

Prof. John Galaty
Leacock 724 (398-1336)
Hours: MW 2:15-3:15 p.m.

ANTH 355, Winter Term 2008
Stewart Biology S3/3
Class: MW 3:35-4:55 p.m.

Theories of Society and Culture

This course explores theoretical issues and perspectives in anthropology that in one way or another have come to “define” the discipline. Unlike the linear approach to schools of anthropology, pursued in the History of Anthropological Theory course, this theory course examines debates that recur; the tension found in theoretical controversies persists. For this reason, the course also introduces a dialogue between classical theorists and more contemporary contributors, with the aim of conveying both the richness and continuing relevance of earlier anthropologists and the fact that the most exciting of recent theory still addresses earlier work.

Through topical units, the theory course addresses the following issues: Should anthropology be a scientific or interpretive discipline? What is the observable ‘reality’ to cultural and social life? Can cultures be compared and how? Is cultural relativism valid and if so does it leave us ‘unmoored’, without enduring values or standards? Do human rights transcend cultural verities and collective or indigenous rights? What enduring impact does anthropology’s colonial roots have on the discipline? How has the practice of ethnography affected the nature of anthropological understanding? Is the localization and integrity of culture a thing of the past, or perhaps never was? What is the ground for the ‘authority’ given to ethnographic reporting? Does the identity of the reporter affect the legitimacy of the report, and is ‘native’ anthropology privileged? How has the State influenced the state of culture and how has culture influenced the workings of the State? Are cultures localized or intrinsically hybridized and translocal? What affect has globalization had on local cultures, and how has the dispersal of cultures influenced global realities? Given its importance, we give special attention to the work of Clifford Geertz.

At the same time, the course will examine four major debates that have preoccupied the discipline over the last few decades, involving serious criticism of major theorists: Margaret Mead, Napoleon Chagnon, Marshall Sahlins, and Richard Lee. In each case, a sub-set of the class will read, present, and debate materials by those anthropologists, their critics, and if available their responses. These controversies involve not just the research addressed but major issues in anthropology, regarding field-based research practices and the analysis and interpretation of results in the light of theory. Each debate is linked to a relevant ethnographic film. About two weeks after each Debate, Debate Reports are due. Late assignments are penalized by half a grade a day (for example, a paper one day late would go from an A to A-).

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/> for more information). On how to avoid plagiarism, consult <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/>.

Assessment:

Mid-Term Exam, Feb. 20th, 25%
Debate Presentation, 10%
Debate Report, 25% (due about 2 weeks after the debate)
Final Exam, 30%
Participation, 10%

Texts available for purchase in Paragraph Bookstore: (1) Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Stanford UP, 1988; (2) Course Pack; readings with * =reference only.
HAT= *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, P. Erickson & L. Murphy, 2006;
AT= *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History*, R. McGee & R. Warms, 2000.

Theories of Society and Culture

SYLLABUS, WINTER TERM 2008

Jan. 7. Introduction to the course.

Part I. Society and Culture: Concepts, Perspectives, Comparison. Relativism.

Jan. 9. Unit 1. Concepts of 'society' and 'culture'

Tylor, E., *The Science of Culture*, 1873; AT: 27-41.

Durkheim, E., What is a Social Fact? *Rules of the Sociological Method*, 1895; AT:87-93.

Jan. 14. Unit 2. Scientific and interpretive approaches to culture.

Plato, 'The Simile of the Cave', *The Republic*

Hunt, R., A Scientific Cultural Anthropology? Ch. 1 In *Beyond Relativism: Rethinking Comparability in Cultural Anthropology*, 2007: 1-14.

Geertz, C., Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture, In *the Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973: 3-30.

*Geertz, C., Blurred Genres, Ch. 1, In *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, 1983: 19-35.

Jan. 16. Unit 3. Can cultures be compared?

Hunt, R., Ch. 2, Challenges to Comparability; Ch. 10, We Can Compare Apples and Oranges, In *Beyond Relativism: Rethinking Comparability in Cultural Anthropology*, 2007: 15-28; 155-163.

Geertz, C., "From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding, Ch. 3, In *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, 1983: 55-70.

Jan. 21. Unit 4. Is cultural relativism absolute?

Boas, F, The Methods of Ethnology, 1920; AT: 134-141.

Benedict, R., The Individual and the Pattern of Culture, 1934; HAT: 130-143.

Geertz, C., Ch. 1, Being There: Anthropology and the Scene of Writing, *Works and Lives*, 1988: 1-24.

