

Contemporary Anthropological Theory

Lecture: T.C. Cheng Bldg (UCC) C5, Monday 2:30–4:15pm
Tutorial 1: UCC C5, Monday 4:30–5.15pm
Tutorial 2: UCC C5, Monday 5:30–6.15pm

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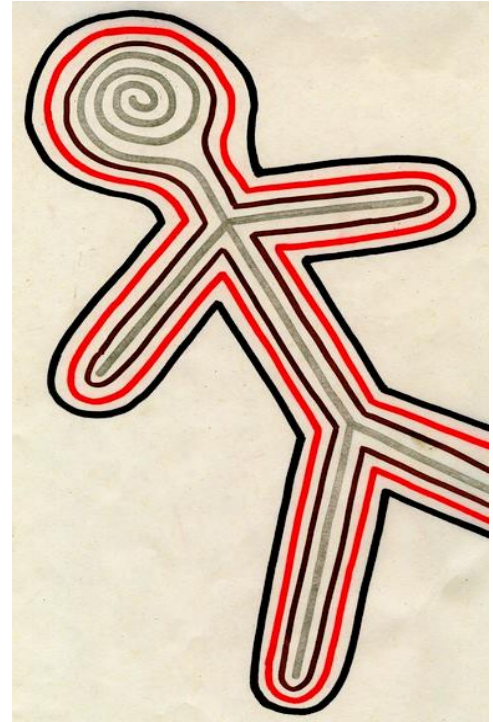


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The second half of the 20th century was marked by real world challenges to anthropological theory that resulted in breaking away from “grand,” generalizing, objectivity-focused, modernist, and Eurocentric theories. Anthropologists began questioning the biases and power relations embedded in representation of others and the researcher’s positionality in ethnographic accounts. As a result, anthropology saw a rise of theories that critically accounted for the salience of colonialism, gender, class, ethnicity, race, and nationality, not only among the people studied by anthropologists but also among anthropologists themselves.

Although not a comprehensive overview of all contemporary theories, this reading-intensive and discussion-intensive course will serve as a map for a new theoretical diversity. This course begins by exploring the developments in the second half of the 20th century: from postcolonial theory, subaltern studies, postmodernism, poststructuralism, theories of body, embodiment, and gender to queer theory, agency and structure, actor-network theory, and globalization. Then, it proceeds to the texts published in the 2000s on a range of issues from media, science, medicine, and technology, violence, affect, migration, citizenship, ontology, and personhood. We will discuss major theoretical debates and ongoing controversies that emerge from different scholarly views on how to make sense of the changing world and what should be the position of anthropologists within it. Thus, we will learn how anthropologists think and write about social formations and human experience, describing the complexity of ordinary and exceptional moments of life.

Learning outcomes

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

- name key theorists in anthropology and other disciplines who have influenced the development of anthropology in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century
- identify major anthropological theories, concepts, genres, and debates of this period
- explain the strengths and weaknesses of the examined theories and theoretical concepts
- provide examples of the application of the examined theories to ethnographic studies and the everyday life

Learning material

Prior to each lecture you are required to read an assigned Textbook Chapter and at least one Primary Text, as indicated in Class Schedule.

All readings are posted on Blackboard. I strongly encourage you to read or skim all assigned Primary Texts, especially if you have not read the works of the assigned scholars previously. However, for the tutorials, you will need to know only one Primary Text in detail; the rest of the texts are optional and are in gray and marked with an asterisk*

Useful resources

- The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology (CEA) is a great teaching and learning resource hosted at the University of Cambridge. It has comprehensive articles on key anthropological concepts, theories, and scholars <http://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/articles-a-to-z>
- 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/>

Assessment

Participation

Exchange of ideas is the foundation of learning; therefore, you are required to participate in class discussions both during the lectures and tutorials. Your TA or me will mark your participation after every class and will calculate the total days of participation at the end of the term. If you prefer to participate in writing, rather than speaking, let me know and we will find a way!

Mid-term exam

To ensure that you are familiar with the main scholars, theories and concepts, we will have an exam which will include multiple-choice, true-or-false, and fill-the-gap questions.
October 18 in class. NO MAKE-UP EXAM

Final essay

Option 1: Theory of love

We hear about love in movies and songs, we might have even experienced it ourselves. But what is it? Is it a social phenomenon that facilitates social cohesion or is it an invented concept associated with modernity and capitalism? Does love transcend borders and cultures, or is the same class and racial background a prerequisite for love? Does love exist in your cognition, or is it embodied? Does gender make an influence on how one experiences love? Can animals and non-human objects experience love?

