

Anthropology 115, Spring 2009

PROSEMINAR: KEY CONTROVERSIES IN SOCIO-CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30-3:45, SCCT 3021

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-4:30pm and by appointment

Description: This proseminar introduces the discipline of cultural anthropology—its history and its contemporary practice—via an exploration of the emergence, development and (sometimes) resolution of key controversies concerning methodological, epistemological, practical and ethical aspects of researching and writing about the disparate yet related forms of human existence. Examples will be drawn from diverse geographical areas and temporal eras. The underlying goal is to trace continuities and discontinuities in anthropological thought and practice over the last hundred years.

We will focus on three main controversies that draw together many crucial questions about where anthropology has been and where it might be going. The first, the “Bushman” debate about the Ju’hoansi and other San (“Bushman”) Peoples of Southern Africa foregrounds issues such as the place of peripheral people in the wider world and calls into question long-held understandings of what the proper subject material of anthropology really is. Our second controversy has to do with the diverse ways in which anthropologists have understood the sexual politics of traditional Samoan culture. The Mead–Freeman controversy brings several issues into focus: claims to scientific objectivity vs. interpretive approaches to culture, the effects of an ethnographer’s own social location on the knowledge they produce and the difficulty of capturing culture in words. Finally, we will spend several weeks on the controversy that in recent years has come to surround Napoleon Chagnon’s work on the Yanomami, a South American indigenous group once renowned as the “Fierce People.” This controversy centers on issues of fieldwork ethics and representational choices. It pushes us to ask, what does the anthropologist owe the people she studies and how can one be true in one’s written work to those one writes about?

In addition to these three key controversies, we also cover other relevant debates in the history of the field including arguments about the merits of fieldwork, the difference between studying culture and society and the question of anthropology of as science or literary genre. Reading materials will be drawn from both contemporary and classic sources and will be supplemented by regular film viewings.

Books (Available for purchase at College Bookstore):

REQUIRED (6):

1. Robert Borofsky, *Yanomami: The Fierce Controversy and What We Can Learn From It*. (2005).
2. Napoleon A. Chagnon, *Yanomamö (Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology)*. (1996).
3. Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*. ([1928]).
4. Martin Orans, *Not Even Wrong: Margaret Mead, Derek Freeman, and the Samoans*. (1996).
5. Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. ([1981]).

6. Edwin Wilmsen, *Land Filled With Flies: A Political Economy of the Kalahari*. (1989).

Other readings will be made available on-line via Blackboard/Electronic Reserve.

Expectations and Requirements:

1. **Show up.** Attendance at all class meetings is required. If you must miss a class meeting it is your responsibility to provide me with documentation of an unavoidable absence **ahead of time**. Students who have more than 3 unexcused absences from class will get a **0%** in **participation**. This is not a good thing.
2. **Be prepared and engaged.** Be prepared to talk and devote your full attention to discussion (i.e. be caffeinated if necessary). As this is a proseminar, in class participation will be more heavily weighted than usual. Also, **please** silence all cell phone ringers. Vibrate is fine.
3. **Don't Cheat**^{*}:
Cheating is defined as fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment, or using or attempting to use materials, or assisting others in using materials which are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question. Here are some examples:

- * Copying or attempting to copy from others during an exam or on an assignment.
- * Communicating answers with another person during an exam.
- * Using unauthorized materials, prepared answers, written notes, or concealed information (i.e. on a cell-phone) during an exam.
- * Allowing others to do an assignment or portion of an assignment for you, including the use of a commercial term-paper service.
- * Submitting the same assignment for more than one course without prior approval of all the instructors involved.
- * Collaborating on an exam or assignment with any other person without prior approval from the instructor.
- * Taking an exam for another person or having someone take an exam for you.

Plagiarism is defined as use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source, for example:

- * Wholesale copying of passages from works of others into your homework, essay, term paper, or dissertation without acknowledgment.
- * Using the views, opinions, or insights of another without acknowledgment.
- * Paraphrasing another person's characteristic or original phraseology, metaphor, or other literary device without acknowledgment.

Y'all have an **HONOR CODE** here and I expect you to follow it

4. Complete all assignments on time. I will **NOT** accept late work.

Grading and Assessments: Your grade in this class will be based on the following ingredients:

1. Attendance and Participation (45%)
Broken down thusly:
 - a. Participation in discussion 25%
(NB: you can't participate if you don't attend!)
 - b. Response Papers (see below) 20%
2. Oral Presentations/Debates/Trials 25%
3. 2 short Keyword Assignments (5% each)
4. Final Paper (20%).

