

ANTH 352

History of Anthropological Theory

Fall 2020

Lecture Times: Tuesday/Thursday 1:05-2:25

Lecture Location: ONLINE VIA MYCOURSES AND ZOOM

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Description and Objectives

This course is an introduction to the history of anthropological thought, from early writings to the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. In it, we will read essays, articles, and books that have shaped anthropology in its founding moments and that have continued to mark anthropological practice today. Our aim is not to simply to become familiar with historically important texts, but to reflect on the arguments, debates, and struggles that have defined the discipline of anthropology at certain historical moments and to consider how these contestations continue to shape the discipline today. We will, thus, pay attention to anthropology's questions and how they change. As we do this, we will think about what makes a canon: what gets included and what does not? How do criteria of inclusion change? We will also see how the discipline has canonized writing by scholars who did not think of themselves as anthropologists and how the work of these scholars both was and remains formative to the discipline.

As we learn about the history of anthropological theory, we will also actively inquire into the possibilities of the concepts we encounter. One way we will do this is by following specific keywords through the semester. Our aim will be to trace the permutations of several critical anthropological concepts and to ask how these concepts continue to be useful for anthropological reflections today. Classes will include (1) weekly lectures, followed by less structured discussions, by groups or as a whole, who interpret readings and analyze keywords; (2) several discussion of films about key theorists, which should be watched by each student before class sessions; and (3) formal discussions held by two discussion groups every two weeks, of major issues raised by pairs of two weekly units.

Although the course is organized chronologically and with a view to touching on the different traditions of thought that have comprised anthropology as an academic discipline, it is not a complete survey of anthropological theory. By the end of the course, students will have a firm grasp of the history of social theory, including the ability to place thinkers in the context of debates and trends in anthropology. Students will, furthermore, hone their critical and analytical skills.

Evaluation

1. Active Participation (50%)

This is a challenging course, with a lot of reading. It is therefore even more important than usual for students to actively participate by doing all assigned reading *before each session*, paying attention to every lecture, and taking careful notes on material presented and discussed. Students also have three different types of activities designed to help them to participate actively in class, even in internet mode, and to learn the material thoroughly: response papers, discussion sessions, and a keyword group.

1.1 Response Papers (10%)

Every week, students will write a 200-word response paper that reflects on the material we have covered that week. The aim of the response papers is for students to jot down their thoughts, comments, and questions on any of the readings we have done that week and/or any of the discussion or lecture material. Response papers are due each Friday at 6p.m. on MyCourses. During our discussion sessions, you may be asked to briefly comment on your response paper of the week.

Some ideas for the response papers: reflect on a passage (even on just one important sentence) from one of the readings covered; reflect on a question or comment from the lecture or discussion; reflect on the main argument of a class reading; draw connections between readings and other course materials and events in the news or everyday life outside of class. The one thing you are not to do is summarize: we assume you have read each piece and are interested in hearing about the thoughts you have in response to the piece, linked to the line of discussion we are having in class.

1.2 Discussion Sessions (attendance and contributions) (10%)

The class will be divided into two groups (Group A and Group B) in the second week of class (September 15). Every two weeks an online discussion session for Groups A and B, marked by * in the syllabus, will meet via Zoom. Attendance in discussion sessions is mandatory and we will take attendance. Sometimes you will work on your keywords during these meetings (see below), discuss questions posed on the syllabus, participate in small group work and/or provide an interpretation of the readings. Discussion of Films may be held by the Discussion Groups, by the Keyword Groups, or as a whole.

Group A (with Prof. Galaty);

Group B (with Maryam Roosta)

1.3 Keyword Group: 30% (10% for posts, 10% for statements, 10% for presentation) Each student will participate in a small keyword group. As part of this group, you will follow and reflect on your assigned keyword throughout the semester, meeting via Zoom or other social media. Keyword Groups will pursue specific tasks:

a). Keyword Discussion Boards (10%). Each keyword group will have a discussion board on the MyCourses site. Each member of the group is expected to post at least two times on the discussion board each week. These posts may be citations,

observations, thoughts, arguments about where the keyword fits in that week's readings. You can think of this as a repository of material on your keyword.