Option 2: Theory of robots

We encounter robots in various forms: Alexa and Siri, robot floor cleaners, robots that purify air in shopping malls, robots that deliver food to COVID patients in quarantine, driverless cars, chat bots, and even a RobotTea that makes you a smoothie. Robots participate in such fields as medicine, education, cooking, social work, and military. But what are they to humans? Is it a new way to create social hierarchies, or a way to promote egalitarianism? Do robots have agency? Are they persons? Should the relationship between humans and robots be regulated by law and ethics? Do robots have race, gender, and culture? Why do we fear or get attached to some robots?

In the final paper, you are invited to examine love or robots through any of the theories you have studied in this class. The questions in Option 1 and Option 2 are just examples of what you can explore in your paper. Feel free to explore another question or aspect of the anthropology of love or robots. The detailed guidelines will be posted on Blackboard

- a) November 22: submit a short description (200 words max) of your chosen topic **in class**
- b) December 20, 23:59: submit the final paper **via Blackboard**. 900-1000 words (excluding bibliography), Times New Roman, 12, 1-inch margins

Grade descriptors

Grade	Participation	Midterm exam	Final exam
A	<p>You participate all the time (but you can skip one class without an explanation).</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your questions always show a nuanced understanding of the course material</p>	57-60 points (95-100%)	<p>your answers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of class material and all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing</p> <p>The exam is original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time</p>
A -	<p>You participate almost all the time, but missed or didn't participate in two classes</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your questions almost always show a nuanced understanding of the course material</p>	54-56 points (90-94%)	<p>Your answers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of class material and almost all concepts; information is factually accurate; arguments are convincing, even if occasionally contain minor errors</p> <p>The exam is original, of a required length and format, and submitted on time</p>
B+	<p>You participate in the majority of classes, but you missed or didn't participate in three classes</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read the assigned readings, and your questions always show a good understanding of the course material</p>	51-53 points (85-89%)	<p>Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain several minor errors, and / or slightly deviate from required length and format.</p> <p>The exam is original and submitted on time.</p>
B	<p>You participate in the majority of classes, you missed or didn't participate in four classes</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read most of the assigned readings, and your questions almost always show a good understanding of the course material</p>	48-50 points (80-84%)	<p>Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but may lack clarity, contain many minor errors, and / or deviate from required length and format.</p> <p>The exam is submitted on time. It is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution</p>

<p>B -</p>	<p>You participate in the majority of classes, but you missed or didn't participate in five classes</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read most of the assigned readings, and your questions sometimes show a good understanding of the course material</p>	<p>45-47 points (75-79%)</p>	<p>Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of class material but lack clarity, contain minor errors and a few major logical flaws, and / or deviate from required length and format.</p> <p>The exam is submitted on time. It is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution</p>
<p>C +</p>	<p>You missed or didn't participate in six classes</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, but your questions show that your understanding of the course material is somewhat limited</p>	<p>42-44 points (70-74%)</p>	<p>Your answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and/or often deviate from required length and format.</p> <p>The exam is submitted on time or a day late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>You missed or didn't participate in seven classes</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, but you rarely ask questions or they show that your understanding of the course material is limited</p>	<p>39-41 points (65-69%)</p>	<p>Your answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format.</p> <p>The exam is submitted on time or a day late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution</p>
<p>C -</p>	<p>You missed or didn't participate in eight classes</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, but you almost never ask questions or they show that your understanding of the course material is limited</p>	<p>36-38 points (60-64%)</p>	<p>Your answers show an acceptable level of understanding of class material but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws. Your work does not follow the required length and format.</p> <p>The exam is submitted a day or two late. It is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution</p>
<p>D +</p>	<p>You missed or didn't participate in 9-10 classes</p> <p>You show a low level of engagement and persistent distraction by the use of mobile phones or other technology.</p>	<p>33-35 points (55-59%)</p>	<p>Your answers show minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints.</p> <p>It is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the</p>

	Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, but you never ask questions or they show that your understanding of the course material is very limited		required length and format (answers are too short), and/or are submitted a few days late.
D	<p>You missed or didn't participate in 11-12 classes</p> <p>You show a low level of engagement and persistent distraction by the use of mobile phones or other technology.</p> <p>Your comments demonstrate that you have read some of the assigned readings, but you never ask questions or they show that your understanding of the course material is very limited</p>	30-32 points (50-54%)	<p>Your answers show minimal understanding of class material. It lacks effort, hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints.</p> <p>It is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and submitted many days late.</p>
F	You almost never participate; or you miss all the lectures/tutorials	29 points and below (49% and below)	Your exam is submitted more than a week late or not submitted at all. The answers are extremely short, factually incorrect, biased, and/or contain instances of plagiarism.

Class schedule

There are two required texts each week: one is a textbook chapter that summarizes the theory in question and the other is a primary text. The required texts are in black, optional are in grey.

Week 1. September 6. Contemporary Anthropological Theory and Its Roots

- (optional) Murphy and Erickson (2016) The Early History of Anthropological Theory. In *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, University of Toronto Press

Week 2. September 13. Postcolonial Theory

- Susan Bayly (2016) "Colonialism / Postcolonialism." In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* Online

Primary texts

- Allan Hanson (1989) The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 91, No. 4, pp. 890-902
- *Edward Said (1989) "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocuters" *Critical Inquiry* 15: 205-225
- *Chandra Mohanty (1988) "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Feminist Review* 30: 61-88

Week 3. September 20. Postmodernism: Historical Context, Theory, and Method

- Mark Moberg (2019) "Claims and critiques of anthropological knowledge." In *Engaging Anthropological Theory: A Social and Political History*, Second Edition, Chapter 2

Primary texts

- 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
- *Lila Abu-Lughod "Writing Against Culture." In *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology*, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, Chapter 38

Week 4. September 27. Writing Culture and the Feminist Critique

- James Laidlaw "Interpretive Cultural Anthropology: Geertz and His 'Writing-Culture' Critics." In *Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory*, edited by Matei Candea, Chapter 8

Primary texts

- James Clifford (1986) "Introduction: Partial Truths." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-26. Also available in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, Chapter 35. Erickson, Paul A. and Liam D. Murphy. Fifth Edition 2017
- *Ruth Behar (1996) Introduction: Out of exile. In *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon

Week 5. October 4. Power and Knowledge

- James Laidlaw "The Anthropological Lives of Michel Foucault." In *Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory*, edited by Matei Candea, Chapter 10

Primary texts

- Emily Martin (1991) The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles. *Signs*, 16(3), 485-501
- *Michel Foucault (1976) "The Incitement to Discourse." In *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History*, edited by McGee, R. Jon and Richard L. Warms, 2017. Boston: McGraw-Hill, pp. 513-531
- *Rabinow, Paul and Nikolas Rose (2006) "Biopower Today." *BioSocieties*, 1: 195-217

Week 6. October 11. Science, Medicine, and Technology

- Matei Candea "Science." In Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/science>

Primary texts:

- Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, "The 'Anthropology' of Science." Excerpt from *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986 [1979]), pp. 27-33.
- *Margaret M. Lock, Vinh-Kim Nguyen (2010): Introduction to An anthropology of Biomedicine. Wiley Blackwell

- RadioLab: “Henrietta’s Tumor,” (both audio and video clips).

Week 7. October 18.

Mid-term exam today

Week 8. October 25. Globalization, Capitalism, Neoliberalism

- Natalie Morningstar (2020) Neoliberalism. In *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/neoliberalism>

Primary texts:

- Paige West (2010) Making the Market: Specialty Coffee, Generational Pitches, and Papua New Guinea. *Antipode* Vol. 42 No. 3, pp 690–718
- *Arjun Appadurai (1990) “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.” *Public Culture*, 2(2): 1–24

Week 9. November 1. Migration and mobility

- Mark Moberg (2019) “Postmodern political economy and sensibilities.” In *Engaging Anthropological Theory: A Social and Political History*, Second Edition, Chapter 14
- *Sian Lazar (2016) Citizenship. In *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/citizenship>

Primary text:

- Aihwa Ong (1989) Introduction to *Flexible Citizenship*.
- *Aihwa Ong (2007) “Neoliberalism as a Mobile Technology.” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 32(1): 3–8

