ANTH 301
History and Theory in Anthropology

Wellesley College
Fall 2006
Tuesdays, 6:30-9:00pm, PNE 351

Gregory A. Ruf
(Visiting Associate Professor)
Office: PNE 346; email: gruf@wellesley.edu
Office Hours: Tu/Th 5:30-6:30pm (and by appointment)

Course Description
This course introduces students to contemporary anthropology by tracing its historical development and its specific application in ethnographic writing. It examines the social context in which each selected model or “paradigm” took hold and the extent of cognitive sharing, by either intellectual borrowing or breakthrough. The development of contemporary theory will be examined both as internal to the discipline and as a response to changing intellectual climates and social milieu. The course will focus on each theory in action, as the theoretical principles and methods apply to ethnographic case studies.

Course Goal and Objectives
This course is a weekly seminar of intensive-reading on history and theory in socio-cultural anthropology, with the goal of presenting closely-reasoned critical analyses of theoretical ideas and their applications. The principal objectives of seminar participation include acquiring: 1) an understanding of major theoretical developments in the history of the discipline and its practice, as well as of the historical context in which such paradigms took form and gained ascendancy; 2) an ability to link theory and method to ethnographic examples and ethnological comparison; 3) an appreciation for the ways in which assumptions, biases, and other factors may influence observations, considerations of evidence, and interpretations of data.

Requirements, Evaluation, and Grading
Active participation in weekly critical discussions will be a significant factor in determination of grades. Regular attendance is expected of all participants; absences will be excused (or extensions granted) only in special circumstance, judged in conformity with College practice. Please come to class sufficiently prepared. Assigned weekly readings are required to be completed prior to class sessions. Participants will be asked not only to respond to questions about the readings, but also to pose questions and comments of their own for the seminar to consider and discuss.

Final grades will be determined on the following basis:

- **General Participation**: 20% - includes active engagement in weekly seminar discussions, as well as short presentations of assigned material
- **Four Short Papers**: 15% each (totaling 60%) - over the course of the semester, each participant will be required to submit four short (~5 pg.) response papers that offer comparative theoretical critiques of assigned readings. The challenge is to provide an informed critique that contrasts strengths and weakness of alternative perspectives. Details regarding each evaluative exercise will be made available at appropriate junctures.
- **Final Presentation**: 20% - at the final session of the semester, each participant will present a brief review of one recent book-length anthropological study of their own choice, which they feel offers a theoretical perspective worthy of further consideration and discussion. The review will include a well-organized 10-15 minute oral presentation to the seminar, as well as a closely-reasoned written analysis of 3-5 pages in length.
Course Texts and Readings
As an advanced-level seminar, this course is requires intensive reading. Several texts have been ordered through the Wellesley College bookstore as suggested purchases (you are not “required” to buy any of them). Assigned readings from these main texts are provided in abbreviated form; additional required readings for each weekly session are listed with full bibliographic citations. Articles accessible via the Wellesley College Library’s subscription to electronic databases [e.g. JSTOR] are so indicated. Other assigned readings will be placed on Library Reserve (call numbers are provided). In addition, under each weekly session one or more ‘recommended’ readings of topical relevance; these are not required, but only suggested debarkation points for those with further interests. Note also that a Course Conference will be created to facilitate communication, discussion, and exchange of ideas.

Suggested Purchases
The following texts will be read in or near their entirety, and have been ordered through the College Bookstore as suggested purchases:


Recommended References
There are a number of helpful references on the historical development on anthropological theory, both in text and on-line. Each offers a slightly different focus and interpretation. You are encouraged to consult these resources, on your own initiative. A few helpful entry points include:

- Alan Barnard, 2000, History and Theory in Anthropology, Cambridge [e-accessible via Questia Online Library]
- See also the (currently) 10-volume ‘History of Anthropology Series’ published by the University of Wisconsin [http://www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/History_of_Aanthropology.html]

Please Note:
Students with disabilities who are taking this course and who need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to work with Barbara Boger, the Director of Programs of the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center (if you have learning or attention disabilities), and Jim Wice, the Director of Disability Services (if you have a physical disability or are uncertain) to arrange these accommodations. Their offices are located in the Pforzheimer Learning and Teaching Center in Clapp Library.
Course Outline

