

**ANTH 480**  
**Wednesday 2:30 – 5:30**  
**Leacock 834**

**Anthropology of Economic Relations**  
**Capitalism, Consumption, and Charity**

How do people circulate money by making, spending, and giving it away? How are goods valued and exchanged? How might we define “economy” in broad terms as a set of relations? Taking a broadly cultural anthropology approach, this course explores how capitalism and economics structure modern lives and social processes. It includes classic economic anthropological texts but focuses most closely on contemporary societies. Together we will examine the role of consumption, technology, and globalization. We will ask how money and exchange contribute to how people experience power, connection, and conflict. Throughout, we will also pay close attention to the moral and gendered aspects of economic processes, including people’s aspirations for a future with more wealth or more justice -- or both.

Course goals are that students will

1. Become conversant with how anthropologists have studied economics, especially within cultural anthropology. They will be able to better weigh the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches.
2. Gain a sense of the historical and contemporary contours of economy and capitalism in different regions of the world, as well as their relation to colonialism and globalization
3. Better understand connections between capitalism, charity, and ethics

**Course Requirements**

**Attendance and Participation**

**25%**

This is a seminar that relies on your participation. You should complete all readings before class and take notes to which you can refer in class. Please come prepared to actively engage with your peers. Active attendance and participation will comprise 20% of your final grade. Missing two or more classes will negatively impact your grade. \*If you must miss a class due to illness or a death please do not worry: just come speak to me as soon as you can.\* If you are a shy student who does not like to speak up in class, I am also happy to work with you to create alternatives. Please contact me.

20% of the grade is based on active engagement (as per above)

5% of the grade is based on your contribution to our group discussion board & conversation. For this 5%, you must post twice on the board at any point during the semester. Each post should include one relevant item you have found online (it could be a news article, blog or Instagram post, website, film, podcast, etc.). It must also include a couple lines explaining why you thought the item was interesting in light of the week's readings. It doesn't have to be about the same subject per se, but it should have some relevance for that week's themes: what did the readings make you think of? What did you encounter in your usual online media? The idea is to apply the themes from our class in different contexts, including in our own lives.

## **Assignments**

### **1. Reading Response & Review (750 words)**

*20% (10% x 2)*

Twice during the semester, you will submit a Reading Response & Review paper.

1. Choose ONE secondary source from the endnotes for any reading (required or recommended) from the week in question. You may choose a monograph or article, but it must be a secondary source – that is, written by an academic.
2. Read that source and write a cogent summary of ONE theme/issue pertinent to our reading. Then clarify how the initial source from our syllabus used this secondary source: Did the author miss part of the argument? Did the author use it in ways that its author would not likely have anticipated? Did the author concur with or dispute its findings? *\*You do not have to respond to these questions per se, but this should give you a sense of what you could do.*

Your review is due the day we discuss the reading you have chosen. I expect that you will share what you found about the secondary source with the class.

### **2. Final Paper or Project (55%)**

*Proposal = 5%*

*Presentation = 15%*

*Paper = 35%*

These papers or projects are your opportunity to engage further with the themes in the class. If you write a paper it will be 2500-3000 words. If you choose to submit a research-creation project, please come to me and we'll discuss the parameters. Regardless, you must have a clear theme and well-developed arguments that are substantiated by relevant material. Whether a paper or a project, you must use a minimum of FOUR secondary sources from outside our class. You may use more secondary sources too, of course, along with readings from our syllabus.

*Proposal:* You will hand in a 1 page proposal. See below.

*Presentation:* You will each have a chance to present in class during the two final weeks of the semester. Presentations will follow an academic conference format (10 minutes each), with a short Q&A after a set of 3-4 presentations. See more details below about creating a coherent presentation.

*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/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information)*

## **Class Policies**

### *Class meetings*

We will meet on Zoom during our regular time slot on Wednesdays. Sitting for 3 hours in front a screen is very tough so we will limit our sessions to 2 hours (2:45-4:45pm), with a short break built in. At times, I may record short Zoom lectures ahead of time, to which you must listen before our class.

One exception are student presentations (Week 13/14). We will use our whole session on April 7. We will also add on 1-2 hours for presentations that week or on Wed April 14, finding a time that works for everyone (think of it as taking some of those 1 hours we didn't use up during the semester and putting them toward presentations!).

