

ANTHROPOLOGY 202A (PROSEMINAR A)

THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY SOCIETY, CULTURE, AND DISCIPLINARITY FALL, 2021 (COURSE CODE 60700)

Tom Boellstorff, Professor, Department of Anthropology

Meets Tuesdays, 2:00pm–4:50pm

Office hours: see [online signup](#)

First meeting: Tuesday, September 28, 2:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is the first quarter of the three-quarter proseminar sequence required for graduate students in the Ph.D. program in the Irvine Department of Anthropology, and is open only to first-year graduate students in the program. In this term, students will explore the history of anthropological theory and ethnographic practice. It is organized around an in-depth discussion of the relation between notions of culture and notions of society in the formation of anthropology as an academic discipline and mode of inquiry. The course will pay particular attention to the emergence of anthropology out of nineteenth-century concerns over the nature of the “primitive” and evolutionary theory, and continue with the formalization and institutionalization of the discipline throughout the twentieth century. The course will also attend to some of the discipline’s internal and external criticisms and reformulations, as well as the debates over its core analytical concepts. The course is centrally concerned with canonicity and inclusion in anthropological theory and practice, and how frameworks of decolonization and transformation contribute to debates over anthropology’s past, present, and future.

The course has the following four overarching goals, all equally important (they are not listed in a ranking):

- 1) Learning various histories of anthropological theory and practice, so that you can forge an analytical, methodological, and political toolkit for your future work. This includes interdisciplinary engagements that have characterized anthropology since its beginnings.
- 2) Honing your writing skills in terms of crafting effective methods of presenting analysis, theory, and data in multiple scholarly voices for varied audiences and publics. This includes

nuts-and-bolts strategies for time management and organizing your writing practice more generally.

3) Developing skills in “power skimming”—engaged, tactical, and considered strategies for reading large numbers of authors and texts. This involves the ability to scan and organize multiple texts, take effective notes, organize and triage work in terms of relevance to your scholarly goals and relevant disciplinary imperatives, and balance reading with “down time” for self-care. Through this strategy you can develop multiple modes of reading—one of the most important skills you can learn. Moving beyond the binarism of “read” / “didn’t read” is transformative; it will serve you in everything from preparing your documents for advancing to candidacy, to writing articles and books, to preparing syllabi of your own.

4) Mastering collaborative and coalitional scholarly work, using our cohort as exemplar but also key instantiation that will deeply shape your future career.

COURSE READINGS

Each week there are 6 readings, listed in alphabetical order. You will pick three of these readings to focus on. As noted in the syllabus, if the reading is a longer reading (like a book), pick two chapters to focus on, skimming through more of the text if you have time. In other cases, sections to focus on are listed for you. Try to look briefly at readings other than the three you focus on, but you can rely on your fellow students and myself to lead the discussion.

Books and book chapters will be provided to you on in a Google Drive folder. You will be able to access articles based on the bibliographic information provided. One way our library justifies its budget is the number of downloads that take place. Additionally, this provides you with the opportunity to practice locating and downloading scholarly work.

The readings are grouped roughly in terms of theme, but the syllabus has also been organized to intentionally place different frameworks and time periods in conversation. The fact that a reading appears earlier in the syllabus has no relation to its importance. Many important authors and topics appear later in the quarter, or in the Winter or Spring proseminars. Multiple readings address questions of fieldwork and writing under conditions of disruption and exclusion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) *Six précis* (goo.gl/vttStV)

You do six (6) précis, which we will share. This means you can choose 4 weeks (including Week 1) in which you do not have to do a précis. Each précis should be 2,500–3,500 characters in length. This is approximately 400–500 words, or 1.5–2 double-spaced pages, but you will be assessed based on character count. Each précis should take the form of critical questions, commentary, and analysis for three of the week’s readings. A précis can link the readings for a particular week to earlier course readings or readings from outside the course, but particularly the latter of these is discouraged. Avoid

negative critiques; focus on generous engagement, linking texts to our discussions. (If possible, look briefly at readings for the week that you do not include in your précis.)

