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Earth Sciences 722

**Anthropology 391: Anthropological Theory**

“I chose anthropology [as a major], since it offered the greatest opportunity to write high-minded balderdash.”  
— Kurt Vonnegut,

**Class time and location:**

MWF, 10:00 – 10:50; Social Sciences 109

**Course Description:**

Broadly speaking, anthropology is a holistic study of all possible human lifeways. It focuses both on the variation between lifeways, but also their commonalities. In order to explain both the variations and commonalities, anthropologists have formulated *theories* that can be used to critically analyze observations of people in their daily lives. Though *theory* and *ethnography* are invariably separated out in anthropological writings and discussions, they are actually two sides of the same coin. Theory is used to illuminate or explain what happens in ethnography, and ethnography provides explanatory power to theory. In short, theory and ethnography, without one another, are pretty meaningless.

This course aims to introduce students to the fundamentals of anthropological theory through seven of the most important concepts in anthropology since the 19th century: race, history, society, function, structure, gender and representation. Through lectures and discussions, we will try and understand why theory is good to think with – how different theories can give us varying insight into the same event or phenomenon, and why certain theories do a better job of explaining than others.

**Course Format:**

This course will follow an interactive lecture and discussion style format, accompanied by the occasional film or documentary in class. Readings are crucial – they are the most important part of this class. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and ask questions. You do not have to purchase any textbooks. All course
materials and information will be posted on the U of C Desire 2 Learn class website. You can link to all articles either via an html link, or via the ucalgary library website. A lecture outline for each class will be posted online immediately before the class. Only some of the supplementary video clips viewed in class will be available online.

Course Assignments and Assessment:

In addition to the readings, students are expected to complete 7 reading reflections throughout the course of the semester, take 5 surprise reading quizzes, write one in-class midterm examination, and write one final exam.

Students will be evaluated on the basis of a 100-point system, whereby:

- 7 Reading Reflections 35%
- 5 Reading Quizzes 5%
- Midterm Exam 25%
- Final Exam 35%

The final mark out of 100, will then be converted to a letter grade as follows:

- A+ 94.9 – 100%
- A 89.9 – 94.8%
- A- 84.9 – 89.8%
- B+ 79.9 – 84.8%
- B 74.9 – 79.8%
- B- 70.9 – 74.8%
- C+ 66.9 – 70.8%
- C 62.9 – 66.8%
- C- 58.9 – 62.8%
- D+ 54.9 – 58.8%
- D 49.9 – 54.8%
- F 49.8% and below

Assignment details:

Reading Quizzes:

- Students will be administered 5 reading quizzes, without advance warning throughout the semester.
- These reading quizzes will cover details about the readings for that day, to make sure that students have done the readings. For example, if you receive a quiz on the day we will be discussing Durkheim’s *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, then the quiz will cover this same Durkheim text, and no other text.
- The quizzes will consist of five multiple choice questions, handed out at the beginning of class.
- You will get the full points for each quiz (1% of your total grade) just for being present in class and taking the quiz. Even if you get a question wrong, you will still receive full points. Think of the quizzes as a type of participation grade. If you are in class to do all of the 5 quizzes, you will get a full 5% of your grade.
- The point of the quiz is to both ensure attendance, but also to practice answering multiple choice questions about theory, and to test yourself on your
reading. The multiple choice questions on the quizzes will be similar to the multiple choice questions you can expect on your midterm and on your final.

Reading Reflections:

- Students are expected to fill in the Reading Reflection form (see D2L website) for 7 weeks worth of reading – that is, they must hand in 7 forms throughout the course of the semester. You will notice that there are 9 opportunities to hand in reading reflections – you only have to give in reading reflections on 7 of those 9 opportunities. You are given a few extra opportunities to account for weeks that may be really busy and you may not have time to do a reading reflection.
- Reading Reflection forms are meant to summarize what you have learned over the course of the week, and not only clarify some of your ideas about the readings, but also act as a study reference later on for your midterm and final examinations.
- The Reading Reflection form must be printed out, filled out to completion by hand, and handed in on Monday the following week, at the beginning of class. For example, if you are doing a reading reflection for Week II, you must hand the reading reflection in on the Monday of Week III. You cannot hand in, for example, a reading reflection for Week II on Monday of Week IV. Look at your calendar in advance, pick out the reflections you will do and hand them in on their due date.
- You can only hand in paper copies of your reading reflections at the beginning of class. No emailed reflections will be accepted.
- No late reflections will be accepted. Late reflections will automatically receive a grade of zero.

Midterm exam:

- Students will be administered an in-class midterm exam (50 minutes) that will have two sections: multiple choice questions and short answer questions.

Final exam:

- Students will be administered a final exam (2 hours) during the final exam period that will have three sections: multiple choice, short answer and two short essay questions. Students will have three essay questions to choose from on the final exam. In each of the essay questions, students will be asked to answer the question while discussing 3-4 texts from the semester. Each exam question will cover different theoretical texts.

Important to consider:
1) Deferred exams are possible only for serious reasons (and the request for a deferral must be backed up with written documentation). A missed exam automatically receives a grade of zero. In the event of an emergency, the office of the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology must be contacted immediately and before the start of the exam: (403) 220-6516.

2) Students are responsible for materials covered in the readings and in the lectures. Classroom materials missed due to absences are the sole responsibility of the student.

