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ANTH 3380  
Fall 2020  
Tuesday 3.30 - 5.15 PM  
Venue: via Zoom

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## ECONOMY, CULTURE AND POWER

**Updated Registration Links (for classes from 22 September) available on Blackboard**



This course is an introduction to economic anthropology. For anthropologists, the economy is not numbers and markets, but how societies organize labor; produce, distribute, and consume goods; and acquire values. People in different cultures have different ways of making a living, but they are not entirely different; what the patterns and rules are? Is it human nature to be selfish and always want more? Why do some people and countries have more wealth than others? Is poverty natural and inevitable? These are not just matters of economy, but power. The focuses of this course are twofold. On the one hand, we examine the nature of the economy. On the other hand, this course is also an inquiry about humanity -- anthropology's core concern.

Starting with Polanyi's argument and the classic debate between formalists and substantivists, this course introduces different theoretical approaches regarding

economic life and organization. We then contemplate core concepts in economic anthropology, including gift, exchange, property, money, work, labor, market and resistance. In the third part of the semester, we focus on issues that concern us in our capitalist and neoliberal world. This year, we will examine consumerism, environmental degradation, migration, freelancing, values of crafts, and financialization. At the end of the semester, we wrap up the course by discussing possible courses of action such as universal basic income and degrowth.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students taking this course will:

- learn to see the cultural nature of the economy and power;
- be able to understand how economic behavior that seems irrational in capitalist contexts can make sense in other cultural contexts;
- learn how to combine universalizing theories and ethnographic understanding of particular cultures;
- understand how capitalism shapes the way we see the world and affects our behavior;
- be aware of the history of consumerism, environmental degradation, global labor migration, fragmentation of work, emerging values of crafts, financialization, and see how they are related to each other;
- acquire a political and economic perspective to understand human behaviors, cultures, and choices.

### **Readings:**

This course uses various articles and book chapters. However, we will read several chapters from the following two titles. You are encouraged to acquire a copy for your reference.

Wilk, Richard R., and Lisa Cliggett.

2007 Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology. (2nd edition). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Robbins, Richard.

2014 Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism (6th edition). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

The following book is also an excellent reference for this course. You can access the e-book via the CUHK library system.

James, G. Carrier. ed.

2012 A Handbook of Economic Anthropology. Second Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Students are expected to read **beforehand** and participate actively in lectures and tutorial discussions.

Participation and contribution 20%

Analysis and synthesis 80%

*Choose 2 of the following options:*

Journal: Highlighted Reflection (Part I) 40% Due: 10 Oct

Blog: Synthesis on a Poster (Part II)	40%	Due: 07 Nov
Essay: Topic-centered analysis	40%	Due: 05 Dec

Participation marks are based on your participation and contribution in both lectures and tutorials. You will be evaluated by whether you have prepared for a topic (e.g., do the reading) and how much you help the class understand the issues and further our discussions.

Journal: Highlighted Reflection: In the first part of this course, we address the following questions: **What is human economic life? What are economic anthropologists interested in and have been arguing? What are the relationship between human nature, social structure, and our economic life?** This assignment aims to help you record your learning, keep and develop your reflection, and produce tentative concluding writing. We will use journals on Blackboard for this assignment. The journal allows instructors to have continuous communication with students. Your work will be marked mainly by your journal's concluding entry (no more than 1000 words in English and 2000 words in Chinese).

Blog: Synthesis on a Poster: The second part of our course deal with a few keywords in economic anthropology, including **exchange/gifting, money, labor, work, property, and market**. In these weeks, we will reflect upon these concepts' meanings, the historical contexts from which they emerge, and our critiques. You will choose one keyword and use individual blogs on Blackboard to record and facilitate your thoughts' development. The assignment graded will be your last entry, which should be a one-page poster that demonstrates your reflections on the concept chosen.

Essay: Topic-centered analysis: In the third and last part of our course, we analyze and reflect on our capitalist and neoliberal world. Capitalism and neoliberalism are the political and economic systems that have largely shape our lives – our values, understanding of who we are, and imaginations of human societies. Inspired by these focuses, this assignment asks you to write a critical essay of a contemporary issue. You are encouraged to engage with news, books, films, podcasts, etc. The paper should be no longer than 1500 words (or 3000 words in Chinese).

**\*Formats and other requirements:** 1) Please use double-spaced, font size 12 or larger, and standard margins. 2) All written assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide ([https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login\\_CUHK.jspx](https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx)). An assignment without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded.