### *Communication*

Please contact me via email. I appreciate when students address emails to me with "Dear Dr. Kaell" (or "Dear Professor Kaell"), use full sentences, and the sign their names. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours, however if you write after 5pm or on weekends it make take me a little longer. I do not respond to substantive questions about essays or other written work over email. For those kinds of questions, please email me to make an appointment. State the reason for your appointment in the email so I can estimate the amount of time we'll need. Please raise general questions about class materials during discussion sessions or on myCourses. You can also email me questions about the material in advance of our discussion sections.

### *Due dates*

*Late work will be penalized 5% per day and will not be accepted after 7 days. I am happy to provide extensions for assignments, if you have a medical or death certificate (as per University guidelines). If this is case, please do not hesitate to let me know. There will be no extensions after an assignment's due date has passed unless there were truly unforeseen circumstances, so please make sure*

*to speak to me before the due date - the earlier, the better – and we'll work out a new deadline.*

*If you have been identified as requiring accommodations by the Office for Students with Disabilities, please email me as soon as possible. The Office for Students with Disabilities can be reached at 398-6009 (online at [www.mcgill.ca/osd](http://www.mcgill.ca/osd)).*

### *Academic Integrity*

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/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information)

### *French Policy*

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.

### *Citation formats*

For materials I have assigned: Include last name and page number. For outside materials: any citation format is fine (e.g. MLA or Chicago), but please keep it consistent and *always include* the following information: *author, title, publisher, date*. Avoid lengthy URLs. Include a tiny URL if needed.

### *Required Readings*

All readings are available as pdfs uploaded to the course website. The website also includes a course reader, which is a single pdf containing all course readings. I would encourage you to print this out and use it as you would a print course reader, if you find it difficult to read so much online.

### *Recommended Readings*

- If you want to read directly from the classic texts, focus on those listed here. The ones marked by \* will be posted on the course site. These and the others are also available online in full.
- Week 2: \*Karl Marx, 1995 [1887]. *Capital: Volume 1*. Chapter 1 (p27-59).
- Week 2: Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1905]
- Week 3: Marcel Mauss, [1925]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 1990)
- Week 4: \*Georg Simmel, "Money and Commodity Culture [1906]," in *Simmel on Culture* (London: Sage, 1997), 233-258.
- Week 10: \*Nancy Munn, *Fame of Gawa* (Duke UP, 1986), 3-20.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Week 1: Assessing Key Terms**

## January 13

- Keith Hart & Chris Hann. "Introduction," *Economic Anthropology* (Polity, 2011) 1-17.
- Frederic L. Pryor, *Capitalism Reassessed* (2010), Chapter 2 (pp. 6-19).
- Margaret Kohn & Kavita Reddy, "Colonialism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2017). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/colonialism/>  
Intro and section 1, skim sections 2, 5. \*Do not worry if you know all the thinkers mentioned. Focus on the big ideas.\*

## Week 2: *Commodity & Accumulation*

### January 20

- David Harvey, *A Companion to Marx's Capital, Volume 1*. (London: Verso, 2010), 15-54.
- Anthony Giddens, "Introduction" to Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1905] (Routledge, 1976, 2005), 1-18. Focus on p4-13 laying out basic tenets of Weber's argument.
- Sasha David, "Self for Sale: Notes on the Work of Hollywood Talent Managers," *Anthropology of Work Review* 28(3) 2007: 6-16.

## Week 3: *The Gift*

### January 27

- Marcel Mauss, [1925]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Rutledge, 1990), 1-23.
- C.A. Gregory, "Gifts to Men and Gifts to God: Gift Exchange and Capital Accumulation in Contemporary Papua," *Man* 15(4) 1980: 626-652.
- Deborah Durham, "Soliciting Gifts and Negotiating Agency: The Spirit of Asking in Botswana," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (1) 1995: 111-128.

## Week 4: *Money*

### February 3

- Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (UNC Press, 1980), 109-111, Chapter 6 & 7.
- Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch. "Introduction: Money and the Morality of Exchange," In *Money and the Morality of Exchange* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1-30.
- David Graeber, "Beads and Money: Notes Toward a Theory of Wealth and Power," *American Ethnologist* 23(1) 1996: 4-24.