A précis must be uploaded onto the course's Google Forms website before the beginning of class. A précis can never be turned in late. If you do not attend class, or leave class early, any précis you submit that day will not be counted. Each précis counts for 5% of your overall grade, so the 6 précis together constitute 30% of the overall grade. Please note that falling even one précis short will thus severely impact your grade. You will receive only partial credit for a précis that does not meet the minimum requirements discussed above. Plan ahead and do not find yourself in a situation where you fail to complete six précis.

I encourage you to do additional précis beyond the six required: it is a nice way to participate in class discussion, build up an archive of notes on the course, and practice scholarly commentary. If you do any additional précis, they can replace an earlier précis that only received partial credit.

2) *Four short essays*

You will write four short essays during the course, with the following minimum word limits:

- Essay #1: 1,500 words (10% of overall grade)
- Essay #2: 2,000 words (15% of overall grade)
- Essay #3: 2,500 words (20% of overall grade)
- Essay #4: 3,000 words (25% of overall grade)

The word limits are inclusive of title, endnotes, and references (I will use the word count function of Word to confirm this). The essay should be emailed to me at tboellst@uci.edu by the deadline. The essay is a chance for you to write analytically about some topic related to the course readings. You can use any course reading that we have discussed up to the time the essay is due: engaging with other readings is discouraged and cannot be done without my permission. Even though the essays are short they should include a title, sections, and bibliography: we will discuss scholarly writing in class.

The précis and essays are the only course requirements: there is no midterm or final. The course grade will be calculated as follows:

- 6 précis times 5 points per précis = 30 points
- 4 papers = 10 points, 15 points, 20 points, 25 points (70 points total)
- Total = 100 points

You will be assigned a letter grade as follows: A+ 96.7–100; A 93.4–96.6; A- 90.3–93.3; B+ 86.7–89.9; B 83.4–86.6; B- 80–83.3; C+ 76.7–79.9; C 73.4–76.6; C- 70–73.3; D 65–69.9; F 64.9 and below.

Students with disabilities: to quote from my colleague Karen Nakamura's syllabus, "If you need a reasonable (or even unreasonable) accommodation, please let me know and I'll make it happen. This goes triply for folks with non-visible disabilities or who pass or mask or compensate. No need to do that here." The Disabilities Services Center has many resources; registering with them can help ensure appropriate arrangements in all your courses (see www.disability.uci.edu/).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Orientations

- Baker, Lee D. 1998. *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896–1954*. Berkeley: University of California Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 1899. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. New York: Schocken Books. {read: Chapter 1 “The Scope of this Study”; Chapter 2 “The Problem”; Chapter 4 “The Negro in Philadelphia, 1820–1896,” Chapter 12 “The Organized Life of Negroes”; Chapter 16 “The Contact of the Races”; Chapter 18 “A Final Word”; more if you wish.}
- Lyons, Andrew P, and Harriet D. Lyons. 2004. *Irregular Connections: A History of Anthropology and Sexuality*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Stocking, George. 1991. *Victorian Anthropology*. New York: The Free Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Tylor, Edward Burnett. 1871. *Primitive Culture, Vol. I: The Origins of Culture*. London: John Murray. {read: “The Science of Culture” (1–22); “The Development of Culture” (23–62); “Survival in Culture” (63–100); “The Art of Counting” (218–46).}
- Tylor, Edward Burnett. 1865. *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*. London: John Murray. {read: “Introduction” (1–13); “The Gesture Language” (14–33); “The Gesture Language (continued)” (34–54).}

Week 2: Evolution to function

- Frazer, James George. 1920. *The Golden Bough* (vol. 1). London: Macmillan and Co. {read: “Sympathetic Magic” (52–219) and “Magic and Religion” (220–43).}
- Lee, Christine. 2021. “‘You Don’t Look American’: Race and Whiteness in the Ethnographic and Disciplinary Encounter.” *American Ethnologist* 48 (2): 206–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13014>.
- Maine, Henry Sumner. 1861. *Ancient Law*. London: John Murray. {read: “Primitive Society and Ancient Law” (113–70).}
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. New York: E.P. Dutton. {read: Introduction (1–25).}
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1944. *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. {read: “The Functional Theory” (147–76). }
- Spencer, Herbert. 1864. *Illustrations of Universal Progress: A Series of Discussions*. New York: D. Appleton and Co. {read: “Progress: Its Law and Cause” (1–60).}

