

Key Concepts in Ethnology
Department of Anthropology
Lakehead University
ANTH-2515
Winter 2015

Instructor: Frederico Oliveira, PhD
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Dates of Appointments: January 5, 2015 to April 1, 2015
Classes Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays: 11:30 am to 1:00pm (AT-1007)
Office: Braun Building (2001C)

Course Description and Objectives:

The understanding and explanation of cultural diversity worldwide is the focus of study of sociocultural anthropologists. The meaning and purposes underlying the study of different cultures has changed considerably since the origins of the discipline from the end of the 19th century until the current days. Economic interests, political agendas, ethics and intellectual commitments have informed distinct views of the so-called “object” of study in anthropology; “the Other” and how it should be approached and described. This course is intended to present the development of anthropology its theories and core concepts that inform anthropological research since the early moments of the discipline until the present. The progress of the readings and discussions is organized following the controversial debates of the discipline, including periods of transition, internal crisis and moments of theoretical and practical significance regarding the essential relationship between anthropology and cultural diversity. The successful students are expected in the end of the course to be able to:

- a) Examine some of the broader questions underlying the main theories, schools of thought and intellectual debates;
- b) Understand how anthropologists elaborate research questions and approach their data;
- c) Be familiar with scientific papers and their structural organization;
- d) Develop, at least from the introductory level, the capacity to critically look and think anthropologically about social phenomena;
- e) Enhance their abilities to critically think, read, propose research questions and write in ways appropriate to the discipline.

The course is organized around lectures and class discussions. We will go through some of the general ideas about that particular topic in the initial sessions of each week and then papers or book chapters will seek to expand such concepts or theoretical debates in the final session. Discussions will form an important part of the learning process and will revolve around current and controversial issues in anthropology. Student attendance and participation is essential.

These are some of the debates and concepts that will be addressed during the course:

- Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism
- Structure and history
- Classification and Cognition (Rationalism vs. Empiricism)
- Is Language the essence of culture?
- Are humans worlds culturally constructed?
- What is myth?
- Qualitative and quantitative research
- Universalism vs. Particularism
- Individual and society: where is the agency?
- Limitations of the comparative method
- Anthropology as science or literature?
- Alterity and the self
- Ethnography and theory
- Ethnographic authority and post-modernism
- Human rights and anthropological relativism
- Primitivism and the search for authenticity of the exotic Other

Course Readings:

Moore, Jerry D.

2012 Visions of Culture: An Introduction to Anthropological Theories and Theorists. Plymouth: Altamira Press.

In addition there are a number of articles and book chapters that are required reading and are listed below for each week. All are available electronically at the course website.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Graded assignments include the following:

Class Participation
5% of course grade

Reading Notes
20% of course grade

Seminar Facilitation
20% of course grade

Mid-Term in Class Essay
25% of course grade

Final Paper
30% of course grade

Class Participation: Reading (sometimes a lot) and attendance are critical to achieve a satisfactory grade and learning objectives in this course. Students are required to critically read all assigned materials prior to class and participate actively (in your own way) in class discussions and assignments.

Reading notes (of approximately 1-2 pages, single spaced) are required for a minimum of 8 (eight) discussion sections. Reading notes are reflections on the week's readings: statements of the argument(s), critical commentary, and discussion questions (it's not a summary of the readings). You are required to submit your notes on the second section of each week's readings. Only hard copies are accepted and only under special circumstances an extended deadline will be accepted. Here you have some tips to organize your reading notes:

Putting the work in the tradition of anthropological theory. Try to get the big picture.

What is the phenomenon being explained?

What is the explanation offered?

How does this apply to a specific observable phenomenon in social relations, in other words, what examples can you generate to illustrate the explanation offered?

With whom (or what alternative school of thought) might the author be arguing? Or, how does this explanation differ from other explanations for the same phenomenon?

Close textual reading.

Find some portions of the text you want us to discuss for close reading and interpretation.

Find portions that are difficult or unclear to you.