## Week 5: *Charity*

### February 10

- Andrea Muehlebach, "The Catholicization of Neoliberalism: On Love and Welfare in Lombardy, Italy," *American Anthropologist* (115) 2012: 452–465.
- Amira Mittermaier, "Beyond compassion: Islamic voluntarism in Egypt," *American Ethnologist* 41(3) 2014: 518-531.

### **Week 6: Consumption**

**February 17**

- Daniel Miller, "Making Love in Supermarkets" in *A Theory of Shopping* (Cornell UP, 1998), 15-72.
- Anne Meneley, "Consumerism," *Annual Review of Anthro* 47 (2018):117–32.
- Hillary Kaell, "Materialism and Consumption: Circulating Christian Love with American Things," *Christian Globalism At Home* (Princeton UP, 2020), 128-156.

### **Week 7: Finance**

**February 24**

- Bill Maurer, "Finance" in James Carrier (ed), *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology* (2005), 178-193. Start at "Definitions, Biases..."
- Annelise Riles, "Too big to fail" in *Recasting Anthropological Knowledge*, Jeanette Edwards and Maja Petrovic- Steger, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 31-48.
- Caitlin Zaloom, "Ambiguous numbers: trading technologies and interpretation in financial markets," *American Ethnologist* 2003: 258-272.

Proposal Due

**\*\*March 1-5: Reading Week\*\***

### **Week 8: Debt**

**March 10**

- David Graeber, *Debt: The First Five Thousand Years* (2011), Chapter 12 (pp.361-387).
- Daromir Rudnyckyj, "Economy in practice: Islamic finance and the problem of market reason," *American Ethnologist* 41, 1 (2014): 110–127.
- -----, *Beyond Debt: Islamic Experiments in Global Finance* (Chicago 2019), 1-21.
- Hadas Weiss, "Homeownership in Israel: The Social Costs of Middle-Class Debt," *Cultural Anthropology* 29(1) 2011: 128-149.

### **Week 9: Labour**

## March 17

- Julie Chu, *Cosmologies of Credit: Transnational Mobility and the Politics of Destination in China* (Duke 2010), Chapters 1,2,3 (pp.31-139).
- Optional FILM: *American Factory* (on Netflix)

## Week 10: *Value*

### March 24

- Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things," in ed. Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things* [1986] (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 64-94.
- Daniel Miller, "The Uses of Value," *Geoforum* 39 (2006): 1122-1132.
- Richard Foster, "Commodities, Brands, Love and Kula: Comparative Notes on Value Creation," *Anthropological Theory* 8(1) 2008.: 9-25.

## Week 11: *Buying Bodies*

### March 31

- Jean and John Comaroff, "Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony," *Am. Ethnologist* 26 (1999): 279-303.
- Daisy Deomampo, "Transnational Surrogacy in India: Interrogating Power and Women's Agency," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 34 (2013), 167-188
- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Global Traffic in Human Organs." *Current Anthropology* 41 (2000): 279-303.

## Week 12: *Other Futures*

### April 7

- Eric Helleiner, "Think Globally, Transact Locally: Green Political Economy and the Local Currency Movement." *Global Society* 14 (1) 2000: 35-51.
- Loretta Ieng Tak Lou, "Freedom as ethical practices: on the possibility of freedom through freeganism and freecycling in Hong Kong," *Asian Anthropology*, 18:4 (2019), 249-265.
- Lana Swartz, "What Was Bitcoin, What Will It Be? The Techno-Economic Imaginaries of a New Money Technology." *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 32 (4) 2018: 623-50.

Check out <https://ilot-montreal.org/>

## Week 13/14 – Student Presentations

### April 14 & 16 (TBA)

### April 28 : [Paper Due](#)

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## Assignments

### 1. Reading Response & Review (750 words)

20% (10% x 2)

Twice during the semester, you will submit a Reading Response & Review paper. It is due the day we discuss the reading you have chosen. (Email it to me just before class). I expect that you will share what you found with the class during our discussion. You will choose which 2 weeks you want to complete this task. I will not remind you so it is up to you decide and then mark it down for yourself.