Week 10. November 8. Body, Embodiment, and Gender

- Jessica Johnson “Feminist Anthropology and the Question of Gender.” In *Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory*, edited by Matei Candea, Chapter 12
- *Maryon McDonald “From ‘The Body’ to ‘Embodiment’, with Help from Phenomenology.” In *Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory*, edited by Matei Candea, Chapter 11

Primary texts:

- Katherine Lutz (1995) “The Gender of Theory.” In *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, pp. 249–266
- *Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí “The Invention of Women.” In *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology*, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, Chapter 44

Week 11. November 15. Race, Class, Intersectionality

- Kathryn Henne (2018) Gender and Race, Intersectionality Theory of. In *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, H. Callan (Ed.). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118924396.wbiea1814>

Primary text:

- Faye Harrison (2019) *Unraveling Race for the Twenty-first century*. In *Exotic No More, Second Edition: Anthropology for the Contemporary World*, edited by Jeremy MacClancy. University of Chicago Press

Week 12. November 22. Queer theory in anthropology

- Ara Wilson (2019) *Queer anthropology*. In *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology* <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/queer-anthropology>

Primary text:

- Kath Weston (1997) *The Monkey Cage and the Red Desert*. In *Families we choose: lesbians, gays, kinship*. Columbia University Press
- *Ara Wilson (2006) *Queering Asia. Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* Issue 14, November 2006

Get your final paper topic approved by today

Week 13. November 29. Ontology, Multispecies ethnography and other current trends

- Paolo Heywood "The Ontological Turn." In *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/ontological-turn>

Primary text:

- Eduardo Kohn "Introduction" to *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013
- *Lesley Sharp "Hybridity: Hybrid Bodies of the Scientific Imaginary." In *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology*, edited by Henrietta Moore and Todd Sanders, Chapter 28
- *Latour, Bruno (2005) *Objects too have agency*. In *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 63-86

December 20 Final Essay Due

Policies and Support

Educational Technology. This class relies on the use of Blackboard. All class communications, announcements, assignment guidelines, and homework submissions will be done through it. Note that it uses the email address assigned to you by the University, so it is your responsibility to have an electronic mail forwarded to your main email address.

Academic Integrity. The University has recently updated its policy on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng.htm#files_2013-14_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!

Special Accommodation. 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 class.

Technology and Cell Phones. Although I recognize the value of technology in aiding the learning process, I also understand that it can be a major hindrance to learning, when used inappropriately. Therefore, the use of laptops and mobile phones is not permitted in class (unless it is necessary for class activities). Mobile phones must be kept in your bags, turned off, or on silent mode (NOT on vibrate) as to avoid distracting your peers. E-readers and tablets are allowed only during tutorials when we discuss assigned articles and you need the texts in front of you. Remember, browsing Facebook or any other website during the class distracts not only you but also persons sitting next to you, and such conduct is disrespectful to me and your classmates. Therefore, disruptions caused by phone calls, texting, emailing, or the use of any other communication technologies during a class will result **in the reduction of your final grade**. If you are expecting an important call, you should talk to me before the class.

Classroom Recording. To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, **you must not record** lectures and/or activities during the class or tutorials without my permission in advance, solely for your own private use.

Late Work and Absence. Late or incomplete assignments will be marked down: a grade will be subtracted **for each late day**. Class attendance is not required, but if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to copy class notes and go over the powerpoint presentations, otherwise, it will most likely result in poor understanding of class material and, ultimately, in a low grade. You are welcome to come to my office during office hours to go over the missed lectures!

Discussion Rules. We will discuss many interesting, important and potentially controversial topics. I expect you to be **polite and respectful** of your classmates' opinions, limit your statements to academic (not emotional) arguments, and not use offensive language or judgmental statements.

Grade Review. If you want to discuss and contest your grade, you can send me an email to set up an appointment during my office hours when we will go over your exam/written work and decide on a grade together. During this process, I can both mark your original grade up, if you demonstrate evidence that you know the material well, or mark it down.

Independent Learning Center. If you need help with communication and learning skills, the University has a great resource for you. You can schedule a consultation or attend workshops on various strategies for improving learning outcomes <https://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/EN/mission.aspx>