Find portions that you think exemplify the author's most important insights

Seminar facilitation: Throughout the semester, every week (each second section), 3 or 4 students will introduce the assigned readings and help facilitate the discussions. You will be given about 15 minutes within which to both present your ideas and facilitate a short discussion (you should be aiming for something like a ten minute presentation and five minute discussion). You may use your reading notes as a guide or you are free to read what you have written. You may depend entirely on class readings for your presentation or you may look for additional information from external sources, as long as it is clear from where you are taking others' ideas. Each student is required to participate at least 2 times in the seminar facilitations.

Mid-Term in Class Essay: Students will be given a list of essay questions in the day of the test. Normally, you will have a list of 3-4 questions and you have to choose two of them to elaborate your answers in class. There will be a handout explaining in details this assignment and providing general tips of the questions that will be given and the expected format of the essays.

Final Project: For this assignment, students will be given a list of themes to choose from in order to elaborate their final projects about a topic in anthropological theory. Each student should prepare an oral presentation to be given on March 30 or April 1. You should also organize a written paper to be delivered until April 8. The Final Paper follows the format of a research paper. This assignment allows students to develop an in depth reflection of a course topic that interests them. Students are supposed to select a subject suggested by the instructor or they may also come up with a topic and discuss with the instructor. Required length: 4000-6000 words or 10-15 pages, excluding bibliography. There will a handout explaining the details of this assignment.

Policies and Procedures:

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend all classes, and actively participate in discussions in order to earn a satisfactory grade.

Grading Policy:

Assignments will be evaluated primarily on the basis of a student's understanding of the material presented in the course. Other factors that figure in evaluation of assignments include creative and critical insight, and writing (clarity, coherence, and organization).

General Course Policies:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity.

1. Avoid disrupting class by arriving late, leaving early, and/or allowing your cell phone to sound in class. Repeated disruptions will result first in a warning and then in a 5% penalty to the student's final grade. If the student's behaviour is disturbing the learning environment of the class he/she will be asked to leave. If you have to leave early inform the instructor in the beginning of the class.
2. It is expected that students will be respectful of their fellow students, their instructor, and cultures and traditions which are not their own.
3. Plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., that belong to someone else. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. This is serious issue. Violation of the university's policy will result in a grade penalty or failure of the course. This type of violation will stay in your academic record.
4. Assignments must be delivered in on time as hard copies (email attachments will not be accepted). A late penalty of 5% will be applied for assignments handed in one day late. For each day thereafter (not including weekends and holidays), an additional 2% of your total mark will be deducted, unless there are exceptional situations and the professor is informed no less than 24 hours before the assignment is due.
5. Late-assignments must be handled to the main desk of the Department of Anthropology (on the 2nd floor of Braun Building). Students should make sure that late submissions are signed and dated by staff or security. Only hard copies are acceptable.
6. The final date to drop the course is March 6, 2015.
7. Students are responsible for taking their own lecture notes. Course outline, journal articles and book chapters will be posted online on Desire2Learn at least one week prior to the due date. All the course readings aside from the textbook will be provided as scanned PDF documents, posted on Desire2Learn.

8. The main communication tool between the instructor and students is Lakehead University's e-mail account. Students are asked to check regularly (including before the class) their LakeheadU e-mail account and Desire2Learn for unforeseen changes to the class due to weather conditions or other reasons. As a general rule, student questions sent 24 hours prior to an assignment or test will not be replied. Students can reasonably expect a response in 1-2 days. Grades are supposed to be returned to the students at the maximum period of two weeks after the assignment is delivered.

9. Students are welcome to schedule personal appointments to discuss any topic related to their academic progress or course content.

10. This syllabus is subject to minor changes during the course of the semester.

Course Schedule

Week 1:

(Jan-5)

(Jan-7)

Introduction to the Course / Film Exhibition

Week 2:

(Jan-12)

(Jan-14)

Civilization and Social Evolutionism: 19th Century Perspectives

"Edward Tylor: The Evolution of Culture" (Chapter 1, Moore)

"Lewis Henry Morgan: The Evolution of Society" (Chapter 2, Moore).