To complete the review:

1. Choose ONE secondary source from the endnotes for any reading (required or recommended) from the week in question. You may choose a monograph or article, but it must a secondary source – that is, written by an academic.
2. Read that source and write a review paper that had two main components:
  - Offers a cogent summary of ONE theme/issue in the article that is pertinent to our subject matter for the week.
  - Clarifies how the initial source from our syllabus used this secondary source: Did the author miss part of the argument? Did the author use it in ways that its author would not likely have anticipated? Did the author concur with or dispute its findings? *\*You do not have to respond to these questions per se, but this should give you a sense of what you could do.*

Make sure you just choose one theme. DO NOT summarize all facets of the article.

It is helpful and often necessary to begin by providing background (‘the big picture’) about context for the fieldwork site outlined in the article, as well as the author’s background and perhaps other works they have written. It is a good way to give people an idea of the theoretical thrust of the article. However, this kind of summary at the outset should be limited to about a paragraph. Try to limit these details at the outset to just what is needed for comprehension and then work in more details organically as part of your discussion about how the article’s findings support or complicate the reading assigned in our class.

The objective for this assignment is to get a feel for how academics build on, and dispute, each other’s work as they are ‘in conversation’ around themes and topics. You might find, for example, that the reading you chose and the secondary source complement each other, but provide contrasting field work sites/examples. You might find that the reading you chose and the secondary source are at odds. Or you might find that they are largely synoptic (looking at the same field site and coming up with very similar conclusions).



\*\*One exception to this assignment concerns 'classic' texts (i.e. those published before the ~1980s). If you want, you can flip the assignment and find an article that uses that classic source (it must refer to the source recommended or required in our class, not other writings by the same author). The same principles of the assignment apply.

## 2. Final Paper or Project

Due Dates

**24 February (Proposal)**

**~ 14 April (Presentation)**

**28 April (Paper)**

**Directions:** This is your opportunity to explore a topic of interest to you that bears some relation to the course. The assignment has 3 parts, which I describe below.

For your paper you must analyze ONE primary source. A primary source is a text that is NOT written by an academic (so it could be, e.g., a historical document, a novel, a newspaper article, a website, an interview, an image. You could also use a case study produced by a scholar, assuming it is 'raw data' and not part of their analysis). You must choose one but you can focus on a grouping (say, of newspaper articles about a particular topic).

*You may work in pairs. Please speak to me and we can work out the terms.*

### Proposal

About one page and can be in point form. I just want to make sure you're on the right track. You should get full marks if you answer the following:

- (a) What is the primary source you will examine?
- (b) What themes will you engage? (This can change but give me a sense of what interests you; \*\*CONNECT these themes to what we've been discussing in this course or will be discussing in the weeks to come.
- (c) What secondary sources have you identified? You must list 3.
- (d) Optional: your proposed organizational structure

NB: A PRIMARY source is produced by the people in question. It is the material being analysed. A SECONDARY source is written by a scholar, giving context or analyzing a primary source.

NB: to get full marks on your proposal, you must include a full citation for the secondary sources and primary source. That means you must include AUTHOR, TITLE, PUBLISHER, DATE.

When choosing a primary source, ask yourself if there is a topic or person in the course about which you'd like to read more or a topic that interests you that we aren't covering. Once you have a topic in mind, there are a few ways to identify a good primary source. Try the following:

- Google! (always a good bet)
- Academic journals (try search engines like ATLA, EBSCO or JSTOR – type in key words. A good journal to check out is Religion and American Culture. If there is a pertinent article, look at their footnotes. What primary sources are they using?
- Look in textbooks on our subject matter. Textbooks sometimes list primary sources to read. Some are called “Documentary readers” and are made up of a series of primary sources.
- If you want to close read an image, try Google images or art books and art gallery websites.
- Archives' websites (and archives.org) have accessible primary sources too.

## **Presentation**

One of the objectives of this seminar course is to improve your ability to communicate material and ideas orally to a small audience. To this end, I ask you to make a short (10 minute) presentation of your paper. It will also give you a chance to organize your thoughts and get feedback.

