ANTH 301
History and Theory in Anthropology

Wellesley College
Fall 2008
Thursdays, 6:30-9:00pm, PNE 351

Gregory A. Ruf
(Part-time Visiting Faculty: Associate Professor, Asian & Asian American Studies/Anthropology, Stony Brook University; Gregory.Ruf@StonyBrook.edu)
Office: PNE 346; email: gruf@wellesley.edu
Office Hours: Th 5:30-6:30pm (other times by appointment only)

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 present summary briefs on the readings and to respond to questions about them, 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
- **Three Short Papers**: 20% each (totaling 60%) - over the course of the semester, each participant will be required to submit three 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 course, each participant will brief the seminar on a research issue of their own choice, outlining how questions on that particular topic might be framed from the perspective of at least three different theoretical approaches. Students will be expected to critique the respective strengths and weaknesses - the ‘highlights and blindspots’ - that each approach brings to the problem, and to reflect on how the ‘framing’ of analytical questions by different theoretical perspectives shapes not only the answers we seek but also how we pursue them methodologically. Students will be expected to review relevant anthropological literature in order to contextualize their research brief, which is to be delivered as an oral presentation roughly 10-minutes in length; a ~5-page written copy of the brief must also be submitted by December 19, 2008.
Course Texts and Readings
As an advanced-level seminar, this course is entails intensive reading. Most assigned readings are available online through JSTOR (or Electronic Reserves). In addition, several book-length studies have been ordered through the Wellesley College bookstore:


Recommended: Although no reading assignments will be drawn from this book, several copies have been ordered through the college bookstore for students interested in purchasing a clear and concise overview of the development on anthropological theory.

Reference Works
There are a number of helpful reviews on the historical development on anthropological theory, each offering a different focus and interpretation. Here are several recommended starting points:

- See also the (currently) 10-volume ‘History of Anthropology Series’ published by the University of Wisconsin [http://www.wisc.edu/wisconsinpress/History_of_Anthropology.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 4)
Introduction

Week 2 (September 11)
Legacies of Victorian Era Evolutionism
Read:

- **Charles Darwin**
  - The Descent of Man, Ch. 21: ‘General Summary & Conclusions’

- **Henry Spencer**
  - 1857 - ‘Progress: Its Laws & its Causes’
    - [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/spencer-darwin.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/spencer-darwin.html)

- **Walter Simon**
  - 1960 - ‘Herbert Spencer and the “Social Organism”’ [JSTOR]

- **Edward Bennett Tylor**
  - 1871 - selection from Primitive Culture

- **Alfred Wallace**
  - 1872 - Review of E.B. Tylor’s Primitive Culture
    - [http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/wallace/S207.htm](http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/wallace/S207.htm)

- **Lewis Henry Morgan**
  - 1877 - ‘Ethnical Periods,’ from Ancient Society
    - [http://www.marxists.org/archive/morgan-lewis/ancient-society/ch01.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/morgan-lewis/ancient-society/ch01.htm)

- **Karl Marx**
  - 1859 - ‘Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy’
  - 1859-61 - ‘Production, Consumption, Distribution, Exchange (Circulation),’ from Outline to the Critique of Political Economy (Grundrisse)
    - [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/grundrisse/ch01.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/grundrisse/ch01.htm)

Recommended:
- Marx & Engels Internet Archive: [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/index.htm)

Week 3 (September 18)
Positivist Traditions
Read:

- **Durkheim**
    - [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/divlabor.html](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/divlabor.html)
  - 1933 - ‘Division of Labor’
    - [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/divlabor.html](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/divlabor.html)
  - 1938 - ‘What is a Social Fact?’
    - [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/socfact.html](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/socfact.html)

- **Max Weber**
  - 1930 - ‘The Spirit of Capitalism’ from The Protestant Ethic & the Spirit of Capitalism
    - [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/weber/WeberCH2.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/weber/WeberCH2.html)
  - 1909-20 - Types of Legitimate Domination – selection from Economy & Society [pdf]
    - [http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/divlabor.html](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/undergraduate/introsoc/divlabor.html)

- **Marcel Mauss**
  - 1924 - The Gift

Film: ‘Everything is Relatives’ (WHR Rivers; Strangers Abroad Series)
Week 4 (September 25)
Boasian Divergences: Historical Particularism & Cultural Patterning

- **Franz Boas**
  - 1896 - ‘The Limits of the Comparative Method of Anthropology’ [JSTOR]
  - 1932 - ‘The Aims of Anthropological Research’ [JSTOR]
- **A.L. Kroeber**
  - 1915 - ‘Eighteen Professions’ [JSTOR]
  - 1917 - ‘The Superorganic’ [JSTOR]
- **Edward Sapir**
  - 1912 - ‘Language & Environment’ [JSTOR]
- **Ruth Benedict**
  - 1930 - ‘Configurations of Culture in North America’ [JSTOR]
- **Margaret Mead**
  - 1937 - ‘Reply to a Review of Sex & Temperament in Three Primitive Societies’ [JSTOR]
  - 1954 - ‘The Swaddling Hypothesis’ [JSTOR]