b). Statement on Keywords (10%). Beginning in Week 2, one student from the group (a different student each week) will post a 200-word statement about the keyword as it pertains to that week's course material. These statements will prove helpful as you pull together your final keyword presentation. Ideally, each student will write 2 of these posts throughout the semester. Each group will post a statement whether or not there is a discussion session that week.

c). Keyword presentation (10%): on Tuesday, December 1, Keyword groups will have 10 minutes to give a presentation on their keyword. The presentation will be a brief analysis of the trajectory of your keyword in anthropological theory. It must be well-organized and presented, and it must both offer an analysis of the keyword and raise some questions about the keyword and what it helps us to see about anthropological theory. What is the relevance of this keyword now? How is it analytically useful?

2. Take-home mid-term (20%)

The Mid-Term will consist of two questions, selected from three choices, answered in no more than 2 double-spaced typewritten pages. The exam is take-home and open book and it will cover the material in the first half of the course (Weeks 1-6). The exams should be uploaded to myCourses by 6pm on Sunday, October 18.

3. Final Take-Home Exam (30%)

The format of this take-home exam will be the same as the midterm. Students will respond to three questions, out of four choices, each no more than 2 double-spaced type-written pages. The exam will be take-home and open book. It will focus on the latter half of the course (Weeks 7-12), but may include material from the first half of the course/ The due date of the exam will be set by the exam office.

McGill Policies

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

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)

Course Material

All course materials that are required or suggested on the syllabus are available through a link to library resources on the syllabus or as a PDF uploaded to the MyCourses website ("PDF"). Under myCourses, look under Content to find the 'SYLLABUS' with live links, and under 'CLASS UNITS AND SESSIONS' to find daily sessions and readings.

Schedule

Thursday, September 3

LECTURE: Introduction

Understanding anthropology's past; the social and economic conditions for the emergence of anthropology; history 'in itself' versus 'history for us'; history of ideas, of thinkers, of practices, and of writings; anthropologists as ethnographers and as writers, anthropology as experience and as narrative; anthropological 'genres', metaphors and tropes; anthropology as science, as history and as description.

UNIT 1. EARLY 'ANTHROPOLOGY'

Trade, empire and Anthropology; ancient, medieval, renaissance & enlightenment perspectives on human nature and the exotic; reference to works by Herodotus ("The Libyan Tribes", *The Histories*), Lucretius ("Sociology", *On the Nature of the Universe*), Ibn Khaldun ("The Bedouins", *The Maquddimah*), and Montaigne ("On Cannibals", *Essays*); narrative forms and dominant tropes in ethnographic description (metonymy, metaphor, synecdoche, irony); describing exotica versus exoticising descriptions; understanding others, the Other, and the constitution of selves; narrative distance between ethnographers and their subjects/objects; cultures as wholes, early science and the notion of relativism.

Tuesday, September 8

LECTURE: 'Anthropology' before Anthropology

Required:

Montaigne, Michel de. [1580] 1965 *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

*Chapter 30: Of Cannibals. PDF

OR <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/3399232>

Thursday, September 10

LECTURE: Enlightenment thinking on what we now know as 'Anthropology'.

Required:

Kant, Immanuel. [1772-1773] 1978. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.

Translated by Victor Lyle Dowdell. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

*Preface (pp. 3-5); and Part 2: Anthropological Characterization; especially C. On the Character of Nations (pp. 174-182); D. On the Character of Races (p. 182); E. On the Character of the Species (pp. 182-193). <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/62132927>

UNIT 2. TRAVEL, DISCOVERY AND KNOWLEDGE

Does the evolutionary perspective build in a 'savage slot' carried forward in Anthropology? What function does the notion of 'the primitive' play? If evolution as a framework for interpreting different sorts of societies seems no longer credible, how should we analyze the steps humans have taken in changing their modes of subsistence and social orders? Can 'stages' be mapped onto existing societies, and why not? If Anthropology is a science of diversity, can it avoid concepts of 'otherness'? What is the significance of travel

and distance for ethnographic observation and conceptions of diverse social orders? How do preconceptions influence knowledge gained in travel?

Tuesday, September 15.

LECTURE: Travel, Exploration and the Creation of Knowledge: Otherness from 'Madness' to the 'Savage Slot'.

