

SOAN 361: Anthropological Theory

Spring 2014

Barnett Hall, room 2226

T/Th 10:30—11:50 a.m.

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Course Description

This course traces the development of anthropological thought from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Our emphasis will be on the *ideas* behind anthropological research—the all-important assumptions and conceptual frameworks that guide (or develop out of) data interpretation. However, we will also discuss the evolution of certain *methods* used by anthropologists, as well as the changing *styles* in which findings have been presented over the years, since these dovetail with the broader theoretical positions of researchers. Finally, we will discuss the ethics of anthropological fieldwork. Over the course of the semester, we will read extensive excerpts from classic ethnographies, learn about key figures in the discipline, and explore our own evolving reactions to the literature. As with most anthropology courses, we will also travel across continents and across time—from the Trobriand Islands of the early 1900s to the streets of San Francisco today—as we grapple with the central questions posed by anthropologists over the years.

This course can be used in your plan of study the following ways:

- It fulfills a Level 3 requirement for Anthropology majors and minors. For majors, it is intended to be taken in conjunction with Research Design (SOAN 360).
- It is an Honors Scholar course.
- It counts toward the 63-credit Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) graduation requirement.

Course objectives:

1. Understand the history of ideas and guiding principles behind anthropological inquiry.
2. Examine the connections between theory, method, and style of presentation in anthropology.
3. Interrogate your own cultural assumptions by broadening your understanding of cultural variation throughout the world.
4. Sharpen your critical thinking skills through class discussion, analysis, and essay writing on theory.

Required text:

- Jerry D. Moore. *Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists*, 4th edition (Alta Mira Press) 2012
- Gezari, Vanessa. *The Tender Soldier: A True Story of War and Sacrifice* (Simon & Schuster) 2013

Supplemental readings will be posted on the course website. Because they are available online, you don't need to buy them. These readings will be drawn from:

- Peoples, James and Garrick Bailey. "The Development of Anthropological Thought." *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (Thompson Advantage Books) 2006
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Waveland Press) 1984 [1922]
- Mead, Margaret. *Coming of Age in Samoa* (American Museum of Natural History) 1973 [1928]
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. *The Nuer* (Oxford University Press) 1974 [1940]
- Stewart, Julian. "The Great Basin Shoshonean Indians: An Example of a Family Level of Sociocultural Integration." In *Environmental Anthropology*, Michael Dove and Carol Carpenter, editors (Blackwell Publishing) 2008
- Binford, Lewis. "Archaeology as Anthropology." *American Antiquity* 1962
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books) 1973
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge) 1977
- Foley, Douglas. *Learning Capitalist Culture: Deep in the Heart of Tejas* (University of Pennsylvania Press) 1990
- Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonberg. *Righteous Dopefiend* (University of California Press) 2009

Grading:

Your final course grade will be based on:

- quizzes (25%)
- midterm (25%)
- presentation (25%)
- final essay (25%)

Quizzes: You will be given unannounced short quizzes on all of the previous day's readings once or twice a week. This means you'll need to complete the readings carefully and come to class prepared to be tested. The quizzes are mostly multiple choice, with an occasional fill-in-the-blank. I may also ask you to include a comment on the readings that can be used for class discussion that day. The average of your quiz grades (with the exception of the lowest score) will be 25% of your final class grade. There are no make-up quizzes.

Midterm: You will take one midterm (**Thursday April 3**) that will be worth 25% of your final grade. The midterm will consist of some multiple choice questions and short essay answers. It will test you on information in the readings and class lectures.

Presentation: You will do a presentation of approximately 25-30 minutes during the semester in which you offer background information on the theorist and readings for that day and help kickstart a discussion. Here are some suggestions on how to put together a strong presentation (you need not apply all of these, but I encourage you to apply as many as you reasonably can):

- Use images, video clips, quotes from other sources, as well as insights/critiques that enhance our understanding of the topic.
- Make the presentation interactive when possible by designing short classroom activities, small group activities, asking questions, or asking your peers to generate questions. These kinds of activities can help relate the abstract ideas being discussed to our own lives and our own reality.
- Draw comparisons in your presentation to other anthropologists we will have discussed in class. For example, how is Leslie White different from Franz Boas or Branislaw Malinowski? Making comparisons like these can help us better situate the theorist within the broad history of ideas in the discipline.

Altogether, the exact structure of your presentation may vary; the important thing is to offer solid contextual information that you've researched and to get everyone thinking about the topic in dynamic ways.

When preparing your presentation you'll need to get information from sources beyond the readings. Be clear about what those sources are when you present (i.e. list the sources on your Powerpoint slides or verbally cite them). You'll be graded on the clarity of the presentation, the pertinence of the contextual information you present, and the amount of outside research you did.

We will decide on the dates of the presentations the first week of class. Your grade for the presentation will be 25% of your final grade.

Final essay (10 pages): Your final essay can be one of two options:

- a) An in-depth comparison of the theoretical perspectives of two anthropologists of your choosing. You will offer background information on each, a thorough description and comparison of their positions, and analysis of their theories using both outside sources and your own opinion.
- b) An overview of a contemporary anthropological publication (a descriptive ethnography or theoretical work), in which you trace the intellectual heritage of the author. Who were the theorists who influenced that author? What schools of thought did he or she draw from? I can suggest an ethnography for you, or you can suggest one.

I'll need a brief (one paragraph) synopsis of the essay, including the names of the anthropologists and/or books you'll be analyzing by **Tuesday, March 4**, worth 5% of your grade. I'll want a more complete outline (2 pages) that includes a short list of references, worth 5%, by **Thursday, April 10**.