Effective oral presentation depends on three things:

- Your ability to select and synthesize the key substance of your paper
- Effective preparation so you can communicate in a relaxed, fluid and clear way
- Appropriate use of audio-visual material or written handouts

1. Selection and synthesis: Remember you have only 10 minutes to tell your audience about what may sometimes be quite long and complex ideas. Don't try to cover everything. Use your judgment to pick out the key ideas, describe a key study and its findings. Your ability to evaluate critically what you have read is one of the criteria upon which you will be marked. It will also be a useful stimulus for discussion with the rest of the group.

It is often helpful to begin by providing a bit of background material (“the big picture”) on the content. Spend about 2 minutes on this context, just in terms of what is needed for your audience to understand your paper. Avoid summarizing general historical or contemporary issues and definitely do not summarize articles you have read.

2. Preparation: Prepare your talk so that you can engage the interest of your audience. It is greatly preferable if you can avoid reading a prepared script verbatim because this usually makes it harder for the audience to follow. Instead, try to have summary notes (or cards) that contain the key points you wish to convey and speak about these extemporaneously (you may wish to use a powerpoint presentation instead of written guides). This will make your talk much more interesting, and will also allow you to monitor your audience's reactions, to judge whether you need to speed up (rarely), slow down (probably!), or repeat something (occasionally). With a couple of rehearsals before the seminar you should be able to gauge the duration of your presentation reasonably accurately. During your presentation, remember to talk more slowly than you would in normal conversation.

3. Presentation aids: Key ideas or research data are often best presented visually, on either in a powerpoint presentation or a written handout (which you can email ahead of time). Don't try to cram too much information on each slide, and make sure you write (or type) using large, legible script. Careful use of such visual aids will also help you to speak 'on' your material rather than reading directly from a card or piece of paper. Don't be afraid to invite your audience to participate, especially at the end of your presentation where it can be valuable if you finish with some provocative questions or comments to which they can respond.

## **Paper**

Your paper should be 2500-3000 words (10-12 pages), not including endnotes/footnotes. It is OK if you are under or over by 150 words or so but more than that and it will affect your grade.

To analyze the primary source, you will choose a particular theme or question. In order to situate your text and answer the question, you must refer to minimum FOUR secondary sources (that is, written by academics about the topic/period/etc).

One of your secondary sources can be from our syllabus. Three must be of your choosing. You can, of course, choose more than 4 sources.

In order to write a successful paper, please think about the following:

- Situate the primary source within its historical and cultural framework: what led to its creation? What impact does it have? How does the author or creator of the primary source situate it vis-à-vis the issues of the day?
- How does this source engage themes in our class?
- What does the source say about the theme/question YOU are posing, with help from secondary sources? Is it indicative of a trend? Is it an outlier to a broader trend? Focus only on those parts of the primary source that help you prove the point you are trying to make in the paper.

\*If you do not know how to access library resources (include online databases), please speak to one of the reference librarians. They hold regular hours to help students – it's their job to help you become a better researcher!

### A Note on Format

Please read the following carefully and do not email about citation format. If something is not clear about formats, the answers are online.

All assignments should be written in 12 pt font, Times New Roman, double spaced, normal margins. Source citations can be in any format (in text, footnotes, or endnotes). You must include a List of Works Cited at the end.

I am not picky about citation format but you must keep it consistent. Some examples are below. In your list of works cited you must include AUTHOR, TITLE, PUBLISHER, DATE. The citations in text or in foot/endnotes must include the PAGE of the quote or idea you are citing. If this information is missing you may lose points.

Here's what a citation should look like:

In the text: (Author Last Name, date: page number). (Smith, 1998: 2). If you are referring to an idea (e.g. a central theme in the book) but not a precise page then it's (Smith, 1998).

In your List of Works:

Author, *Title*, Place of publication: Publisher, date. John Smith, *Women and Religion*, New York: Routledge, 1998.

For a chapter: John Smith, "Women and Religion," in ed. Ann Smith, *This is a Book* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 133-55.

If it is a website: Author (or organization), "Title of page/document," *Title of website*. Access date. URL.

John Smith, "Women and Religion," *United Church of Canada*, Accessed 12 Sept. 2012. [www.fsdgddhdhdhgjj.com/fsdfgd/dff](http://www.fsdgddhdhdhgjj.com/fsdfgd/dff)

*You MUST to include the author, title, date of an online source. Do NOT just copy and paste the URL*