Required:

Fabian, Johannes. 2000. *Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Introduction 1-9; Chapter 8: Making Knowledge 180-209; Epilogue 271-283 PDF

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/49570325>

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2003. Anthropology and the Savage Slot: the Poetics and Politics of Otherness. In *Global Transformations Anthropology and the Modern World*. New York Palgrave Macmillan: pp. 7-28. PDF.

Suggested:

Appadurai, Arjun. 1986. Theory in Anthropology: Center and Periphery. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (28:2), 356-361. PDF

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/4669531986>

Thursday, September 17.

*Discussion of how the image of a 'savage slot' relates to contact through exploration.

UNIT 3. SOCIAL EVOLUTION

Evolutionary assumptions and the comparative method; the notion of the "primitive"; the social and cultural conditions of evolutionist thought; assumption of the "psychic unity of mankind"; history versus evolution; the logic of patriarchal and matriarchal theories; the totemic paradigm; independent invention and diffusionism; evolutionism as integrative and as hierarchical; the comparative method and the concept of survivals; armchair versus field methods; Spencer and the 'organic' metaphor of society; biological versus cultural evolution. Darwinian selection and gradualism vs human agency.

Tuesday, September 22.

LECTURE: Evolutionism as a Method and a Framework for thinking.

Required:

Tylor, Edward B. [1871] 1891 *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*. London: J. Murray.

* Preface; Chapter 1: The Science of Culture. PDF

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/881360282>

Darwin, Charles. [1871]. *The Descent of Man*. London: Watts

Ch. I, Evidence of the Descent of Man from Some Lower Form, pp. 153-164.

Ch. XXI. General Summary and Conclusion, pp 582-590.

https://go-gale-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/ps/i.do?p=NCCO&u=crepuq_mcgill&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CBHDRYN311245338

Thursday, September 24.

LECTURE: From Evolution to Revolution: Morgan and Marx.

Materialist philosophy; early Marx, Hegelianism and humanism; mechanism of social change: selection, gradualism and revolution; the Marxist philosophy of history and social evolution; later Marx: materialism and social determination; Marx the revolutionary; Marxian influences on Anthropology. Morgan's influence on Marx and his activist role in supporting indigenous rights.

Required:

Morgan, Lewis Henry. 1878. *Ancient Society, or, Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*. New York: H. Holt.

*Preface; Chapter 1: Ethnical Periods; final page of book.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/45950/45950-h/45950-h.htm>

Marx, Karl [1846/1932] 1978. German Ideology: Part 1, pp. 146-200. In Tucker, Robert C., Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: Norton. PDF
HSSL HX39.5 M375 1978

UNIT 4. FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIAL THOUGHT

The contribution of ethnology to sociological thought; 'elementary' forms of social life and totemic theory; notions of the social and the nature of Society; the role of ideas and the nature of facts; conceptualizing non-Western societies through 'organic' versus 'mechanical' solidarity; gift exchange and reciprocity in society; sociological categories and social action; theories of industrial and non-industrial societies; forms of 'meaningful' social action; 'ideal types', interpretive understanding.

Tuesday, September 29

LECTURE: Elementary Forms of Thinking: Durkheim and the Annales School.

Required:

Durkheim, Emile [1912] 1995 *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Translated by Karen Fields. New York: Free Press. *Introduction; Book one, Chapter one; Conclusion. PDF

Thursday, October 1.

LECTURE: How ideas shape society, economy and history

Required:

Weber, Max [1905] 2001. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Routledge. HSSL Reserve BR115 C3 W413 2002b.

*Part I (Chs. 1-3); Part II (Ch. 4-5), PDFs

UNIT 5. OFF THE VERANDA AND INTO THE FIELD

The field-work method; the functionalist revolution, emphasizing cultural context, pragmatism & fieldwork; fieldwork seen as a test and 'trial' and as method; the anthropologist as scientist versus interpreter; analytical perspectives versus the 'native's point of view'; the influence of psychoanalytic theory on Anthropology.

Tuesday, October 6.

