Anthropology, in its classic sense, “makes the strange familiar, and the familiar strange.” The analysis of modern society places the emphasis on the second half of the formula, bringing attention to the cultural facets of phenomena usually taken to be a-cultural or universal. Anthropology highlights the contingency of those cultural forms, points out their limitations, and suggests other possibilities. By recognizing as arbitrary the divisions between the economic, political, social, psychological, and cultural, anthropology stands to make major contributions to the social sciences and humanities as they continue to explore their already-profitable interdisciplinary connections. It is in this spirit that the Department of Anthropology at the University of California at Irvine conducts the Irvine Seminars in the Anthropology of Modernity. We invite internationally recognized scholars to present works-in-progress and to engage in wide-ranging, open discussions about their work, its place in the social sciences broadly conceived, and its role in helping us to understand modernity as a cultural phenomenon.