BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
Department of Anthropology

ANTH 201a
History of Anthropological Thought
Fall 2014
Tu and Th 2:00-3:20

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed for graduate students at the MA level in anthropology and in related disciplines; advanced undergraduate majors and minors in anthropology are welcome to enroll but will need a consent code from the instructor. In order to focus this survey of anthropological thought over the past two centuries I have selected readings that compare different approaches to symbolic classification (e.g., totemism, cosmology, ideology) and social structure (e.g., kinship systems, residence patterns, lineages). Of particular concern are the following themes: (1) the continuous conflict between materialist and idealist explanations of cultural phenomena; (2) arguments about evolutionary and historical analyses versus synchronic and functional analyses; (3) debates about the degree of structure, integration, or patterning of sociocultural systems; and (4) methods and limitations of cross-cultural comparison. We will, mostly in discussion rather than in reading assignments, make an effort to link the discipline of anthropology to surrounding historical and institutional contexts and to illuminate the reciprocal borrowings of concepts and methods between anthropology and other scientific and humanistic disciplines.

REQUIREMENTS AND CLASS PROCEDURES: The primary requirement for this class is active, informed, and regular participation in discussions based on careful preparation of the reading assignments, including informal class presentations (40%). There are three written assignments, given at the end of this syllabus (20% each). Written assignments must be submitted in hard copy. Unexcused lateness in turning in written assignments is penalized by the loss of one-third of a letter grade for that assignment, though extensions are automatically granted for lateness beyond your control (illness, family emergency, computer failure, lost pets, transportation problem, etc.) equal to the number of academic workdays lost. The use of laptops and other portable electronic devices during class is restricted to note taking and examining assigned course materials. Because you can’t participate if you are not in the room, attendance will be considered an important part of the first “primary requirement” described above. Your registration in this course implies that you understand and will follow the university’s policies for maintaining academic integrity as outlined in Section 4 of the Rights and Responsibilities document. There will be several formal lectures during the semester; the rest of class time will be dedicated to the
presentations and discussions of the readings. I will email the class at the end of each week specifying which readings (and presenters) are scheduled for each day in the upcoming week. In general I prefer to discuss substantive aspects of the course in person rather than via email.

ORAL PRESENTATIONS: During the semester everyone will sign-up for several informal 8-10 minute presentations of the readings from the syllabus. Ideally, presentations will: (1) quickly summarize of the content of the reading (just enough to remind everyone), (2) clarify new or technical concepts or terminology, (3) suggest connection between the reading and others assigned for the same day, and (4) formulate at least two questions that you think will generate fruitful class discussion. Your presentations will be graded.

SPECIAL NOTE: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

READINGS: Assigned readings marked with * can be found on e-journal sites through OneSearch. I have placed on LATTE a number of other readings as PDFs. For some units I have also provided suggestions (smaller font) for supplementary reading, but you need to be very careful in reading these or other commentaries since they can often be more misleading than helpful. Throughout the semester I will also be posting on LATTE various handout, lecture outlines, images, and other additional materials.

ABBREVIATIONS:
AA = American Anthropologist
AJP = American Journal of Psychology
AJS = American Journal of Sociology
CA = Current Anthropology
JAFL = Journal of American Folklore
JRAI = Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland
MLN = Modern Language Notes [although this journal now uses the abbreviation as its title]

TEXTBOOKS: The following textbooks are available for purchase at the university bookstore:
Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*.
Ward Goodenough, *Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology*.
Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*.
Louis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society*.
Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*.

**Introductory Class Meeting**

*Lecture I: Why Study the History of Anthropology?*


**Unit 1: Ethnological Theory before the Darwinian Revolution**


James Cowles Prichard, Jr., "Inquiry whether the human kind contains more than one Species," *Researches into the Physical History of Man* [1813], 1-32. [Available on Google Books]


Margaret T. Hodgen, “From Hierarchy to History,” *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*.


**Unit 2: Social Evolutionism**


Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society* [1877], part I, chs. 1-3; part II, chs. 2, 7; part III, chs. 1-2, 5-6.