Geertz, C., Ch. 5, Us/Not-Us: Benedict's Travels, *Works and Lives*, 1988: 102-128.

Jan. 23. Film #1: Margaret Mead and Samoa (1988, 51 min., GN671.S2M37RP A-V)

Jan. 28. Debate #1: Relativism under Attack: Margaret Mead vs Derek Freeman

Mead, M., Introduction, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, 1928; HAT: 124-129.

Freeman, D., *Margaret Mead and the Heretic*, 1983/1996; Ch. 18, The Samoan Ethos; Ch. 19, Mead's Misconstruing of Samoa; Ch. 20, Towards a More Scientific Anthropological Paradigm: 269-302.

Jan. 30. Repositioning on cultural diversity and values

Geertz, C., Anti Anti-Relativism, In *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, 2000: 42-67.

Schweder, R., Cliff Notes, In *Clifford Geertz by His Colleagues*, 2005: 1-9.

& Discussion

Part II. Rights and Wrongs in Global and Colonial Perspectives

Feb. 4. Unit 5. Anthropology's choice: Indigenous cultural and human rights

Silverman, E., Anthropology and Circumcision, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33: 419-445, October 2004.

Herskovits, M., Statement on Human Rights, *American Anthropologist*, 1947, 49(4): 539-543.
American Anthropological Association, Declaration on Anthropology and Human Rights, 1999
(<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/humanrts.htm>)

Guest: Dr. Caroline Archambault, lecture & discussion on rights

Feb. 6. Debate #2: Anthropological Ethics & the Yanomami: Chagnon vs Tierney

Tierney, P., *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon*.

N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000; Intro. & Chs. 1-3, xxi-xxvii, 3-35.

Borofsky, R., Yanomami: *The Fierce Controversy and What We Can Learn From It*, Univ. of California Press, 2005; Ch. 1, The Controversy and the Broader Issues at Stake; Ch. 2, Chagnon and Tierney in their own Words; 13-34.

*Chagnon, N., Yanomamo: *The Fierce People*, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968/1977.
American Anthropological Association, Referendum on Darkness in El Dorado & Danger to Immunization Campaign, 2003 (<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/humanrts.htm>)

Guests: Dr. Caroline Archambault & Prof. Edouardo Kohen, to adjudicate debate

Feb. 11. Film #2: The Feast (1970; 29 min., Green VHS F022); The Axe Fight (1989; 30 min., F2520.I43A9).

Tierney, P., *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon*.

N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Co., 2000; Ch. 6, Filming the Feast; Ch. 7, A Mythical Village: 81-122.

Guest: Prof. Edouardo Kohen, discussion leader

Feb. 13. Unit 7. Culture in Colonial and Postcolonial Perspectives

Cooper, F. & A. Stoler, eds., Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda, Ch. 1 In *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997: 1-55.

Asad, Talal, ed., 1973, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Intro. & Ch. 4.

Trouillot, M. Anthropology and the Savage Slot: the poetics and politics of otherness. In *Recapturing Anthropology*, ed. R.G. Fox, 17-44.

*N. Thomas, *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel and Government*, 1994; Ch. 2, Culture and Rule: Theories of Colonial Discourse: 33-65.

Guest: Mr. Pascal Gaudette, lecture/discussion on anthropology and colonialism.
Debate #1 Report Due

Feb. 18. Unit 8. Rhetorical strategies of cultural (re)presentation

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., The Nuer of the Southern Sudan, 1940; AT: 187-204.

Geertz, C., Ch. 3, Evans-Pritchard's African Transparencies, In *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, 1988: 49-72.

Rosaldo, R., From the Door of His Tent: The Fieldworker and the Inquisitor, In *Writing Culture*, 1986: 77-97.

Feb. 20. In Class Mid-Term **Debate #2 Report Due**

Feb. 25, 27. [Study Break, No Classes]

Part III. Ethnography as a Site of Knowledge

March 3. Unit 9. Ethnographic practices and anthropological understanding

Malinowski, B., The Subject, Method and Scope of This Inquiry, In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, 1922; HAT: 171-186.

Geertz, C., Ch. 4, I-Witnessing: Malinowski's Children, *Works and Lives*, 1988: 73-101.

Clifford, J., *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1997; Ch. 3, Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology: 52-92.