LECTURE: The Ethnographic Turn in Anthropology: Fieldwork in Melanesia

Required:

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge. Introduction: The Subject, Method and Scope of this Inquiry; PDF; Chapter XVII: Magic and the Kula. PDF

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/252938177>

Thursday, October 8. Film discussion (Watch film before class)

Strangers Abroad 4: 52 min. [Off the verandah : Bronislaw Malinowski, 1884-1942](#);

Format: eVideo; **Publication year:** 1986.

Film Discussion: how field-work methods impacted on anthropological theory.

UNIT 6. RECIPROCITY AND SOCIETY

Against kinship and reproduction, collective conscience, or shared ethics is the notion that reciprocity lies at the heart of the social order. Mauss contrasts 'the gift' to commodity exchange, and Levi-Strauss extends his analysis into the role of reciprocity in forging links between groups and communities. This idea is the basis for understanding networks and commodity flows.

Tuesday, October 13.

LECTURE: Exchange as a Social Foundation: Giving, Receiving, Reciprocating

Required:

Mauss, Marcel. [1925] 1990. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: Norton. B. HSSL Reserve GT3040 M3813 2000
Chs., I, II: pp.1-45.

Suggested:

Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. [The Gender Of the Gift: problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia](#), Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988. GU490 S79
Ch. 2. A Place in the Feminist Debate. DOI:10.1525/california/9780520064232.003.0002

Thursday, October 15.

Discussion of reciprocity in Malinowski, Mauss and Marx.

Review of Units 1-6. Exam made available.

MIDTERM DUE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18 AT 6PM

UNIT 7. RELATIVISM AND THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

Franz Boas. The totemic illusion; from difference to unity in world culture; critique of the comparative method, the emergence of particularism and the historical method; cultural relativism and its limits; relativism of knowledge versus relativism of values; importance of 'context'; anthropology as 'contextualist'; relativism as an ironic perspective.

Tuesday, October 20.

LECTURE: Boas: Founder of 'Cultural Anthropology', German to American Thought

Required:

Boas, Franz. 1982. *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology: 1883-1911*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

"The Aims of Ethnology": 67-71; Anthropology: 267-282. PDF

Thursday, October 22. Film Discussion (Watch film before class)

[Franz Boas : The Shackles of Tradition](#) by [CTE \(Carlton\) Limited.](#), [Films for the Humanities & Sciences \(Firm\)](#), [Films Media Group](#).

Film Discussion: What field experiences influenced Boas' views on cultural relativism?

UNIT 8. THE INTEGRATION OF CULTURE (LANGUAGE & PERSONALITY)

Divergent strands of the Boasian tradition; cultural versus social anthropology; concepts of culture; culture the individual and personality; psychological and psychoanalytic Anthropology; relativism and cultural critique; relativism and comparison; questions of the 'form' of culture.

Tuesday, October 27.

LECTURE: Cultural Patterns and Integration in Benedict, Sapir and Mead.

Required:

Benedict, Ruth. [1934] 2005. *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Mifflin.

*Acknowledgements; Introduction (by Boas); Chapter 1: The Science of Custom; Chapter 8: The Individual and the Pattern of Culture. PDF

Sapir, Edward. 1927. The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society. In Erickson, Paul A. and Liam Donat Murphy, eds., *Readings for A History of Anthropological Theory*. University of Toronto Press, 2017. PDF

Suggested (to watch on your own):

Film: *Strangers Abroad 5: Coming of Age* (Mead), 52 min. Films on Demand platform: <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/809233275>

Thursday, October 29.

*Discussion: How can patterns of culture be discerned and described?

UNIT 9. MID-CENTURY BRITISH SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The centrality of kinship in British anthropology; notions of structure, form and process; the relevance of colonialism in the development of Anthropology & of Anthropology for colonial practice; exoticism & the romantic vision of Anthropology. Structural-functionalism; explaining the 'irrational' (e.g. Azande Witchcraft); segmentary theory; realism as a mode of description.

Tuesday, November 3.

LECTURE: British Social Anthropology: From Structure to Function

Required:

Radcliffe-Brown. 1940. On Social Structure. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*. 70(1):1-12.

