

Seminars in Anthropological Theory

ANTH 6010 (Fall 2021)

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Course location: NAH_401

Course time: Wednesday, 6:30 pm-9:15 pm

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Course description

This course introduces research postgraduate students to major theories and debates that have inspired the development of (sociocultural) anthropology. The course serves as a foundation for understanding both the history of anthropological thought and the wealth of contemporary theories of cultural phenomena. Over the course of the semester, we will discuss a range of theoretical propositions concerning such topics as evolution, culture, structure, subjectivity, agency, social change, power, gender, discourse, representation, ontology, and globalization. We will selectively explore some of the most prominent theories, writings, and concepts by interrogating them on three levels: (1) their explanatory power for understanding human behavior and the social world; (2) the social and historical circumstances in which they were produced; and (3) their application and value in ongoing anthropological debates, including your research.

The readings in this syllabus will serve as (re)entry points into a larger body of work produced by key scholars relevant to anthropology. We will begin by reading the works of the discipline's foundational figures in Europe and North America in the 19th-early 20th centuries as well as their less-known contemporaries whose work gained recognition in the second half of the 20th century. Then we will examine more recent theoretical developments to understand where the discipline is going.

Course format

This is a seminar, not a lecture. Participation is absolutely essential to your success in this class, so make sure to read the assigned text very carefully.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:

• identify and explain the views of leading theorists in anthropology and other disciplines who have influenced anthropology since the 19th century

- identify and explain major anthropological theories, concepts, genres, and debates
- explain the strengths and weaknesses of these theories and theoretical concepts
- assess anthropological theories according to the socio-political and historical contexts in which they were developed
- provide examples of the application of these theories to ethnographic studies and the everyday life
- be able to apply these theories to the analysis of contemporary societies and cultures

Reading Materials

Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History by McGee, R. Jon and Richard L. Warms **Seventh Edition. 2020.** Boston: McGraw-Hill.

! students can get a 30% discount off of the list price when buying on rowman.com. Use promo code STUDENT30

Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory (referred to as Readings) by Erickson, Paul A. and Liam D. Murphy. Fifth Edition 2017. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. E-book at CUHK library: https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuhk-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4931392

Routledge Companion to Contemporary Anthropology, edited by Simon Coleman, Susan B. Hyatt and Ann Kingsolver. London and New York: Routledge, 2017. E-book https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuhk-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4748641

Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders. 2014. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuhk-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1575629

Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory, edited by Matei Candea. London and New York: Routledge, 2018. E-book https://www-taylorfrancis-com.easyaccess1.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/books/e/9781315388267

Additional articles will be available on Blackboard. Please, note that further readings may be assigned as the course progresses, so it is your responsibility to check Blackboard regularly.

Useful resources

- The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology (full texts are available online) is an excellent teaching and learning resource hosted at the University of Cambridge. It has comprehensive articles on various anthropological concepts, theories, and scholars http://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/articles-a-to-z
- Oxford bibliographies (full texts are available via CUHK library) are thorough guides to the current scholarship with original commentary and annotations https://www-oxfordbibliographies-com.easyaccess1.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/
- If you need concise definitions of the concepts that you encounter in readings and lectures, check out this glossary of theory terms: http://www.utpteachingculture.com/teaching-theory/glossary-of-theory-terms/
- A complementary resource to our main book: Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology:
 An Encyclopedia by R. Jon McGee & Richard L. Warms https://sk-sagepub-com.easyaccess2.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/reference/theory-in-social-and-cultural-anthropology

Grading

1. Participation

You are expected to attend the class, having read the assigned readings and ready with questions and comments that will facilitate our discussion. You can miss one class with no explanation.

2. Theoretical debate

As Lila Abu-Lughod says, "the history of anthropological theory is a history of debate." Some debates focused on specific facts and issues (*Was Captain Cook a god? Were Samoan adolescent girls sexually free? Are food prohibitions due to the logic of symbols or material conditions?*), while others questioned the very fundamentals of anthropology (*Are there such things like culture, nature, society? Was anthropology the handmaiden of colonialism? Should anthropology be engaged?*). Nevertheless, they were ultimately about theory: how anthropologists view and explain the world of humans. Therefore, it is important that you become familiar with and conversant in all sides of the major anthropological debates, some of which have even gained publicity outside the discipline.

