

ANTH 308
Political Anthropology
Winter 2021
REMOTE

Tuesday and Thursday 11:35-12:35

Lecture Location: Zoom

<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/81366653883?pwd=WGphb0RYWnNCSnZwbFV3NnFqRUNpdz09>

Discussion Location: Zoom

Before January 26, each student will be assigned to a discussion group. You will receive a zoom link for the discussion session to which you have been assigned.

Professor Katherine Lemons

Email: katherine.lemons@mcgill.ca

OH: Friday 1pm-3pm on zoom:

<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/81367981892>

Teaching Assistant

Cynthia Kreichati

OH: Tuesday 3-4pm on zoom:

<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/88153710965?pwd=ajM1aFFtVGlkQjVjaDBnWS9rN3JoUT09>

Course Description

Cultural anthropology, in a broad sense, is the study of human beings: their social networks, cultural formations, ways of communicating, varieties of religious and ethical commitments, not to mention their interactions with non-humans. Since the founding of the discipline, one of the questions anthropologists have encountered is how to study politics. As we will see in this class, anthropologists have come up with a variety of sometimes contradictory answers to the questions of what politics is and how it might be an object of anthropological study.

We will begin the course by looking at some of the earliest contributions to the subfield of political anthropology in the 1940s. We will then work with some of the major topics and themes that political anthropologists of the last decades have taken up, including the state—both colonial and postcolonial; political economy; power; gender; race and racism; policing; and political movements. Our primary engagement with each topic will be through readings in anthropology; however, we will also discuss some texts in social and political theory that inform the anthropological literature.

Draft Syllabus: subject to minor changes

Underlying our class this semester is the question: what does political anthropology teach us about how to think with and in our current political moment? The class is not “applied,” and it is not designed to address policy questions. It seeks, instead, to acquaint students with concepts from the history and present of political anthropology. The course challenges students to consider how and whether these concepts can travel, and what they can help us to understand about contemporary situations. Throughout the course, we will also ask about the distinctions between the work of political anthropology and that of politics.

Remote Learning

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, this class will be taught remotely. In an effort to make remote learning as enjoyable and effective as possible, and to limit screen fatigue, we will have fewer hours than usual spent together “live.”

The class meets Tuesday and Thursday. Once a week (usually **Tuesday**) I will deliver short (20-25 minute) lectures live on zoom. I will record these lectures and upload them to the MyCourses site. Following the lecture, I will take questions live and from the Zoom chat; the Q&A will not be recorded. Students will also be required to attend discussion sessions; they will be able to sign up for these before January 26. Students who are absolutely unable to attend the discussion can fulfill this requirement with a writing assignment for any discussion session they miss (500 words). Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be posted on MyCourses.

Class components

Lectures

Professor Lemons will deliver lectures and take questions on Zoom most Tuesdays from 11:35-12:35. Students are all strongly encouraged to attend these live sessions. For those who cannot attend, lectures will be recorded and available on MyCourses. The Q&A at the end of the lecture will not be recorded.

N.B. Sometimes lectures will be replaced by on-line lectures or interviews. These are noted in the course outline. The links are available in the course outline.

The lecture may sometimes be replaced by a podcast. If this is the case, students will be notified in advance and the podcast will be uploaded before the day of class.

Discussion

Professor Lemons and the TA will hold required discussion regularly throughout the semester, as indicated in the course outline. Discussions will cover the week’s readings and the lecture material. Discussions will not be recorded to allow students to speak freely.

Assignments and Requirements

Your performance in this course will be evaluated based on several different kinds of work. This is to give students with different strengths and learning styles the chance to do their best, while pushing everyone to engage course material in a variety of ways.

Discussion Session Attendance (10%)

Each student will be assigned to a discussion session, which will meet more or less weekly throughout the term. Attendance in discussion sessions is required. Only if you are absolutely unable to attend, you may receive credit for this part of the course by submitting a 500-word written assignment for each discussion you miss. Detailed guidelines will be available on the MyCourses site before discussion sessions begin. Discussion sessions will not be recorded.

Discussion Session Preparation (20%)

Prior to each discussion session, students must upload a summary of the readings and lecture to be discussed that week (200-250 words). The summary should be posted to MyCourses in the appropriate folder by 4p.m. the day before your discussion session. The summary should conclude with a question that you would like to talk about during the session. The question may seek to *clarify* a concept or argument, to propose or ask about an *interpretation* of the course material, or it may be something you would *ask the author* of the texts, if you could. Discussion questions will not be graded but will receive credit for completion. Late submissions will not receive credit.

