

American University of Beirut
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences
SOAN 310: Seminar in Anthropological Theory

1. Course Learning Outcomes

Anthropology, the discipline broadly defined as “the study of human beings” that takes “culture” as its central concept, comprises a diverse corpus of theory that addresses both particular and universal aspects of the human experience. This graduate seminar provides an overview of sociocultural theory in anthropology, with an emphasis on American and British theorists, organized chronologically beginning with the late nineteenth century. It covers such categories as cultural evolution, historical particularism, culture and personality, Malinowskian functionalism, structural-functionalism, kinship, cultural materialism, structuralism, and interpretive, critical and poststructuralist anthropology. At the end of the course we will examine Marshal Sahlins and Gananath Obeyesekere’s debate about culture and historical interpretation.

This is a seminar course, and class time will consist mainly of discussion of the assigned readings, articles placed on reserve in the library and four required texts. This course is required for those students pursuing an M.A. in Anthropology, and highly recommended for graduate students in sociology, psychology, urban planning, health, medicine and related disciplines.

By the end of this course, students can expect to have acquired:

- * an understanding of the concept of “culture” as it is used by anthropologists
- * a thorough grounding in and sense of change through time of ethnological and sociocultural theory and the major theorists since the 19th century
- * the ability to recognize and describe the main trends in anthropological thought, such as historical particularism, functionalism, praxis theory, and others
- * an understanding of current and emerging ideas in ethnology such as practice, action, reflexivity and subjectivity
- * the ability to assimilate, succinctly summarize, and present to others writing in sociocultural anthropology
- * the necessary theoretical foundation for further advanced study in anthropology and related disciplines concerned with the human experience

2. Resources Available to Students

Required texts available in the Campus Bookstore:

Kuper, Adam

1999 Culture: The Anthropologists' Account. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Marcus, George E. and Michael M. J. Fischer

1996 Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences, Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Obeyesekere, Gananath

1997 The Apotheosis of Captain Cook, Reprint Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sahlins, Marshall

1996 How 'Natives' Think: About Captain Cook, for Example. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

In addition to the above required texts, students will be provided with an extensive collection of required articles through Jafet Library Reserve and Electronic Reserve.

3. Grading Criteria

<u>Course Requirement</u>	<u>Percentage Points Possible</u>
Informed in-class participation	10
6 reading summaries	12
2 class presentations / theory papers	30
Midterm take-home essay	18
Final take-home essay	25
Improvement in writing over the course of the semester	<u>5</u>
TOTAL	100

4. Schedule

<u>Week</u>	<u>Theme(s)</u>
1	Introduction
2	Cultural Evolution
3	Historical Particularism, Culture and Personality - Franz Boas et. al.
4	Malinowskian Functionalism; Culture and Civilization
5	Social Structure, Social Action; Structural-Functionalism - Radcliffe-Brown
6	Kinship
7	Cultural Materialism – Julian Steward, Leslie White, et. al.; Structuralism – Claude Levi-Strauss
8	Interpretive, Critical and Poststructuralist Anthropology
9	Interpretive, Critical and Poststructuralist Anthropology continued Midterm take-home essay due
10	Praxis – Bourdieu, Giddens, Ortner et. al.
11	Anthropology as Cultural Critique
12	History as Culture – Marshal Sahlins
13	Gananath Obeyesekere’s rejoinder to Sahlins
14	Wrap-up; general discussion of course content
Finals week	Final take-home essay due

5. Course Policy

Academic Integrity

In this class, academic integrity is required of you 100% of the time. At the graduate level and beyond, plagiarism is the most common form of violating academic integrity. Plagiarism involves using someone else's work without clearly stating that you are doing so. This includes but is not limited to appropriating the words of an article, book, internet source, or another student (past or present). It is also a violation of academic integrity to turn in material that you have turned in or will turn in for another class. You must perform original work for this class. Please do not hesitate to ask your professor if you have any questions about any aspect of academic integrity. If you are caught in violation of it, the consequences may include being reported to a university committee, receiving a mark on your permanent academic record, and being embarrassed before your peers. For more information, see AUB's Student Code of Conduct here: <http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/158010081.html>

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT ANY POINT IN THE SEMESTER.