Week 1 (September 5)
Introduction & Orientation: The Nature of Humanity
- Film: ‘Fieldwork’ (Sir Baldwin Spencer; Strangers Abroad Series [GN20.S77 1990])

Week 2 (September 12)
Intellectual Foundations: Evolutionary Legacies
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, chs 1-5 (M&E, Tylor, Morgan, Spencer, Darwin)
- Film: ‘Everything is Relatives’ (WHR Rivers; Strangers Abroad Series)

Recommended:
- “Discussion & Criticism: Morgan & Materialism” (Thomas Harding; Eleanor Leacock; Morris Opler), Current Anthropology 1964, 5(2), pp. 109-114 [JSTOR]
- Marx & Engels Internet Archive
  - K. Marx & F. Engels, 1845-6, The German Ideology
  - K. Marx, 1851-2, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon

Week 3 (September 19)
Boasian American Traditions: Historical Particulars of Culture, Character, & Personality
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, chs 8-12 (Boas, Lowie, Kroeber, Mead, Benedict)
- Franz Boas, 1896, “The Limits of the Comparative Method of Anthropology” [JSTOR]
- Film: ‘The Shackles of Tradition’ (Franz Boas; Strangers Abroad Series)

Recommended:

Week 4 (September 26) - Essay 1 Due
Colonial Fields: Functionalism and Organic Analogies
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, chs 6, 15-18 (Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown, Malinowski, Fortes & Evans-Pritchard, Gluckman)
- Film: ‘Off the Verandah’ (Bronislaw Malinowski; Strangers Abroad Series)

Recommended:
- Bronislaw Malinowski, 1984 [1923], Argonauts of the Western Pacific, Waveland [GN671.N5 M3]
Week 5 (October 3)

Deep Thoughts: Structuralism & the Symbolic Expression of Meaning
- Levi-Strauss, Myth & Meaning
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, chs. 13-15, 23 (Levi-Strauss, Leach, Sapir, Turner)
- Film: ‘Strange Beliefs’ (E.E. Evans-Pritchard; Strangers Abroad Series)

Recommended:

Week 6 (October 10) – No Class: Fall Break
<recommended: use this time to read Raffles, In Amazonia>

Week 7 (October 17)

Ties that Bind: Exchange, Reciprocity, and Action
- Marcel Mauss, The Gift
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, ch. 29 (Bourdieu)
- Film: ‘Trobiand Cricket’

Recommended:
- Abraham Rosman & Paula Rubel, 1971, Feasting with My Enemy: Rank & Exchange among NW Coast Societies, Columbia [E78.N78 R65]

Week 8 (October 24) – No Class: Tanner Conference – Essay 2 Due
<recommended: use this time to read Tsing, Diamond Queen>

Week 9 (October 31)

Systems Theory
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, chs. 20-22, 27 (White, Harris, Sahlin)

Recommended:
- Marvin Harris, 1979, Cultural Materialism, NY: Random House [GN360 .H37]
Week 10 (November 7)

Process & Power
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, ch. 27-28 (Wolf, Foucault)

Recommended:

Week 11 (November 14)
Discussion of Raffles, In Amazonia

Week 12 (November 21) - Essay 3 Due
Anthropology as Cultural Interpretation
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, chs. 24-26 (Geertz, Gal, Strathern)
  - Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” pp. 412-453
Film: ‘The Cockfight’

Recommended:

Week 13 (November 28)
Critical Reflections: Predicaments of Focus, Representation, and Authority
- Erickson & Murphy (eds.), Readings, chs. 28-34 (Clifford, Marcus & Fischer, Ortner, Lock & Scheper-Hughes, Appadurai)

Recommended:
- Paul Rabinow, 1977, Reflections of Fieldwork in Morocco, California [GN346 .R3]

Week 14 (December 5)
Discussion of Tsing, In the Realm of the Diamond Queen

Week 15 (December 12) - Essay 4 Due
Student Presentations