Recommended:

Film: *The Shackles of Tradition* (Franz Boas; Strangers Abroad Series)

Week 5 (October 2) - Essay 1 DUE
Function & Structure: Organic Analogies in the Colonial Field

Read:
- **Bronislaw Malinowski**
  - 1920 - ‘Kula’ [JSTOR]
  - 1921 - ‘Primitive Economics of the Trobriand Islanders’ [JSTOR]
  - 1939 - ‘The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis’ [JSTOR]
- **A.R. Radcliffe-Brown**
  - 1935 - ‘On the Concept of Function in Social Science’ [JSTOR]
  - 1940 - ‘On Social Structure’ [JSTOR]
  - 1940 - ‘On Joking Relationships,’ [JSTOR]
- **E.E. Evans-Pritchard**
  - 1939 - ‘Nuer Time-Reckoning’ [JSTOR]

Recommended:

Film: *Off the Verandah* (Bronislaw Malinowski; Strangers Abroad Series)

Week 6 (October 9)
Deep Thoughts: Structuralism & Symbolic Meaning

Read:
- **Ferdinand de Saussure**
  - 1911 - ‘Arbitrary Social Values & the Linguistic Sign’ - from Course in General Linguistics [pdf]
- **Sigmund Freud**
  - 1930 - Civilization & the Individual - from Civilization & Its Discontents [pdf]
  - 1939 - Psychical Apparatus & the Theory of Instincts (1900-39) - from An Outline of Psycho-Analysis [pdf]
- **Claude Levi-Strauss**
  - 1955 - ‘The Structural Study of Myth’ [JSTOR]
  - 1978 - Myth and Meaning
- **Mary Douglas**
- **Victor Turner**
  - 1973 - ‘Symbols in African Ritual’ [JSTOR]
Recommended:
- Mary Douglas, 1975, Implicit Meanings, Routledge & Kegan Paul

Film: ‘Strange Beliefs’ (E.E. Evans-Pritchard; Strangers Abroad Series)

Week 7 (October 16)
System & Process
Read:
- Leslie White
  - 1943 - ‘Energy & the Evolution of Culture’ [JSTOR]
- Robert Murphy & Julian Steward
  - 1956 - ‘Tappers and Trappers’ [JSTOR]
- Marvin Harris
  - 1966 - ‘The Cultural Ecology of India’s Sacred Cattle’ [JSTOR]
- Roy Rappaport
  - 1967 - ‘Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations among a New Guinea People’ [pdf]
- Sydel Silverman
  - 1979 - ‘On the Uses of History in Anthropology: The ‘palio’ of Siena’ [JSTOR]
- Victor Turner
  - 1980 - ‘Social Dramas and Stories About Them’ [JSTOR]

Recommended:

Week 8 (October 23) - Essay 2 DUE
The Interpretative Turn
Read:
- Clifford Geertz
  - 1974 – ‘From the Native's Point of View’ [JSTOR]
- Thomas Scheff
  - 1986 - ‘Toward Resolving the Controversy over Thick Description’ [JSTOR]
- William Roseberry
  - 1989 - ‘Balinese Cockfights and the Seduction of Anthropology’ [pdf]
- Peter Kosso
  - 1991 - ‘Method in Archaeology: Middle Range Theory as Hermeneutics’ [JSTOR]

Recommended:

Week 9 (October 30)
Agency & Power
Read:
- Michel Foucault
  - 1982 – ‘The Subject & Power’ [JSTOR]
- Edward Said
  - 1989 - ‘Representing the Colonized’ [JSTOR]
- Pierre Bourdieu
  - 1989 - ‘Social Space & Symbolic Power’ [JSTOR]
- Lila Abu-Lughod
Week 10 (November 6)
Reflexive Critique
Read:
  • Paul Rabinow, Reflections of Fieldwork in Morocco

Week 11 (November 13)
Questioning Authority
Read:
  • George Marcus & James Clifford
    o 1985 - ‘Making Ethnographic Texts’ [JSTOR]
  • Akhil Gupta & James Ferguson
    o 1992 - ‘Beyond Culture’ [JSTOR]
  • Nancy Scheper-Hughes
    o 1995 - ‘The Primacy of the Ethical’ [JSTOR]
Recommended:

Week 12 (November 20)
Reconsidering Marginality
Read:
  • Anna Tsing, In the Realm of the Diamond Queen

Essay 3 DUE: Wednesday, Nov 26

Week 13 (November 27) - NO CLASS - Thanksgiving Recess

Week 14 (December 4)
Student Presentations

Final Paper Due: Friday, Dec 19, 4:30pm