

# THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY

## ANTHROPOLOGY 441

Bates College  
Fall 2007

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Pettengill 163  
786-6081

### Course Description

This course on the history of anthropological theory could also be considered a course on the anthropology of anthropological theory. It is both a course on the intellectual history of anthropology as a discipline and a course in which we subject the discipline of anthropology to the kind of analysis and interpretation anthropologists usually engage in while studying other cultures in other parts of the world. Instead of analyzing myths and rituals from other cultures, in this course we analyze the texts anthropologists themselves write to see what we can learn from them about the different perspectives anthropologists and members of Western European cultures more generally have adopted in their study of what have been variously referred to as "savage," "primitive," "tribal," "kinship-based," "non-literate," and "Third World" societies. Instead of asking what the work of Margaret Mead or Evans-Pritchard, for example, can tell us about the Samoans or the Nuer, we ask what it can tell us about American or British anthropology. By adopting a self-reflexive or critical stance we set the discipline of anthropology in its historical and cultural context. In that way we can better understand the different theoretical approaches that have dominated anthropology over the past century. Among the important approaches and topics we consider are: cultural evolutionism, historical particularism, British structural-functionalism, psychological anthropology, recent developments in the areas of ethnographic writing, anthropology as cultural critique, postmodernism, feminism, and globalization theory.

### Required Books

Boas, Race, Language, and Culture  
Benedict, Patterns of Culture  
Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society  
Said, Orientalism  
Behar and Gordon, Women Writing Culture  
Appadurai, Modernity at Large

### Reserve Readings

Tylor, Primitive Culture, Part I: The Origins of Culture  
Lessa & Vogt, Reader in Comparative Religion  
Lavenda & Schultz, Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology  
Frazer, The Golden Bough  
Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism"  
Said and Lewis, "Orientalism: An Exchange"  
Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths" in Writing Culture  
Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority" in The Predicament of Culture

### **Reserve Readings** (cont.)

Marcus and Cushman, "Ethnographies as Texts" in Siegel,  
Annual Review of Anthropology, 1982  
 Geertz, Works and Lives  
 Gordon, "Writing Culture, Writing Feminisms" in Inscriptions  
 Morales, "Concepts of Pollution" in Getting Home Alive  
 Senior theses by Amatruda, Noone, Poore and others are available in Pettengill 171.

### **Topics and Readings**

Sept. 6      Organization of the Course  
                  The Anthropology of Anthropology

#### **1. Evolutionism and the Use of the Comparative Method**

Sept. 11      Tylor, Primitive Culture, Part I: The Origins of Culture (1871), Chapters I and II,  
                  pp. 1-69

Sept. 13      Tylor, "Animism" in Lessa and Vogt, pp. 9-19  
                  Frazer, "Sympathetic Magic:" in Lessa and Vogt, pp. 415-430 or 300-315 (pages  
                  may differ in some editions)  
                  Frazer, The Golden Bough (1911-15), Abridged Version, Chapter IV, "Magic and  
                  Religion"

#### **2. Senior Thesis Workshop: Part 1**

Sept. 18      Session with Social Science Reference Librarian Laura Juraska on improving  
                  Senior Thesis research skills (in Library)

Sept. 20      Reading will include a variety of prospectuses, grant proposals, senior theses, and  
                  articles from various anthropology journals  
                  Lavenda & Schultz, Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology, chapter 12, "Theory  
                  in Cultural Anthropology", pp. 185-203

#### **3. A Critique of Evolutionism and the Comparative Method: Historical Particularism and the Concepts of Culture and Race**

Sept. 25      FILM: Franz Boas (1858-1942)

Sept. 27      Boas, Race, Language, and Culture  
                  "The Aims of Ethnology" (1888), pp. 626-638  
                  "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology" (1896), pp. 270-  
                  280  
                  "The Methods of Ethnology" (1920), pp. 281-289  
                  "Some Problems of Methodology in the Social Sciences" (1930), pp. 260-269  
                  "The Aims of Anthropological Research" (1932), pp. 243-259

Oct. 2      **Rough Draft of Senior Thesis Prospectus due at 2:00 p.m.**

- 2      Boas, Race, Language, and Culture  
 "Review of William Z. Ripley, 'The Races of Europe'" (1899), pp. 155-159  
 "New Evidence in Regard to the Instability of Human Types" (1916), pp. 76-81  
 "Race and Progress" (1931), pp. 3-17

#### 4. Senior Thesis Workshop: Part 2

Oct. 4, 9    We will read and critique rough drafts of students' prospectuses.