For this assignment you will work in groups of two or three persons, re-enacting and analyzing a theoretical debate of your choice (a list of suggested debates will be provided in class). The goal of this assignment is to enrich your knowledge of historical developments of anthropological theory and sharpen your critical skills. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be posted on Blackboard.

Due in Week 11 with two components:

- Essay: about 1300-1500 words; 1500 words maximum (graded)
- In-class debate: 30 minutes for each group (ungraded)

3. Final paper: What Would *Marx* Say?

The final paper is a thought experiment in which you are invited to evaluate a contemporary theory (post 1970s and ideally later) through a conversation with a scholar of the 19th or first half of the 20th centuries. You first need to identify a theory or, narrowly, a specific concept discussed in any of the assigned readings. For example, "ontology," "governmentality," "biopower," "precarity," "gender performativity," "neoliberalism," "flexible citizenship," "affect," "assemblage," and so on. Then, you need to choose an early scholar whose views might bring a valuable insight into the interpretation of the chosen theory/concept. It can be Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Boas, Mead, Levi-Strauss – anyone whose works primarily occur before 1960s. For example, what would Boas say about Allan Hanson's theory of the invention of culture? What would Malinowski say about Appadurai's theory of global flows?

Begin your essay by introducing the theory and explaining why you chose a certain scholar to reflect on it. Provide a definition, analyze its meaning and characteristics. You should rely on the assigned text, but it is okay to cite other original texts too. Then introduce the earlier scholar's view in general and explain why you think they would say certain things about the modern theory. Finally, don't forget to include your assessment of the chosen theory/concept: is it novel, useful, precise, convincing?

Some tips for choosing a theory or a concept:

- As you read the assigned texts, write down on a piece of paper all interesting ideas, theories, and concepts that you come across
- Look at your list and select only those that are central (key, major) to the texts
- Before choosing, ask yourself if there is enough material about this theory, concept
- Do you understand it well?
- Can you provide your own opinion/view of its validity, significance and applicability?
- Can you make connections between the chosen theory, idea, concept with ideas of some earlier scholar?

- Do you understand the views of that scholar well? They could be critical or favorable, complementary or contradictory to the modern theory, idea, concept you've chosen
- 3500 (min) 4000 words (max), excluding references

All written assignments should use 12 Times New Roman with 1-inch margins

4. Publication Ethics Training (ungraded)

You will need to complete the publication ethics training developed by University. The training allows you to gain an understanding of the scope and examples of plagiarism as well as best practices of publishing, applicable to any written academic assignment. This assignment is ungraded, but you fail to submit the completion certificate, I will mark your class participation down. Due November 1, via email Access here: https://www.research-ethics.cuhk.edu.hk/orktsResearch/Web/Quiz/public

Grade Descriptors

Grade	Participation	Written assignments
A	You participate in all classes (one absence is ok). Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your questions show a nuanced understanding of the course material	Your writing is original, nuanced, well-written, clear, and factual; your analysis and arguments are convincing. Everything is of a required length and format, and submitted on time
A -	You participate in almost all classes, with two classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your questions show a good understanding of the course material	Your writing is original, nuanced, well-written, clear, and factual; your analysis and arguments are convincing, but may occasionally contain minor errors. Everything is of a required length and format, and submitted on time
B+	You participate in the majority of classes, with three classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read most of the assigned readings, and your questions show a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your writing demonstrates an overall good grasp of concepts and theories, but occasionally lacks clarity, contains several minor errors, and / or slightly deviates from required length and format. It is original and submitted on time.
В	You participate in the majority of classes, with four classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read most of the assigned readings, and your questions show a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your writing demonstrates an overall good grasp of concepts and theories, but occasionally lacks clarity, contains many minor errors, and / or deviates from required length and format. Everything is submitted on time and is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution
B -	You participate in the majority of classes, with five classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read most of the assigned readings, and your questions show a sufficient understanding of the course material	Your writing demonstrates an overall good grasp of concepts and theories, but lacks clarity, contains minor errors and a few major logical flaws, and / or deviates from required length and format. Everything is submitted on time and is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution
C +	You participate in about half of classes, with six classes missed or inactive. Your	Your writing shows an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity,

	comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, and your questions show a partial understanding of the course material	contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and/or often deviates from required length and format. The assignments are submitted on time or a day late. The work is original, although there are serious problems with citations and attribution
С	You participate in about half of classes, with seven classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, and your questions show a partial understanding of the course material	Your writing shows an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and does not follow the required length and format. The assignments are submitted on time or a day late. The work is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution
C -	You participate in about half of the classes, with eight classes missed or inactive. Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, and your questions show partial understanding of the course material	Your writing shows an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and does not follow the required length and format. The work is submitted a day or two late. It is original, although there are serious problems with citations and attribution
D+	You participate in a small number of classes, with 9-10 classes missed or inactive; or you show a low level of engagement. Your comments demonstrate that you have not read the assigned readings, and you do not quite understand what is being discussed	Your writing shows a minimal understanding of concepts and theories. It lacks effort, is hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The work is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and/or are submitted a few days late.
D	You participate in a small number of classes, with 11-12 classes missed or inactive, or you show a low level of engagement. Your comments demonstrate that you have not read the assigned readings, and you do not understand what is being discussed	Your writing shows a minimal understanding of concepts and theories. It lacks effort, is hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The work is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (too short), and submitted many days late.
F	You almost never participate, or you miss all the seminars or come unprepared	Your writing is submitted more than a week late or not submitted at all. The work is extremely short, factually incorrect, biased, and/or contains instances of plagiarism.

Weekly schedule

Subject to change. Stay tuned on Blackboard

All readings below are required. There will be additional readings not included in the syllabus but uploaded to Blackboard. These additional readings are <u>optional</u> but strongly recommended

Week One. September 8

What is theory in anthropology?

Readings

• Lila Abu-Lughod. Speaking About Anthropological Theory. From http://www.utpteachingculture.com/teaching-theory/why-theory-matters/

- Louise Lamphere. Why Theory Matters. From http://www.utpteachingculture.com/teaching-theory/why-theory-matters/
- Don Brenneis. Why Theory Matters. From http://www.utpteachingculture.com/teaching-theory/why-theory-matters/

Week Two. September 15

19th Century Evolutionism

Readings:

- Herbert Spencer (1860) "The Social Organism." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 16–33
- Edward B. Tylor (1871) "The Science of Culture." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 34–49
- Lewis Henry Morgan (1877) "Ethnical Periods." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 50–62
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1846) "Feuerbach: Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 63–80

Week Three. September 22 No Class. Public Holiday

Week Four. September 29

- Social Theory in Europe

Readings:

- Émile Durkheim (1895) "What is a Social Fact". In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 86–93
- Marcel Mauss (1925) "Excerpts from *The Gift.*" In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 94–108
- Max Weber (1922) "Class, Status, Party." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 109-125
- Max Weber (1922) "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority." In *Readings*, pp. 89–95

Week Five. October 6

American Cultural and Psycho-Cultural Anthropology

Readings:

- Franz Boas (1920) "The Methods of Ethnology." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 138–147
- A. L. Kroeber: On the Principle of Order in Civilization as Exemplified by Changes of Fashion (1919). In *Anthropological Theory*
- Ruth Benedict (1929) "The Science of Custom: The Bearing of Anthropology on Contemporary Thought." In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 158–167
- Margaret Mead (1928) "Introduction to Coming of Age in Samoa." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 168–175
- Zora Neale Hurston (1935) From Of Mules and Men. In Anthropological Theory, Chapter 12

Week Six. October 13

- Structural Functionalism and (Psychological) Functionalism
- Reemergence of evolutionary thought

Readings:

- Bronislaw Malinowski (1939) The Group and the Individual in Functional Analysis. American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 44, No. 6, pp. 938-964
- A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1958) Social Structure. In *Readings*, Chapter 18
- Leslie White: Energy and the Evolution of Culture (1943) In *Anthropological Theory*, Chapter 16
- Julian Steward: The Patrilineal Band (1955) In Anthropological Theory, Chapter 17