A hard copy of the final draft is due at 9 a.m. the last day of class (**Thurs, May 1**). It should be 10 pages long (not including a list of references) and 12-point font. Give the essay a title (although you don't have to give it a title page) and number your pages. It will be considered late and docked one letter grade if it's turned in after 9 a.m., and docked an additional letter grade for every subsequent 24 hours it's late.

Be sure to use proper citation for sources. See online department guidelines: <http://societyandenvironment.truman.edu/majorminorandforms/AQuickStyleGuideforStudents.pdf>.

Class format:

Classes will consist of a combination of short lectures, student presentations, and class activities. Be sure to take notes during lectures as you will be tested on that information.

When you come to class, I expect you to be fully engaged in the material at hand. Therefore, there are a few points of class etiquette you need to be aware of: Please do not sleep, text, or otherwise engage in any activity that is a distraction from what is being reviewed in class. Do not bring your laptops (take notes by hand). Also, be courteous and respectful when hearing other students' opinions.

This last point is particularly important since we will be hearing a wide array of perspectives during class discussions and debates, some of which you may not agree with. Keep your responses on-point and your tone professional (i.e. do not make personal attacks or belittle other points of view). Keep in mind that opposing points of view bolster discussion within a classroom. So when you hear a perspective that you strongly disagree with, consider how it may broaden, sharpen, or even change your own ideas. This process is at the core of intellectual development. Keep an open mind and you will fine-tune your thinking while fostering an atmosphere of civility.

Discussion sessions will be held nearly every class, and many of them will be led by your peers (including you). Come well-prepared for these discussions. This means a thorough reading of the assigned chapters and supplemental readings, and, every day, **at least one question/comment for discussion**. I—or your peers—will call on you during class to offer comments on the reading.

Attendance:

I don't keep attendance per se, but multiple absences can hurt your final grade significantly through missed quizzes. Given that quizzes account for 25% of your final grade, every missed quiz after your first will cost you approximately 2% of your final grade. I structure grades this way deliberately because I believe that attending class is a fundamental part of doing well in this—or any—course.

If you miss an exam or the deadline for the final paper, I'll ask for a doctor's note, court order, etc. that documents the reason for your absence. Otherwise, I won't ask for documentation.

Academic Dishonesty:

Students are expected to do their own academic work. Any student involved in plagiarism, cheating on an examination, or in any other form of academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion from the class, the student's academic program, or the University.

For more on this, as well as the University's policies on ADA accommodations and attendance, go to <http://catalog.truman.edu/content.php?catoid=1&navoid=18>.

Note: This syllabus will be subject to change. I'll notify you of any changes by announcing them in class and sending you an email.

Class readings and due dates (readings must be *completed* by the morning of the date indicated; assignments are due at the start of class on the day indicated):

Tues (Jan 14): first day of class, introductions

Thurs (Jan 16): Peoples and Bailey "The Development of Anthropological Thought"

Tues (Jan 21): Moore – Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2 (Tylor and Morgan)

Thurs (Jan 23): Moore Chapter 3 and 4 (Boas and Durkheim)

Tues (Jan 28): Moore Part II Intro (pp.55-58) and Ch. 6 (Ruth Benedict)

Thurs (Jan 30): Moore Ch. 7 (Edward Sapir)

Tues (Feb 4): Moore Ch. 8; *Coming of Age* Forward, Preface, Chs. 1-3 (Margaret Mead)

Thurs (Feb 6): *Coming of Age* Chapters 7, 10-11

Tues (Feb 11): Moore pp.107-109, Ch.10 (Malinowski); *Argonauts* pp.1-8, 49-62

Thurs (Feb 13): *Argonauts* pp.70-78; 81-104

Tues (Feb 18): Moore Ch. 12 (Evans-Pritchard); *The Nuer* Introductory

Thurs (Feb 20): *The Nuer* Chapter I

Tues (Feb 25): Moore pp. 157-159; Ch. 13 (Leslie White)

Thurs (Feb 27): (university conference – no class)

Tues (Mar 4): **synopsis due**; Moore Ch. 14 (Julian Steward); "The Great Basin..."

Thurs (Mar 6): Binford "Archaeology as Anthropology"

Mon–Fri (Mar 10-14): **Midterm Break (no classes)**

Tues (Mar 18): Moore Ch. 15 (Marvin Harris); *Cows, Pigs, Witches* pp.3-32

Thurs (Mar 20): Chagnon *The Fierce People*; NY Times "How N. Chagnon Became..."

Tues (Mar 25): Moore Ch. 19 (Clifford Geertz); Geertz “Thick Description”
Thurs (Mar 27): Geertz “Deep Play: Balinese Cockfighting”

Tues (Apr 1): Foley *Learning Capitalist Culture* Introduction, Chapters 1-2
Thurs (Apr 3): **Midterm**

Tues (Apr 8): Moore pp.261-265; Ch. 22 (Sherry Ortner)
Thurs (Apr 10): Moore Ch. 23 (Pierre Bourdieu); **outline due**

Tues (Apr 15): *Righteous Dopefiend* pp.1-23 (Philippe Bourgois)
Thurs (Apr 17): Gezari pp.1-46

Tues (Apr 22): Gezari pp.47-99
Thurs (Apr 24): Gezari pp.101-141

Tues (Apr 30): Gezari pp.143-198
Thurs (May 1): Gezari pp.199-230; **Final Essay due, 9 a.m.**