Week 3: Exchange and knowledge

- Clifford, James. 1981. “On Ethnographic Surrealism.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23 (4): 539–64. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/178393>.
- Deloria, Ella Cara. *Waterlily*. 1988. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}

- Harrison, Faye V., and Ira E. Harrison. 1999. "Introduction: Anthropology, African Americans, and the Emancipation of a Subjugated Knowledge." In *African-American Pioneers in Anthropology*, edited by Ira E. Harrison and Faye V. Harrison, 1–36. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Mauss, Marcel. 2016 [1925]. *The Gift*, Expanded edition. Selected, annotated, and translated by Jane I. Guyer; foreword by Bill Maurer. Chicago: Hau Books. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1991. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by Richard G. Fox, 17–44. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.
- Weiss, Margot. 2021. "The Interlocutor Slot: Citing, Crediting, Cotheorizing, and the Problem of Ethnographic Expertise." *American Anthropologist*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13639>.

Friday of Week 3, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time—Essay #1 due

Week 4: History and the human

- Asad, Talal. 1973. "Introduction." In *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, edited by Talal Asad, 9–19. New York: Humanities Press.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1947. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. London: Secker & Warburg. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Boas, Franz. 1974. *The Shaping of American Anthropology 1883–1911: A Franz Boas Reader*, edited by George W. Stocking. New York: Basic Books {read: "The Basic Assumptions of Boasian Anthropology" by George W. Stocking (1–20); "Instability of Human Types" (214–18); "The Outlook for the American Negro" (310–15).}
- Bunzl, Matti. 2004. "Boas, Foucault, and the 'Native Anthropologist': Notes toward a Neo-Boasian Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 106(3): 435–42. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3567609>.
- Groark, Kevin P. 2019. "Freud among the Boasians: Psychoanalytic Influence and Ambivalence in American Anthropology." *Current Anthropology* 60 (4): 559–88. <https://doi.org/10.1086/704711>.
- Simpson, Audra. 2018. "Why White People Love Franz Boas or, The Grammar of Indigenous Dispossession." In *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas*, edited by Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Wilner, 166–81. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Week 5: Language/structure, self/community

- Hymes, Dell. 1964. "Introduction: Toward Ethnographies of Communication." *American Anthropologist* 66 (6, Part 2): 1–34. doi:aa.1964.66.suppl_3.02a00010.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society: Essays and Addresses*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press. {read: "On the Concept of Function in Social Science (1935)" (178–187); "On Social Structure (1940)" (188–204).}

- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage." In his *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, 1–21. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Sapir, Edward. 1999 [1928] "The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society." In *The Collected Words of Edward Sapir*, Vol. 3, edited by Regna Darnell and Judith T. Irvine, 155–72. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Shankman, Paul. 2018. "The Public Anthropology of Margaret Mead: Redbook, Women's Issues, and the 1960s." *Current Anthropology* 59 (1): 55–73. <https://doi.org/10.1086/695987>.
- Srinivas, M. N. 1976. *The Remembered Village*. Berkeley: University of California Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}

Friday of Week 5, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time—Essay #2 due

Week 6: Structure, cognition, ecology

- Frake, Charles. 1964. "How to Ask for a Drink in Subanun." *American Anthropologist* 66 (3): 127–32. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/668166>.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3–32. New York: Basic Books.
- Goodenough, Ward. 2004 [1956]. "Residence Rules." In *Theory in Anthropology: A Sourcebook*, edited by Robert A. Manners and David Kaplan, 181–90. London: Routledge.
- Harris, Marvin. 1966. "The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle." *Current Anthropology* 7 (1): 51–66. <https://doi.org/10.1086/200662>.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1955. "The Structural Study of Myth." *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (270): 428–44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/536768>.
- Rouse, Carolyn M. 2019. "Claude Lévi-Strauss's Contribution to the Race Question: Race and History." *American Anthropologist* 121 (3): 721–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13296>.