March 5. Film #3. Off the Veranda (Malinowski, 1984, 52 min., GreenVHSS015 p. 4)

March 10. Unit 10. Ethnography as travelogue and philosophical reflection

Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, 1955/1973; Ch. 6, The Making of an Anthropologist; Ch. 20, A Native Community and its Life-Style; Ch. 22, Virtuous Savages; Ch. 38, A Little Glass of Rum: 51-60, 178-197, 215-229, 383-393.

Geertz, C., Ch. 2, The World in a Text: How to Read 'Tristes Tropiques', *Works and Lives*, 1988: 25-48.

March 12. Debate #3: Ethnographic legitimacy, or 'Who can Speak?'; about Hawaiian Views of Captain Cook, for example? Sahlins vs Obeyesekere

Obeyesekere, G., *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1992; Preface, Part I, Captain Cook & the European Imagination, Part VIII, Myth Models in Anthropological Narrative: xvii-xxi, 3-22, 177-191.

Sahlins, M., *How 'Natives' Think: About Captain Cook, For Example*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995; Introduction, & Epilogue, Historiography or Symbolic Violence?: 1-15, 191-198.

*Sahlins, M., *Islands of History*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985; Ch. 4, Captain Cook; or the Dying God: 104-135.

*Geertz, C., The State of the Art, In *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics*, 2000: 89-142; commentaries on Sahlins/Obeyesekere debate, and on Clifford's work.

March 17. Unit 11. Ethnographic reality effects and authorial authority

Clifford, J., Introduction: Partial Truths, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, J. Clifford & G. Marcus, eds., 1986: 1-26.

Clifford, J., On Ethnographic Allegory, In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, J. Clifford & G. Marcus, eds., 1986: 98-121.

Barthes, R., The Reality Effect, In *The Rustle of Language*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1989: 141-148.

Part IV. The Displacement of Culture and Locality Through Globalism & Transnationalism

March 19. Unit 12. Reciprocal inventions: Cultures, nations, states

Anderson, B., Ch. 1, Introduction, & Ch. 10, Census, Map, Museum, *In Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin & Spread of Nationalism: 1-7, 163-185*.

Mitchell, T., 1988, *Colonising Egypt*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press; Ch. I, Egypt at the Exhibition, Ch. 2, Enframing: 1-62.

Scott, James C., *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1998; Introduction; Ch. 1, Nature & Space: 1-52.

March 20 (Thursday!). Unit 13. Against culture and place: Transnationalism and (de)localization

Gupta, A., and J. Ferguson, Beyond culture: space, identity, and the politics of difference, In Gupta, A., & J. Ferguson, *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997: 33-51.

Malkki, L., National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees, In Gupta, A., & J. Ferguson, *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, Durham & London: Duke Univ. Press, 1997: 52-74.

Appadurai, A., Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy, Ch. 2 In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1996: 27-47.

March 24. [Easter Weekend, No Class]

March 26. Debate #4: Cultures local and global: Are the 'Bushmen' in history?

Wilmsen, E., *Land Filled with Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari*, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989: xi-xviii, 1-32.

Solway, J. & R. Lee, Foragers, Genuine or Spurious? Situating the Kalahari San in History, *Current Anthropology* 31, 1990:109-122.

Wolf, E., Introduction, *Europe and the People Without History*, 1982; HAT: 370-386.

*Lee, R., *The Dobe !Kung*, 1984.

Debate #3 Report Due.

March 31. Film #4: Bushman's Secret (2006; DVD, 65 min., #57AP4373)

April 2. Unit 14. Anti anti-culture and place: Localization and emergent identities

Wilson, T., & H. Donnan, eds., *Border Identities: Nation and state at international frontiers*, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998 Ch. 1: 1-30.

Escobar, A., Culture sits in places: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of localization, *Political Geography* 20 (2001): 139-174.

Ewing, K., The illusion of wholeness: Culture, self and the experience of inconsistency, *Ethos* 8, 3:25:1-278.

April 7. Unit 15. Globalization encompassed through cultural complexity

Friedman, J., Simplifying complexity: assimilating the global in a small paradise, In Olwig, K. & K. Hastrup, eds., *Siting Culture: the sitting anthropological object*, NY: Routledge, 1997: 268-291.

Friedman, J., From roots to routes: tropes for trippers, Mn, 2001: 1-15.

Sahlins, M., What is Anthropological Enlightenment? Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century, *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* 1999, 28: i-xxiii.

April 9. Unit 16. Summary, Conclusion, Discussion, Review

Geertz, C., Ch. 6, Being Here: Whose Life Is It Anyway? In *Works and Lives*, 1988:129-149.

Debate #4 Report Due.