Interview Question and justification (15%)

You will watch and listen to a number of interviews with anthropologists about their work during the course. We will then have the opportunity to collectively discuss one of the books we are reading, Dr. Alpa Shah's *Nightmarch*, with the author. Your discussion group will be responsible for coming up with one substantive question for Dr. Shah. The question will include context that explains its importance, how it relates the book to another topic or text/s discussed in class and a clearly-formulated question for Dr. Shah (total about 800 words). These will be submitted prior to Dr. Shah's visit to class.

Take-home Midterm Exam (25%): Posted February 17, due February 24

The midterm exam will cover material covered in reading, lectures, and discussions. It will focus on comprehension and analysis.

Comprehensive Final Take-Home Exam (30%): Date TBA

The final exam will be comprehensive, giving students the chance to demonstrate their knowledge of material covered throughout the course. This exam will cover readings, lectures, and topics covered in discussion.

Extensions and Lateness

Only Professor Lemons can grant extensions for valid, documented reasons. Please see her as soon as you foresee an issue completing an assignment on time. Late Midterm and Final

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assignments will lose one-third of a grade per day (A becomes A-) unless the student has received an extension from Prof. Lemons in advance of the deadline. Late discussion preparation summaries and late interview assignments will not receive credit.

Office Hours and Communication

Professor Lemons and the TAs have office hours every week, and you are always welcome to drop in. You need not have a questions about a specific assignment; you may wish simply to come talk about a reading you liked or that troubled you, for academic advising, to learn more about the anthropology major or minor or for other reasons relating to class. We look forward to getting to know you this semester.

Professor Lemons and the TA, Cynthia Kreichati's, office hours are indicated at the beginning of the course outline.

Required Readings

The following book is available for purchase at the Libarie Paragraphe (2220 Avenue McGill College; ph. 514-845-5811). You can purchase your book at the store, call 514-845-5811 or email paragraphbooks@paragraphbooks.com to arrange curbside pickup or visit the B2C site <https://paragraphbooks.com/collections/textbooks> which has a textbook section. The book will be under ANTH 308 beginning in January but should already be at the bookstore in December

✦ Shah, Alpa. 2019. *Nightmarch*. University of Chicago Press.

All other readings will be made available on the class MyCourses website.

Class Schedule

1. Beginnings

Tuesday, January 12. Lecture. Introduction to Political Anthropology

Preparation (listen):

Alpa Shah. "India's Redbelt." BBC. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b00s7dvr>

Thursday, January 14. Lecture. The Oxford Origins.

Preparation (read):

Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1940. Preface. In *African Political Systems*. Oxford University Press. Meyers Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, eds.

E.E. Evans-Pritchard. [1940]. Nuer Politics: Structure and System. In *The Anthropology of Politics*. Joan Vincent, ed. 2009. Blackwell Publishing. Pp. 34-38.

Asad, Talal. 1970. The Kababish Arabs. Power, Authority, and Consent in a Nomadic Tribe. London. Hurst & Company, pp. 1-10.

Tuesday, January 19. Lecture. The Manchester School.

Preparation (read):

Gluckman, Max. "The bridge": analysis of a social situation in Zululand. In *The Anthropology of Politics*. Joan Vincent, ed. 2009. Blackwell Publishing. Pp. 53-58

Frankenburger, Ronald. "The Bridge" Revisited. In *The Anthropology of Politics*. Joan Vincent, ed. 2009. Blackwell Publishing. Pp. 59-64.

Thursday, January 21. Discussion (entire class)

2. The State

Tuesday, January 26. State Formation. No lecture. Instead, watch:

Scott, James. "How Grains Domesticated Us," Lecture given at SOAS, January 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QO__r8Q0bmU

Thursday, January 28. Lecture. What is a State?

Preparation (read):

Mitchell, Timothy. 1999. "Society, Economy, and the State Effect." In *The Anthropology of the State*. Sharma, A. and A. Gupta, eds. Blackwell Publishing (2006). Pp. 169-186.

3. Borders and Sovereignty

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Tuesday, February 2. Lecture. Borders and Language
Thursday, February 4. Discussion

Preparation (read):

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera*. Aunt Lute Books. Chapters 1, 2 & 7.

Simpson, Audra. 2014. [Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States](#). Duke University Press. Chapter 5

4. Ideological State Apparatuses

Tuesday, February 9. Lecture. Ideology.
Thursday, February 11. Discussion

Preparation (read):

Althusser, Louis. 2006 [1970] "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." In *The Anthropology of the State*. Sharma, A. and A. Gupta, eds. Blackwell Publishing (2006). Pp. 86-111.