Week 7: Rethinkings

- Anderson, Mark. 2019. *From Boas to Black Power: Racism, Liberalism, and American Anthropology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Bunzl, Matti. 2005. "Anthropology Beyond Crisis: Toward an Intellectual History of the Extended Present." *Anthropology and Humanism* 30 (2): 187–95. <https://doi.org/10.1525/anh.2005.30.2.187>.
- Davis, Allison, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner. 1941. *Deep South: A Social Anthropological Study of Caste and Class*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Leach, Edmund. 1961. "Rethinking Anthropology." In *Rethinking Anthropology*, 1–27. London: Althone.
- Nelson, Diane M. 2019. "Low Intensities." *Current Anthropology* 60 (S19): S122–33. <https://doi.org/10.1086/701040>.
- Varel, David A. 2018. *The Lost Black Scholar: Resurrecting Allison Davis in American Social Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. {read: "Introduction"; more if you wish.}

Friday of Week 7, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time—Essay #3 due

Week 8: Feminist and queer interventions

- Boellstorff, Tom. 2003. "Dubbing Culture: Indonesian *Gay* and *Lesbi* Subjectivities and Ethnography in an Already Globalized World." *American Ethnologist* 30 (2): 225–42. <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2003.30.2.225>.
- McClaurin, Irma. 2001. "Introduction: Forging a Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics of Black Feminist Anthropology." In *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis, and Poetics*, edited by Irma McClaurin, 1–23. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Newton, Esther. 1979. *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. {read: two chapters of your choice; more if you wish.}
- Newton, Esther. 2018. *My Butch Career: A Memoir*. Durham: Duke University Press. {read: chapter 5 (79–101) and chapter 6 (102–18).}
- Rosaldo, Michelle Z. 1974. "Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview." In *Woman, Culture and Society*, edited by Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, 17–42. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Yanagisako, Sylvia, and Carol Delaney. 1995. "Naturalizing Power." In *Naturalizing Power: Essays in Feminist Cultural Analysis*, edited by Sylvia Yanagisako and Carol Delaney, 1–22. New York: Routledge.

Week 9: Reframings

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1991. "Writing against Culture." In *Recapturing Anthropology*, edited by Richard Fox, 137–62. Santa Fe: SAR Press.
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1997. "Discipline and Practice: The Field as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology." In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, edited by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 1–46. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kulick, Don. 2006. "Theory in Furs: Masochist Anthropology." *Current Anthropology* 47 (6): 933–52. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/507198>.
- Price, David. 2019. "Counter-Lineages within the History of Anthropology: On Disciplinary Ancestors' Activism." *Anthropology Today* 35 (1): 12–16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12482>.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 2016. "Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory since the Eighties." *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6 (1): 47–73. doi:10.14318/hau6.1.004.
- Rodseth, Lars. 2018. "Hegemonic Concepts of Culture: The Checkered History of Dark Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 120 (3): 398–411. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13057>.

Friday of Week 9, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time—Essay #4 due

Week 10: Futures

- Berry, Maya J., Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shanya Cordis, Sarah Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada. 2017. "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field." *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (4): 537–65. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca32.4.05>.
- Ingold, Tim. 2008. "Anthropology Is *Not* Ethnography." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 154: 69–92. <https://doi.org/10.5871/bacad/9780197264355.003.0003>.
- Jobson, Ryan Cecil. 2020. "The Case for Letting Anthropology Burn: Sociocultural Anthropology in 2019." *American Anthropologist* 122 (2): 259–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13398>.
- Olson, Kyle G. 2021. "Disciplinary Futures and Reorienting Research: A Reply to Jobson and Rosenzweig on Doing Anthropology in the Age of COVID." *American Anthropologist* 123 (1): 170–75. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13526>.
- Lins Ribeiro, Gustavo. 2014. "World Anthropologies: Anthropological Cosmopolitanisms and Cosmopolitics." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (1): 483–98. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030139>.
- Warren, Jonathan, and Michelle Kleisath. 2019. "The Roots of US Anthropology's Race Problem: Whiteness, Ethnicity, and Ethnography." *Equity and Excellence in Education* 52(1): 55–67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1632230>.

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