**Unit 3: Evolution and Reflexivity in Marxian Social Theory**

Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts of 1844*, First Manuscript: Estranged Labor, 106-119. [Note: The complete writings of Marx are available on line at Marx & Engels Internet Archive]


Karl Marx, “Forms Which Precede Capitalist Production,” *Grundrisse* [1857-1858] (ed. M. Nicolaus), 471-98 (also known as “Precapitalist Economic Formations”).
Kart Marx, “Preface,” *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* [1859].
Karl Marx, *Capital I* [1867], chs. 1-2.

Richard J. Parmentier, “Evolutionary and Critical Dimensions of Marxian Social Theory.”

**Unit 4: The Development of an Americanist Anthropology**

*Lecture II: Americanist Anthropology before Boas*

Alice Cunningham Fletcher, “Camping with the Sioux: Fieldwork Diary of Alice Cunningham Fletcher” [1881]. [Available on line]
Frank Cushing, “Notes Made during a Visit …” [1886], *Zuni: Selected Writings of Frank Hamilton Cushing* (ed. J. Green), 409-25.
Horatio Hale, “Language as a Test of Mental Capacity,” *JRAI* 21 (1892): 413-55 (skip 423-32).*

A. Irving Hallowell, “The Beginnings of Anthropology in America,” AA.*

**Unit 5: The French Sociological School**

Emile Durkheim, "Individual and Collective Representation" [1898], *Sociology and Philosophy* (ed. D. F. Pocock), 1-34.

Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* [1924], ch. 1 and Conclusion.
Marcel Mauss, “A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person, the Notion of Self” [1938], *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*, 57-94.

**Unit 6: Foundations of Boasian Anthropology**

Franz Boas, Introduction to the *Handbook of American Indian Languages* [1911], 55-69.


**Unit 7: The Flowering of Boasian Anthropology: Sociological Integration**


**Unit 8: The Flowering of Boasian Anthropology: Psychological Integration**

Edward Sapir, “Do We Need a Superorganic?” *AA* 19 (1917): 441-47.*
Margaret Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* [1936], chs. 10-16.


**Unit 9: British Anthropology before Structural-Functionalism**

*Lecture III: The Diffusionist Moment in British Anthropology*


**Unit 10: The Twin Peaks of Structural-Functionalism**


Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* [1922], ch. 1.

**Unit 11: Social Anthropology in the Wake of Structural-Functionalism**


Audrey Richards, *Chisungu*, 112-69.


**Unit 12: Structuralism**

*Lecture IV: The Intellectual Foundations of Structuralism*


Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, chs. 1, 2 and 8.


**Unit 13: The Interpretive Turn in Anthropology**

Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description,” *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3-30.


**Unit 14: Typology, Comparison, Generalization**


Ward Goodenough, *Description and Comparison in Cultural Anthropology*, chs. 1, 2, 4.

**First Essay Assignment:** Answer the following question in a well-argued, synthetic essay about six double-spaced pages long (followed by a complete bibliography of sources cited):

*Social theorists have long recognized the importance of ideas, consciousness, or cognitive categories, but few theorists agree about their character and explanatory place. Describe as precisely as you can what Marx, Durkheim, and Boas mean (respectively) by ideological forms, collective representations, and conscious or secondary elaborations. Then compare how these theoretical constructs are integrated into their overall theories of society.*

In preparing your essay you are by no means limited to the primary texts listed on the syllabus.

**Second Essay Assignment:** Answer the following question in an essay about six double-spaced pages long (followed by a complete bibliography of sources cited):

*British-inspired “functionalism” (and “structural-functionalism”) and French-inspired “structuralism” make strong arguments about the coherence, structure, or systematicity of
culture and/or society. Compare the various positions on this issue as exemplified in the writers from Units 10-12. You should (minimally) include some discussion of Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, and Lévi-Strauss.

In preparing your essay you are by no means limited to the primary texts listed on the syllabus.

**Third Essay Assignment:** Answer the following question in an essay about six double-spaced pages long (followed by a complete bibliography of sources cited):

*To what degree and in what ways do you see the interpretive study of “meaning,” as it emerged in anthropology in the 1960s, as contradictory to or as consistent with the comparative study of human societies and cultures, as evidenced in readings throughout the semester?*

In preparing your essay you are by no means limited to the primary texts lists on the syllabus.

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