#### 5. Patterns of Culture and the Origin of the Culture and Personality School

Oct. 11    Benedict, Patterns of Culture (1934), Chapters I-IV

Oct. 16    Benedict, Chapters VI-VIII (Omit V)

#### 6. British Social Anthropology: Structural — Functionalism

Oct. 23    Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society, Introduction and Chapters I, III, and IV

Oct. 25    Radcliffe-Brown, Chapters VIII, IX, and X

#### 7. Anthropology and the Other: The Politics of Representation

Oct. 30    Said, Orientalism, pp. 1-49  
 Video: On Orientalism

Nov. 1    Said, pp. 49-73, 92-110

Nov. 6    Said, pp. 284-328  
 Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism"  
 Said and Lewis, "Orientalism: An Exchange"

#### 8. Writing Ethnography: Postmodernism in Anthropology

Nov. 8    Marcus and Cushman, "Ethnographies as Texts"  
 Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," in Predicament of Culture  
 Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in Writing Culture

Nov. 13    Geertz, Works and Lives, Chapters 1, 4 and 6

#### 9. A Feminist Critique

Nov. 15    Gordon, "Writing Culture, Writing Feminisms" in Inscriptions, 1988  
 Behar, "Introduction," in Women Writing Culture, pp. 1-29

Nov. 27 Behar, "Writing in My Father's Name," in Women Writing Culture, pp. 65-82  
 Lutz, "The Gender of Theory," in Women Writing Culture, pp. 249-266  
 Moralis, "Concepts of Pollution" in Getting Home Alive

Nov. 29 Discussion

## **10. Globalization Theory**

Dec. 4 Appadurai, Modernity at Large, Chapters 1 and 2

Dec. 6 Appadurai, Chapter 3

## **Course Requirements**

1. Class attendance and participation in class discussion. Regular and valuable contribution to class discussion will raise a student's grade. Poor attendance will lower it.
2. For every class students will prepare three questions or topics for discussion raised by the readings. The questions should be typed and will be handed in after class.
3. Thesis prospectus and critiques of other students' prospectuses.
4. Two short papers (5 pages) analyzing the assigned readings. The first paper should deal with the work of Boas, Radcliffe-Brown, or Benedict; the second with the work of Said, Geertz, Clifford, Marcus and Cushman, Behar (Gordon, Lutz), or Appadurai.
5. One long paper (10-15 pages) on a topic of your choice.
6. Take-home final exam.

## **Grading**

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Final Exam	25%
Long paper	25%
Two short papers	25%
Class participation, written questions, thesis prospectus, exercises and peer response forms	25%

### **Schedule of Due Dates**

Short papers are due at the beginning of class on the day the material analyzed is scheduled to be discussed.

**Oct. 2** Senior Thesis Prospectus

**Nov. 29** Long Paper

**Dec. 11** Take-home final examination (**to be handed out on Dec. 6**)

(Late papers and exams will be graded down unless an extension has been granted.)

### **Papers**

The long paper should be approximately 10-15 pages long. It should focus on one anthropological school, the work of one anthropologist, an important work of one anthropologist, or one concept that has been central to the history of anthropology. You are encouraged to choose a school, an anthropologist, a work, or a concept that we have not dealt with in class, such as French Structuralism (Durkheim or Levi Strauss), cultural ecology (Steward or Harris), interpretive anthropology (Geertz, Turner, or Douglas), medical anthropology (Kleinman), race (Montague), or post-processual archaeology (Hodder). You should deal with your topic as we deal with the class readings. Treat the text as a document from another culture. Ask what we can learn from the text about the culture of the anthropologist who wrote the text. Do not focus on the ethnographic content of the work. In other words, if you were to write about Margaret Mead's Coming of Age in Samoa, you would not be concerned with Samoan culture, but with American cultural anthropology or with psychological anthropology as practiced by Mead. You should examine the perspective or the paradigm of the anthropologist you write about. What, for example, does Mead take for granted? What are her assumptions? What are her questions? What are her methods? What for Mead constitutes an explanation?

The short papers should be approximately 5 pages long. They should focus on one idea, concept, term, or issue from the readings. They should deal with some of the same topics as the long paper, but in a much more restricted and focused manner. Make sure you do not just summarize the reading, but make a point, say something interesting, or offer an interpretation or analysis of some specific aspect of the readings. For example, you might analyze Tylor's concept of culture or progress or Boas' use of the term culture or his thoughts about anthropology as a science.

All students are responsible for reading and understanding the

**Bates College Statement on Academic Honesty.**