Week Seven. October 20

- Neomaterialism
- Structuralism

Readings:

- Marvin Harris (1966) "The Cultural Ecology of India's Sacred Cattle." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 309–224
- Roy Rappaport Ritual Regulation of Environmental Relations Among New Guinea People (1967). In *Anthropological Theory*, Chapter 19
- Claude Levi-Strauss (1960) "Four Winnebago Myths: A Structural Sketch." In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 345–353
- Edmund Leach (1972) "Structuralism in Social Anthropology." In Readings, pp. 173–185
- Marshall Sahlins (1985) Introduction to Islands of History. In Readings, pp. 186–194

Week Eight. October 27

- Interpretive Anthropology
- Early Feminist Anthropology

Readings:

- Mary Douglas (1966) "External Boundaries." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 439–448
- Victor Turner: Symbols in Ndembu Ritual (1967)
- Clifford Geertz (1973) "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *Readings*, pp. 320–337
- Sally Slocum (1975) "Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology." In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 408–417
- Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1974) Introduction to Woman, Culture, and Society.
 Stanford University Press

Week Nine. November 3 Postmodernism

Readings:

- Pierre Bourdieu (1980) "Structures, Habitus, Practices." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 496–512
- Michel Foucault (1976) "The Incitement to Discourse." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 513–531
- Michel Foucault (1991) "Governmentality." In The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
- Renato Rosaldo: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage (1989). In Anthropological Theory

Week Ten. November 10

- The crisis of representation
- Postcolonial critique

Readings:

- Allan Hanson (1989) "The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic." In Anthropological Theory, pp. 532–546
- James Clifford (1986) "Partial Truths." In Readings, pp. 454-474
- Talal Asad (1973) "Introduction" [Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter]. In Readings, pp. 383–390
- Edward Said (1979) "Knowing the Oriental." In *Readings*, pp. 391–403

Week Eleven. November 17 Gender, Race, and Culture

Readings:

- Katherine Lutz (1995) The Gender of Theory. In *Women Writing Culture*, Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon eds. pp. 249–266
- Chandra Mohanty (1988) "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminist Review* 30: 61–88
- Lila Abu-Lughod: A Tale of Two Pregnancies (1995). In Anthropological Theory.
- Tom Boellstorff: The Emergence of Political Homophobia in Indonesia: Masculinity and National Belonging (2004)
- Lynn Bolles (2013) Telling the Story Straight: Black Feminist Intellectual Thought in Anthropology. In Transforming Anthropology, 21(1), 57–71

Week Twelve, November 24

The Other Anthropological Theory

Readings:

- Faye Harrison (2016) Engaging Theory in the New Millennium. In *Routledge Companion to Contemporary Anthropology*, Chapter 2
- Aleksandar Boskovic and Thomas Eriksen (2008) "Introduction to Other People's Anthropologies." In Readings, pp. 586–599

Week Thirteen. December 1 Globalization and Mobility

Readings:

- Eric R. Wolf. Facing Power Old Insights, New Questions (1990). In Anthropological Theory
- Arjun Appadurai: Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy (1990). In Anthropological Theory
- Theodore C. Bestor: Kaiten-zushi and Konbini: Japanese Food Culture in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (2006) In *Anthropological Theory*
- Aihwa Ong (1999) Introduction. In *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 1–26
- David Harvey (1989) "Time-Space Compression and the Postmodern Condition." In *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*

Make up class for Week Three. December 7 (Tuesday) Agency and Structure, anthropology of the good, and other current trends

Required

- Philippe Bourgois: From Jíbaro to Crack Dealer: Confronting the Restructuring of Capitalism in El Barrio (1995)
- Sherry Ortner: Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency (2006)
- Veena Das: Engaging with the Life of the Other: Love and Everyday Life (2010)
- Cheryl Mattingly: Luck Friendship and the Narrative Self (2014)
- Bruno Latour (2005) "Introduction" to Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–17

Further readings

• Lila Abu-Lughod (2008) Speaking About Anthropological Theory. In *A History of Anthropological Theory*, pp. 203–204