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/7586580583>

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. [1950] 1962. Social Anthropology Past and Present. In *Essays in Social Anthropology*. London: Faber and Faber. PDF

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1962. Anthropology and History. In *Social Anthropology and Other Essays*. New York: Free Press. PDF

Thursday, November 5. Film Discussion (Watch film before class)

[Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard : strange beliefs](#) by [Films Media Group.](#), [Films for the Humanities & Sciences \(Firm\)](#), [CTE \(Carlton\) Limited](#). eVideo; 2012.

Film Discussion: Empirical vs abstract models in British theorizing of the social order.

UNIT 10. FRENCH STRUCTURALISM

The notion of 'structure' and 'system'; equilibrium concepts of culture and society; linguistic and semiotic models of culture; cultural 'codes' and cultural performance; conscious versus unconscious models; the atom of kinship; culture as transformations, oppositions and mediations, and structuralism as philosophy and science; hot vs. cold societies; myth vs history; savage mind & wild thought; cultural 'bricolage'; nature versus culture; totemic operators; the tragic vision of lost worlds in dismal tropics (*tristes tropiques*).

Tuesday, November 10.

LECTURE: Structure and Transformation: The French Moment

Required:

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. The Scope of Anthropology. *Current Anthropology* 7(2): 112-123. PDF

Suggested:

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1974. *Tristes Tropiques*. New York: Atheneum.

Available through HathiTrust, with restrictions:

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/643582872>

Debaene, Vincent and Caroline Vial. 2013. Lévi-Strauss: What Legacy? Yale French Studies, No. 123. *Rethinking Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009)*: pp. 14-40. PDF

Thursday, November 12.

*Discussion: British vs. French concepts of 'structure'.

UNIT 11. GENDER IN ANTHROPOLOGY

The critique of gender bias in social anthropology and the rise of feminist perspectives and methods of inquiry; is gender a category of social reality or a perspective? And what role should power play in the feminist definition of the object of anthropological study?

Tuesday, November 17.

LECTURE: Sex and Gender in Feminist Anthropology

Required:

De Beauvoir, Simone. [1949] 2011. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier. New York: Vintage: HQ1208 B352 2011

Vol 1: Introduction; Part 2 (History), Chapter 1; Vol 2: Part 1 (Formative Years), Chapter 1 (Childhood). <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/705522798>

Abu-Lughod, Lila. [*Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*](#), Univ. of California Press, 1993; "Introduction": 1-42.

Suggested:

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge

Unlimited access e-book: <https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/63679948>

Rosaldo, Michelle, and Louise Lamphere, eds. 1974. *Women, Culture, and Society*.

Available through HathiTrust, with restrictions:

<https://mcgill.on.worldcat.org/oclc/890898>

Thursday, November 19. Film Discussion (Watch film before class).

Daughters of de Beauvoir by Penny Foster, Format: eVideo, 1990. Watch film before.

Film Discussion: the epochs of feminist theorizing in the work of De Beauvoir, and how it has changed anthropology.

UNIT 12. RACE, ETHNICITY AND COLONIALISM

Is Anthropology an intrinsically colonial enterprise, or a source of critique of the colonial order? How should we interpret cultural relativism in the context of the encompassment of diversity within colonial orders, and what role does universalism of values, talent, development process and social autonomy play in comprehending differences of power within the colonial order? What role did violence play in anti-colonial struggles and resistance? Is the depiction of local societies performing culturally comprehensible roles supportive of neo-colonialism or supportive of peasant resistance to the urban bourgeois order? In other words, is anthropology an emancipatory or a reactionary discipline?

Tuesday, November 24

LECTURE: Race, Gender, Colonialism and Anthropology

Required:

Asad, Talal. 1973. *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. New York: Humanities Press; Introduction: a review of the New Left Review critique of Social Anthropology. GN17 A57 1973

Fanon, Franz. 1967. *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press. *Racism and Culture. PDF

Suggested:

Fanon, Franz. [1961] 2004. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press. On Violence; Colonial War and Mental Disorders. HSSL DT33 F313 2004. PDF

Thursday, November 26

*Discussion of how notions of race, gender and class interact in the context of colonialism and anthropology.

UNIT 13. REPORTS AND REFLECTIONS

Tuesday, December 1.

Keyword Group Presentations; Course Conclusion and Final Review.

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION

DUE DATE ACCORDING TO FORMAL EXAM SCHEDULE