800 words) in response to given questions. **The exams are due on March 4 and April 29 (before midnight)**. The questions will be posted on blackboard in week 7 and week 15 of the class. The exams need to be submitted in the assignments on blackboard together with a signed veriguide statement.

VeriGuide requirements: Students are required by university policy to submit all exam papers to VeriGuide (https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx). A take-home-exam assignment without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded.

Use of any generative AI is not allowed in this class and will lead to an F (and be reported).

Grade Descriptors (Course Specific Descriptor):

A: Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.

(The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original way. The argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. The work goes beyond merely summarizing key ideas. The work clearly differentiates between the position of the author versus the position(s) the author wishes to challenge. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims).

A-: Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.

(The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement).

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.

(The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence. There is

some confusion over what position the author has taken versus the position(s) the author wishes to challenge).

C: Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.

(The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged or the paper fails to directly address the prompt. The argument and the writing is not clear).

D: Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.

(The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing).

F: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

(The work has failed respond to the assignment prompt).

Policies and Support:

- **Technology Use:** Please be respectful and do not distract yourself and your fellow students. Students are only allowed to use their tablets or laptops in class to take notes. Please do not use your devices for non-class related activities. Mobile phones must be turned on silent (not vibrate).
- **Educational Technology:** This class relies on the use of Blackboard. All required class readings, the out-of-class assignment submissions, as well as announcements will be done through it. Note that it uses the email address assigned to you by the University, so it is your responsibility to have an electronic mail forwarded to your main email address.
- **Respectful Conduct and Discussion Rules:** We will discuss many interesting and important topics. While I encourage thoughtful, engaged, and controversial discussion, I expect you to be polite and respectful of your classmates' opinions, limit your statements to academic (not emotional) arguments, and not use offensive language or judgmental statements. Please give each other time to talk, do not interrupt, and most importantly listen to each other.

- **Late Submission:** Late submission will suffer a fraction of a grade per day. For example, an A will become an A-.
- **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:** Academic honesty is crucial and plagiarism is a serious offense. The university has recently updated its policies on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating:
http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_hm_files_%282013-14%29/p06.htm. You are required to cite properly (guidelines: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/tstyle.doc> and http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf) to avoid plagiarism. Any use of AI-based writing programs (such as ChatGPT) is not allowed and is considered plagiarism. Please do not hesitate to talk to me and ask questions about this.
- **Independent Learning Center:** If you need help with communication and learning skills, the University has a great resource for you. You can schedule a consultation or attend workshops on various strategies for improving learning outcomes
<https://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/EN/mission.aspx>
- **Special Accommodation:** If you need special accommodations or classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the University's Wellness and Counseling Center (<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB>) no later than the third week of class.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (January 8): Why Theory?

Lila Abu-Lughod, "Speaking about Theory". In: *A History of Anthropological Theory* (3rd edition). Paul Ericksen and Liam Murphy (eds). University of Toronto Press, Toronto (2008)

Ghassan Hage. "Towards an Ethics of the Theoretical Encounter". In: Bolles, A.L., Gomberg-Muñoz, R., Perley, B.C., Brondo, K.V. (eds). 2022. *Anthropological Theory for the Twenty-First Century: A Critical Approach*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London: pp. 405 - 409.

Week 2 (Jan 15): Historical Materialism vs. Meaningful Action

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology: Part I," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (1845-46). Start reading from bottom of page 155 on: 1. History. (skim 155-175; focus on 176-200)

Max Weber, "Introduction" and "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism," in *The*

Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1905)

Week 3 (Jan 22): Solidarity and Reciprocity

Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Intro., Bk. 1 Chapters. 1 & 4, and Book 2, Chapter 7 Selections ([1912], 1995).

Émile Durkheim, “Progressive Preponderance of Organic Solidarity” and “Division of Labor in Society: Consequences,” in *On Morality and Society* (1893)

Week 4 (Jan 29): Early Anthropology and the Study of Difference

E. B. Tylor, “The Science of Culture,” (1873), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Lewis Henry Morgan, “Ethnical Periods,” (1877), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Franz Boas, “The Methods of Ethnology” (1920), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Week 5 (Feb 5): Structure and Function (British Social Anthropology)

Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*, Introduction & Chapter 1 (1952).