Edward Tylor: "Chapter 1: The Science of Culture" (from Primitive Culture)

Lewis H. Morgan: "Chapter 1: Ethical Periods" (from Ancient Society)

Week 3:

(Jan-19)

(Jan-22)

The Emergence of American Anthropology and the Critique of the Comparative Method

"Franz Boas: Culture in Context" (Chapter 3, Moore)

"Margaret Mead: Individual and Culture" (Chapter 8, Moore)

Franz Boas: "Limitations of the Comparative Method" (from Science Magazine)

Ruth Benedict: "The Integration of Culture" (Chapter 3, from Patterns of Culture)

Week 4:

(Jan-26)

(Jan-28)

Structural Functionalism and Its Extensions – Part 1

"Bronislaw Malinowski: The Functions of Culture" (Chapter 10, Moore)

"A.R. Radcliffe Brown: The Structures of Society" (Chapter 11, Moore)

Malinowski: "Argonauts of the Western Pacific" (Introduction)

Week 5:

Structural Functionalism and Its Extensions – Part 2

- (Feb-2) Evans-Pritchard: "Social Anthropology: Past and Present" (from Man Journal)
- (Feb-4) Evans-Pritchard: "Introduction" (from The Nuer)
Evans-Pritchard: "Witchcraft is and Organic and Hereditary Phenomenon" (from Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande)

Week 6:

Sociological Foundations of Anthropology – Part 1

- (Feb-9) Émile Durkheim: "The Organic Society" (Chapter 4, Moore)
Émile Durkheim: "Introduction" and "What is a Social Fact? (from Rules of the Sociological Method)
- (Feb-11) ***** Mid-Term in Class Essay *****

Week 7:

Reading Week

- (Feb-16)
(Feb-18) No Classes

Week 8:

Sociological Foundations of Anthropology – Part 2

- (Feb-23) Marcel Mauss: "Elemental Categories, Total Facts" (Chapter 9, Moore)
Claude Lévi-Strauss: "Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss"
- (Feb-25) Marcel Mauss: "The Gift" (Introductory and Chapter 1)

Week 9:

French Structuralism

- (Mar-2) Claude Lévi-Strauss: "Structuralism" (Moore, Chapter 17)
Claude Lévi-Strauss: "Introduction: History and Anthropology" (from Structural Anthropology, Vol.1)
- (Mar-4) Claude Lévi-Strauss: "The Effectiveness of Symbols" (from Structural Anthropology, Vol.1)
Claude Lévi-Strauss: "Four Winnebago Myths: A Structural Sketch" (from Structural Anthropology, Vol.2)

Week 10:

Marx and His Legacy

- (Mar-9) Karl Marx (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

(Mar-11) Julian Steward: "Cultural Ecology and Multilinear Evolution" (Moore, Chapter 14)
Marvin Harris: "Cultural Materialism" (Moore, Chapter 15)

Week 11: **Interpretivism and the Problem of Meaning**

(Mar-16) Clifford Geertz: "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (Erickson and Murphy, Chapter 25)

(Mar-18) Victor Turner: "Symbols, Pilgrims and Drama" (Chapter 18, Moore)
Clifford Geertz: "Deep Play: notes on a Balinese cockfight" (from Daedalus Journal)

Week 12: **On Ethnographic Authority: The Crisis of Representation in Anthropology**

(Mar-23) James Clifford: "On Ethnographic Authority"

(Mar-25) James Clifford: "Partial Truths" (from Writing Culture)
Vincent Crapanzano: "Hermes Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description" (from Writing Culture)

Week 13: **** Final Project Presentations ****

(Mar-30)

(Apr-01)

Desire2Learn

The course uses Desire2Learn for its course website. To access the course website, or any other Desire2Learn-based course website, go to the LU portal login page at <https://lakeheadu.desire2learn.com/> and log in using your LU username and password. Once you have logged in to the portal, look for the **mycourselink** module, where you'll find the link to our course website along with the link to all other Desire2Learn-based courses you are registered.

Accessibility Needs

Lakehead University is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.