## Course Outline:

### WK1 (Sep 8): Introduction

Syllabus and course overview

*No reading this week*

*No tutorial on Sep 7*

## Part I: The Debate

### WK 2 (Sep 15): The Market and Human Nature

Wilk & Cliggett. "1: Economic Anthropology" & Part of "2: Economics and the Problem of Human Nature." Pp. 1-29 & 40-47.

#### *Recommended:*

Isacc, Larry (2012[2005]) "Karl Polanyi" and "Provisioning." In *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, Pp. 13-25 & 77-94. James G. Carrier, ed. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Hart, K. and Hann, C. (2009) "Introduction: Learning from Polanyi 1." In K. Hart and C. Hann, eds. *Market and Society: The Great Transformation Today*. Pp. 1-16. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Polanyi, Karl (1968) "The Economy as Instituted Process." In E. E. Leclair and H. K. Schneider, eds. *Economic Anthropology*. Pp. 122-142. London: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

### WK 3 (Sep 22): Self-Interest and Modern Economics

Wilk & Cliggett. Chapter 3 "Self-interest and Neoclassical Microeconomics." Pp. 49-81.

**News:** "How Economists Came to Dominate the Conversation." *The New York Times*. January 23, 2015.

### WK 4 (Sep 29): Political Economy in Anthropology

Wilk & Cliggett. "4: Social and Political Economy." Pp. 83-115.

**Video:** *Can We Do it Ourselves?* Patrik Witkowsky (2015).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfaFriFAz1k>

#### *Recommended:*

Eades, J.S. (2012[2005]) "Anthropology, political economy and world-system theory." In *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, Pp. 26-40. James G. Carrier, ed. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Robotham, Don (2012[2005]) "Political economy." In *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, Pp. 41-57. James G. Carrier, ed. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Hart, Keith (1983) "The Contribution of Marxism to Economic Anthropology." In *Economic Anthropology: Topics and Theories*. Sutti Ortiz, ed. Pp. 105-144. Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America.

### **WK 5 (Oct 6): Rationality, Morals and Choices**

Wilk & Cliggett. "5: The Moral Human: Cultural Economics." Pp. 117-151.

#### *Recommended:*

Thompson, E. P. (1971) "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century." *Past & Present* 50: 76-136.

Ferguson, James (2006) "De-moralizing Economies." In *Global Shadows: African in the Neoliberal World Order*. Pp. 69-88. Duke University Press.

➤ ***The journal reflection is due on 10 Oct (via Blackboard).***

## **Part II: Keywords**

### **WK 6 (Oct 13): Gifts, Exchange and Reciprocity**

Wilk & Cliggett. "6: Gifts and Exchange" Pp. 153-175.

Hart, Keith (2007) "Marcel Mauss: In pursuit of the whole: a review essay." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 49(2): 473-485.

#### *Recommended:*

Mauss, Marcel (2002) *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York and London: W. W. Norton.

Malinowski, B. (1920) "Kula: the circulating exchange of valuables in the archipelagos of eastern New Guinea." *Man* 20:97-105.

Laidlaw, J. (2000) "A free gift makes no friends." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 6 (4): 617-634.

### **WK 7 (Oct 20): Land, Property, and Money**

Hann, Chris (1993). 'From production to property.' *Man* 28(2):299-320.

Robbins. "The Consumer, the Laborer, the Capitalist, and the Nation-State in the society of Perpetual Growth." Pp. 1-11.

#### *Recommended:*

Hann, Chris (2012[2005]) "Property." In *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, Pp. 110-124. James, G. Carrier, ed. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Taussig, M. (1977) "The genesis of capitalism amongst a South American peasantry: Devil's labour and the baptism of money." In *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 19 (2): 130-55.

Parry, J.P. and Bloch, M. (1989) 'Introduction.' In *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Pp. 1-32. Parry, J.P and Bloch, M., eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hart, Keith (2000) "Capitalism: Making Money with Money." In *Money in an Unequal World: Keith Hart and His Memory Bank*. Pp. 73-118. New York and London: Texere.

**Video:** *Nosedive*. Black Mirror, Season 3.

**\*No Tutorials on 26 October (for week 8)**

**WK 8 (Oct 27): Work, Alienation, and Resistance**

Robbins. "10: Peasant Protest, Rebellion, and Resistance." Pp. 282-305.

Carrier, J. (1992) "Emerging alienation in production: a Maussian history." In *Man* 27(3) pp.539-558.

*Recommended:*

Ong, Aihwa. (1987) "9: Spirits of Resistance." In *Spirits of resistance and capitalist discipline: factory women in Malaysia*. Pp. 195-213. State University of New York Press.