Malinowski, Bronislaw, *A Scientific Theory of Culture*, (1960), Selections.

Optional/Skim: Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Introduction to *African Political Systems* (1940).

+++ Week 6 (Feb 19): No Class because of Lunar New Year Vacation +++

Week 7 (Feb 26): The Social Subject (American Cultural Anthropology)

Margaret Mead, Introduction to Coming of Age in Samoa, in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (1928)

Ruth Benedict, “The Individual and the Pattern of Culture,” in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (1934)

Zora Neale-Hurston, *Mules and Men*, (1935), Selections/Audio.

++ Posting of questions for take-home-exam (due on Wednesday, March 4 by midnight) ++

Week 8 (Mar 5): History, Colonialism, and the Other

Asad, Talal, Anthropology & the colonial encounter (1973), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Hau'Ofa, Epeli, "Our Sea of Islands," in: *A new Oceania: rediscovery our sea of islands*, edited by Vijay Naidu, Eric Waddell and Epeli Hau'Ofa, 1993.

Wolf, Eric, "Europe and the People without History" Introduction. (1982), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Bolles, A.L., Gomberg-Muñoz, R., Perley, B.C., Brondo, K.V. (eds). 2022. *Anthropological Theory for the Twenty-First Century: A Critical Approach*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London:

- 6.2 "Knowing the Oriental", Edward W. Said

Week 9 (Mar 12): Symbolic Anthropology

Victor Turner, "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual," in *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (1967).

Mary Douglas, "Secular Defilement," in *Purity and Danger* (1966).

Week 10 (Mar 19): Interpretive Anthropology

Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" and "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973), in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Week 11 (Mar 26): Anthropology on Trial / A Better Anthropology

Bolles, A.L., Gomberg-Muñoz, R., Perley, B.C., Brondo, K.V. (eds). 2022. *Anthropological Theory for the Twenty-First Century: A Critical Approach*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London:

- 6.1 "Learning to Be an Anthropologist and Remaining "Native", Beatrix Medicine;
- 9.3 "What Did You Do Today? Notes from a Politically Engaged Anthropologist," DÁna-ain Davis
- 9.4 "Fieldwork in Shared Spaces: Positionality, Power, and Ethics of Citizen Anthropologists in Southern Africa," Heike Becker, Emile Boonzaier, and Joy Owen

In class movie: Anthropology on Trial (1983)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LBEgyWScdmA>

Week 12 (Apr 2): Post Structuralism, Power and Practice

Mauss, Marcel, "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 70-88.

Michel Foucault, "Docile Bodies" in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975)

Pierre Bourdieu, "The Berber House" in *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, ed. By Low and Lawrence-Zuniga (2003).

Week 13 (Apr 9): Writing Cultures and Situated Knowledges

James Clifford, "Partial Truths." *Writing Culture*, (1986). in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*

Bolles, A.L., Gomberg-Muñoz, R., Perley, B.C., Brondo, K.V. (eds). 2022. *Anthropological Theory for the Twenty-First Century: A Critical Approach*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London:

- 5.3 "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage," Renato Rosaldo;
- 5.4 "Writing against Culture," Lila Abu-Lughod;
- 9.1 "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," Donna Haraway

Week 14 (Apr 16): Gender and Power

Zimbalist Rosaldo, Michelle, "Women, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," (1974), in *Women, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

Bolles, A.L., Gomberg-Muñoz, R., Perley, B.C., Brondo, K.V. (eds). 2022. *Anthropological Theory for the Twenty-First Century: A Critical Approach*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto Buffalo London:

- 7.1 "Introduction to The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State: In the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan, by Friedrich Engels," Eleanor Burke Leacock
- 7.2 "Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship," Sylvia Junko Yanagisako and Jane Fishburne Collier;
- 7.3 "Excerpt from Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society," Ifi Amadiume

Week 15 (Apr 20 – Monday, 6:30 pm – Make Up class): The Ontological Turn and New Materialisms

Latour, Bruno, "How to Resume the Task of Tracing Associations," "Action is Overtaken," and "On the Difficulty in Being an ANT," in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (2005)

Ingold, Tim, "Knowing from the Inside [selection]," in *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture* (2013).

+++ Posting of questions for take-home-exam (due on April 29th by midnight) +++