Academic Accommodations:
The academic accommodations policy can be found at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy).
It is the student’s responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students that have not registered with the SAS are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about the academic accommodations can be found at [http://www.ucalgary.ca/access](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access).

A note on plagiarism:

Any plagiarism will automatically result in a failing grade for the submission. Any student caught plagiarizing will also be subject to additional University sanctions. Students should familiarize themselves with the Faculty of Arts’ policy on intellectual honesty:

[https://arts.ucalgary.ca/plagarismcheating](https://arts.ucalgary.ca/plagarismcheating)

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**Week I. Introductions**

**September 12: Introduction to the class**

Discussion of course outline and assignments

**September 14: What is theory? Explanatory methods – why we do it;**

No readings for today.

*In class:

September 16: “Theorizing Society”: A Closer look at the Murder of Captain Cook

No readings for today.

*In class:


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**Week II. Race, Biology and the Study of Difference**

**September 19: Predecessors: Colonialism and Race in the 19th century**


Optional: (Take a look at this and skim if you have time)


**September 21: Is race biological? The American Challenge**


**September 23: SO WHAT, Joseph Arthur and Franz? Race as Constructed**

Optional: (Take a look at this and skim if you have time)

Take a look through: http://eugenicsarchive.ca/


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III. The Logics of History and its Consequences

September 26: Predecessors: Diffusionism, Ladders of Civilization and Human Progress

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK II IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.


September 28: Society and evolution


http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?itemId=F373&viewType=text&pageseq=1

September 30: SO WHAT, Charles? Contemporary evolutionism, diffusionism and progress
Harry Truman’s 1949 Inaugural Address, also known as “The Four Point Speech.”
http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres53.html


IV. WMD I: What is ‘society’? The Collective

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK III IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

October 3: Durkheim - Structures and Solidarities in 19th century society:


http://soc100willse.voices.wooster.edu/files/2012/01/Durkheim-Div-of-Labor.pdf

October 5: Durkheim and the Collective


October 7: SO WHAT, Émile? Nationalism and Solidarity in Contemporary Europe


https://www2.bc.edu/marian-simion/th406/readings/0420anderson.pdf

Please watch the following *before class:*

**Note:** The following video contains hateful language, as well as bigoted and racially prejudiced statements. We are watching it in order to analyze contemporary notions of identity amongst certain European citizens more thoroughly.
Bjorn Hocke’s speech in Munich on the Refugee Crisis in Europe:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjlkO6hCRoc

V. WMD II: What is ‘society’? Structure

October 10: NO CLASS - THANKSGIVING

October 12: Marx: The Structure of History

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK IV IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

Marx, Karl. (1978) Selections from The German Ideology. (open online source)

October 14: Marx: Capitalist Formations


*In class: Metropolis (1927) dir. Fritz Lang

VI. WMD III: What is ‘society’? Ideology

October 17: SO WHAT, Karl? Marx and Capitalism today


***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK V IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

October 19: Weber: Taking Marx’s Camera Obscura seriously


October 21: Weber: The Elective Affinities of Protestantism and Capitalism


**VII. Rationalization and Midterms**

**October 24: SO WHAT, Max? Rationalization and Capitalism Today**

**NO READING REFLECTIONS ARE DUE TODAY BECAUSE OF THE UPCOMING MIDTERM.**

Ritzer, George. The McDonaldization of Society  

**October 26: Review for midterm**

**October 28: MIDTERM EXAM**

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**VIII. What’s your Function? (and structure?)**

**October 31: Malinowski: Stranded on an Island with nowhere to go**

**THERE IS NO READING REFLECTION DUE TODAY BECAUSE OF MIDTERM AND REVIEW.**


**October 2: Radcliffe-Brown and an elaboration of function**


**November 4: SO WHAT, Brony and Alfred? Structural Functionalism at its Peak**


**IX: Structuralism**

**November 7: Linguistic Structuralism**

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK VIII IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.***


**November 9: French Structuralism**


+ So what, Ferdinand and Claude? : In-class exercises on kinship

**November 11: NO CLASS – Mid-term Break**

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**X: The ‘structure’ of gender:**

**November 14: Male and Female as Binary Structure**

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK IX IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.***

Ortner, S. B. (1972). Is female to male as nature is to culture?. *Feminist studies*, 1(2), 5-31. (ucalgary)


**November 16: Division of Household Labour and Other Reproductive Structures**

**November 18: SO WHAT, Sherry and Michelle? Beyond the Binary**


http://www.mit.edu/~shaslang/Teaching/ColliertilTF.pdf

Optional:


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**XI: Post-structure and Post-structuralism**

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK X IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.***

**November 21: Foucault**


**November 23: Foucault**


**November 25: So what, Michel? The Performance of Gender**


*In class: Life’s a Drag (2016)*
Week XII: Beyond binaries: “Writing Culture” and Representation

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK XI IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

November 28: Is ethnography truth?

https://lcst3789.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/clifford-writing-culture.pdf

November 30: Is Male to Female as West is to East?


December 2: So what, Writing Culture?


Optional:

Week 13: The End of Theory?

December 5: Wrap-up

***READING REFLECTION FOR WEEK XII IS DUE TODAY, AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS.

December 7: Q&A Session and Exam Practice

December 9: Exam Review –
FINAL EXAMINATION: REGISTRAR’S SCHEDULE TBA