- Laura Nader (2011) Ethnography as Theory. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1(1): 211–219
- "The Early History of Anthropological Theory," 2016. In *Readings*, pp. 3–10 (until "Marxism")
- Charles Darwin (1871) "The Descent of Man." In *Readings*, pp. 57–66
- Nineteenth-Century Evolutionism. In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 7–15
- Harry Liebersohn (2009) Anthropology Before Anthropology. In A New History of Anthropology, edited by Henrika Kuklick, pp. 17–32
- Émile Durkheim (1915) "Introduction to *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.*" In *Readings*, pp. 75–88
- Benjamin L Whorf (1922) "The Relations of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language." In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 176–193
- Sigmund Freud (1930) "Civilization and its Discontents." In *Readings*, pp. 67–75
- A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1958) "Social Structure." In *Readings*, pp. 195–201
- Julian Steward (1955) "The Patrilineal Band." Anthropological Theory, pp. 273–288
- Clifford Geertz (1972) "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cock Fight." In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 468–490
- Karen Sacks (1974) "Engels revisited: Women, the Organization of Production, and Private Property." In *Woman, Culture, and Society*, pp. 207–222
- Michel Foucault (1961) "The Birth of the Asylum." In *Readings*, pp. 421–436
- Judith Butler (1988) "Performative Acts and Gender Construction." In *Readings*, pp. 347–358
- Strathern, Marilyn (1987), 'An Awkward Relationship: The Case of Feminism and Anthropology', *Signs*.12:(2): 276-292
- Kirin, Narayan (1993), 'How native is Native Anthropology?', *American anthropologist*, New Series, 95(3): 671-686.
- Spivak, Gayatri (1995), 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in D. Landry and G. Maclean (eds.), *The Spivak Reader*, New York: Routledge.
- George Marcus and Michael Fischer (1986) "A Crisis of Representation in the Human Sciences." In *Readings*, pp. 475–483
- Rosaldo, Renato (1989) "Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage." In Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993, pp. 1–21
- Mascia-Lees, Francis, Patricia Sharpe & Colleen Cohen (1989) "The Postmodernist Turn in Anthropology: Cautions from a Feminist Perspective." *Signs* 15(1): 7–33
- Thomas Csordas (1993) "Somatic Modes of Attention." Cultural Anthropology, 8 (2): 135–156
- Michael Jackson "Knowledge of the Body." In Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, Chapter 27

- Emily Martin "The End of the Body?" In Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, Chapter 28
- Jonathan Friedman and Kajsa Ekholm Friedman (2013) "Globalization as a Discourse of Hegemonic Crisis." In *Anthropological Theory*, pp. 649–668
- Arjun Appadurai (1986) "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value." In The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, edited by Arjun Appadurai, pp. 3–63
- Aiwha Ong (2007) "Neoliberalism as a Mobile Technology." Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 32(1): 3–8
- Marilyn Strathern "Persons and partible persons." In Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory, edited by Matei Candea, Chapter 15
- Bruno Latour (1996) "On Actor-Network-Theory: A Few Clarifications." Soziale Welt, vol. 47, pp. 369–381
- Eduardo Kohn "Introduction" to How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013
- Soumhya Venkatesan (2010) "Ontology is Just Another Word for Culture," *Critique of Anthropology* 30(2): 152–200
- Anna Tsing (2004) "Introduction" to Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press
- Nancy Scheper-Hughes "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology."
 In Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, Chapter 30
- Roy D'Andrade "Moral Models in Anthropology." In Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, Chapter 41
- Brian MASSUMI, Introduction to Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation
- Yael NAVARO-YASHIN, "Affective Spaces: Melancholic Objects: ruination and the production of anthropological knowledge," JRAI

The AAA's stance on race: http://www.aaanet.org/issues/press/upload/Georgia-Anti-Immigration-Law.pdf

Policies

Disability Services. If you need special accommodations or classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the University's Wellness and Counselling Center (https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB) no later than the third week of classes.

Academic Integrity. The University has recently updated its policy on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating. You can find the information here: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng httm files %282013-14%29/p06.htm Read it carefully: every student is expected to comply with the policy; otherwise, if you are suspected of violating these obligations you will be subject to the outlined sanctions. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me or your TA about this!

Late Work. Late or incomplete assignments will be marked down: a grade will be subtracted for each late day.