5. Repressive State Apparatuses

Tuesday, February 16. No lecture. Instead listen:

Laurence Ralph, Professor of Anthropology, Princeton University, interviewed by Jen Shannon, on Sapiens
<https://www.sapiens.org/culture/police-violence-and-the-pandemic/>

Thursday, February 18. Discussion. Race, Gender, and Repressive State Apparatuses

Preparation (read):

Razack, Sherene H. 2000. "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder Pamela George." In *Race, Space, and the Law : Unmapping a White Settler Society*, edited by Sherene Razack, Between The Lines, 2000. Pp. 121-156.

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM POSTED ON MYCOURSES WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

6. Political Economy

Tuesday, February 23. Lecture. The Communist Manifesto
Thursday, February 25. Discussion

Preparation (read):

Marx, Karl. The Communist Manifesto. <http://mcgill.worldcat.org/oclc/794670865>

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READING WEEK

7. Political Economy: Socialism and Capitalism

Tuesday, March 9. No lecture. Instead listen to:

Derderian, Beth. 2020. "Socialism, Spies, and Serendipity: Katherine Verdery and Kristen Ghodsee on Anthropology and Epistemic Change." AnthroPod, *Fieldsights*, November 15. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/verdery-ghodsee>

Thursday, March 11. Discussion

Preparation (read):

Verdery, Katherine. "After Socialism." In Nugent, David, and Joan Vincent. 2004. *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*. Blackwell Companions to Anthropology, 2. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub.

Tuesday, March 16. No lecture. Instead, listen to:

New Books Network interview by Aparna Gopalan with Tania Li, Professor of Anthropology, University of Toronto.
<https://newbooksnetwork.com/tania-li-lands-end-capitalist-relations-on-an-indigenous-frontier-duke-up-2014/>

Thursday, March 18. Discussion.

Preparation (read):

Li, Tania. 2014. *Land's End : Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Book Collections on Project Muse. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapter 5.

8. Resistance

Tuesday, March 23. Lecture

Preparation (read):

Shah, Alpa. 2020. *Nightmarch: Among India's Revolutionary Guerillas*. University of Chicago Press. Parts I, II.

Thursday, March 25. No class. Instead, read:

Shah, Alpa. 2020. *Nightmarch: Among India's Revolutionary Guerillas*. University of Chicago Press. Parts III, IV & V.

Tuesday, March 30. Discussion. Prepare questions for Dr. Alpa Shah

Preparation (read):

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Shah, Alpa. 2020. *Nightmarch: Among India's Revolutionary Guerillas*. University of Chicago Press. Parts VI & VII.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS DUE WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31

Thursday, April 1. Discussion with Dr. Alpa Shah, Associate Professor of Anthropology, the London School of Economics

9. Politics of Identity

Tuesday, April 6. Lecture

Thursday, April 8. Discussion

Preparation (read):

Haider, Asad. 2018. *Mistaken Identity Race and Class in the Age of Trump*. Verso. Chapters 1, 3 and 6.

10. Politics of Anthropology

Tuesday, April 13. Lecture. Conclusions: Political Anthropology Today

Preparation (read):

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2003. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot" in *Global Transformations : Anthropology and the Modern World*. 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM

Other Class Policies

I seek to make the learning environment inclusive and respectful for all participants. Thus, violent or harmful language on discussion boards, in chats, or in discussions as well as in user names or visual backgrounds may be cause for disciplinary action.

In the interest of clarity, please keep your microphone muted during the live zoom sessions until the instructor indicates that it is your turn to speak. We will discuss appropriate uses of the Zoom chat during the first meeting.

If you experience barriers to learning in this course do not hesitate to discuss them with me or with the Office for Students with Disabilities: <https://www.mcgill.ca/osd/>

Accommodations are possible for students who experience barriers to learning—including disabilities or medical conditions but also inadequate internet access or living situations that make participation in live discussions difficult or impossible. **Students who need accommodations should contact me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as a barrier arises.**

If you have an ongoing mental health concern or one that arises during the semester and that interferes with your coursework, contact me as soon as you are able. You should also contact Counseling and Psychological Services (<http://www.mcgill.ca/counselling/home>) for a preliminary appointment.

Please let me and the other students know your preferred pronoun.

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 www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the instructor's or the university's control, the content and/or evaluation methods for this course may change.