Pun, Ngai (2005) "Approaching a Minor Genre of Resistance." In *Made in China: Women Factory Workers in a Global Workplace*. Pp. 189-196. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

**Part III: Contemporary Issues**

**WK9 (Nov 3): Consumerism, Affluenza and Environment**

Robbins. "1: Constructing the Consumer" & "7: Environment and Consumption." Pp. 12-34 & 168-219.

*Recommended:*

Junghans, T. (2001) "Marketing selves: constructing civil society and selfhood in postsocialist Hungary." *Critique of Anthropology* 21(4): 383-400.

Scheper-Hughes, N. (2000) "The Global Traffic in Human Organs." *Current Anthropology* 41(2):191-224.

**News:** "Conspicuous Consumption? Yes, but It's Not Crazy." *The New York Times*, November 22nd, 2014

**News:** "The Economics (and Nostalgia) of Dead Malls." *The New York Times*, Jan 3rd, 2015

➤ ***The blog poster is due on 7 Nov (via Blackboard).***

**WK 10 (Nov 10): Migration and Precarity**

Robbins. "5: Population Growth, Migration, and Urbanization." Pp. 133-167.

Kosugi, R. (2008) "Introduction: The Free Worker." In *Escape from Work: Freelancing Youth and the Challenge to Corporate Japan*. Pp. 1-15. Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press.

*Recommended:*

Robbins. "2: The Laborer in the Culture of Capitalism." Pp. 35-56.

- Prentice, Rebecca (2017) "Microenterprise development, industrial labour, and the seductions of precarity." *Critique of Anthropology*, 37 (2): 201-222.
- Bolt, M. (2013). "Producing permanence: employment, domesticity and the flexible future on a South African border farm." *Economy and Society* 42(2): 197-225.
- Gillette, Maris Boyd (2014) "Labor and Precariousness in China's Porcelain Capital." *Anthropology of work review*, 35(1): 25-39.
- News:** "Workers on Tap." *The Economist*, January 3rd, 2015

### **WK 11 (Nov 17): Crafts and the Politics of Values**

- Herzfeld, M. (2004) "Embodying Value." In *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*. Pp. 193-210 Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Grimes, K. and B. L. Milgram (2000) "Introduction: Facing the Challenges of Artisan Production in the Global Market." In *Artisans and Cooperatives: Developing Alternate Trade For the Global Economy*. Pp. 3-10. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

#### *Recommended:*

- Appadurai, Arjun.  
1986 "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of value. In Arjun Appadurai ed. *The Social Life of Things*. Pp. 3-63.
- Errington, S. (1994) "What became authentic primitive art?" *Cultural Anthropology* 9(2): 201-227.
- Venkatesan, S. (2009) "Rethinking agency: persons and things in the heterotopia of 'traditional Indian craft.'" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15(1): 78-95

### **WK 12 (Nov 24): Financialization, Debt and Risk**

- Graeber, David (2012[2005]) "Value: Anthropological Theories of Value." In *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, Pp. 439-454. James, G. Carrier, ed. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Zaloom, C. (2004) "The Productive Life of Risk," *Cultural Anthropology* 19(3): 365-391.

#### *Recommended:*

- Graeber, David (2011) "A Brief Treatise on the Moral Grounds of Economic Relations." In *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. Pp. 89-126. Brooklyn: Melville House.
- Roitman, J. (2003) "Unsanctioned Wealth; or the productivity of debt in Northern Cameroon." *Public Culture* 15(2): 211-237.
- News:** "Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies are useless." *The Economist*, August 30, 2018.

### **WK13 (Dec 1): Reflection and Courses of Action: Universal Basic Income and Degrowth**

Robbins. "13: Solving Global Problems: Some Solutions and Courses of Action."  
Pp.353-378.

#### *Recommended:*

Ferguson, James (2012) *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*. Durham: Duke University Press.

**News:** "Savage capitalism is back – and it will not tame itself." *The Guardian*, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

**News:** "The lapsing of Finland's universal basic income trial." *The Economist*, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

➤ ***The essay is due on 5 Dec (via Blackboard).***

### **Grade descriptors**

#### **Grade      Overall course**

A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

### **Policies**

Late Submission: Late submission will suffer a fraction of a grade per day. For example, an A will become an A-.

Academic Honesty: You must cite properly

(guidelines: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/tstyle.doc>), and please refer to the university website

( <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/index.htm> and [http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing\\_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf](http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf)) to avoid plagiarism.



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