Important Dates:

Monday February 2	Group Assignment on Nisa and Cultural Relativism in class
Wednesday February 25	ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION #1
Friday March 13	Keyword Assignments Due
March 13-29	SPRING BREAK
Wednesday April 15	ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION #2
Mon May 4, Wed May 6	ROUNDTABLE #3 (CHAGNON ON TRIAL)
Monday May 11	FINAL PAPERS DUE

The Response Papers: You will be expected to submit **at least** seven (7) Response Papers over the course of the semester. I will be creating a Blackboard Discussion Group for this class. I want you to post your reading notes to this Blackboard group by 11:59PM of the day before Wednesday class (i.e. before you go to sleep on Tues). ***Please read your classmates' notes before coming to class. on Wednesday and be prepared to discuss their responses.***

There are a total of 12 possible reading notes due during the semester. If you submit fewer than 7 your grade will be negatively impacted. If you submit more than seven, you may receive some extra-credit or gold stars (see below).

The Response Papers consist of two parts:

First, a section comprised of **a sentence or two on each of these 6 topics:**

1. The main argument of the reading(s)/film(s) in question (What is the author saying?)
2. The impact or importance of this argument (Why should we care?)
3. The relationship of this piece to other readings for the week or class as a whole (How does it fit?)
4. What quotation (or scene/moment) from this piece sums up its contribution/impact most succinctly? (Give us the quote and tell us where it's from)
5. How do you feel about this reading/film (Was it compelling? Was it intelligible? Couldn't keep your eyes open?)
6. Propose two **thoughtful** discussion questions to be covered in class.

And **second**, a written response (**a minimum of 800 words in length**) that incorporates a critical response (not just summary of) to the week's reading(s). There are multiple ways to approach this task: raise questions prompted by the readings or lectures, identify especially

difficult or generative passages, relate the readings to what you observe around you, link the readings to something happening in the real world, struggle with a particular concept or respond personally. As I mentioned, I do not want summaries of the week's reading. Rather some form of critical reflection should be the goal. You should treat these as mini-essays. Feel free to be creative, but please organize your arguments carefully and deal with the readings in a substantive fashion.

I will note receipt of these responses and grade them on a \checkmark , $\checkmark+$ and $\checkmark-$ basis. Sharing your reading notes with your classmates will spark conversation and help us all to draw connections between the readings, the lectures and the real world. Submitting your notes on Tuesday evening will allow us to read your notes before class meets the next afternoon. I expect you to have read your classmates notes before you come to class. Bring paper copies with your comments to class on Wednesday. I will periodically collect notes with your comments to check up on your reading of classmates' work.

Especially good reading notes will reference others' points (and will be good candidates for a gold star; see below). Students who are leading discussion will also be expected to read and draw upon these reading notes.

Oral Assignments

1. Participation in class discussion (20%). The Proseminar is based on active, engaged and constructive participation by all members of the seminar. It is the responsibility of everyone in class to know their classmates' names and to make each other feel comfortable with expressing themselves to the group. Participation is a major component of your grade. You will be assessed not simply on the amount of participation, but on the relevance and insightfulness of your contribution to discussion. My criteria for grading participation class discussion are pretty simple: how well do people listen/respond to each other; do they contribute relevant or at least interesting and provocative points; do they ask good questions; do they do so regularly? If you are really scared to talk, come see me.
2. Roundtables, Debates, Trials (25%). I will have more to say about the specific format of each Roundtable as they draw closer but in general, here are some questions I will use to evaluate you (and that you can use to evaluate yourself):
 - a. Are you making a clear point?
 - b. Are you illustrating it with a few relevant examples?
 - c. Are you keeping focused? Honestly, it's better to have a few clearly explained examples than to try to drag in too much information and over-explain.
 - d. Does your presentation demonstrate that you really understand the concepts involved with the question you are addressing?
 - e. Did you present in a way that draws your audience in?

Remember, in some cases you may have as few as 5 minutes to present. The trick to a good short presentation is to have a few (3 or 4) substantive points to make, clearly explained and illustrated. I **expect** you to supplement the oral component of your presentation with visuals—whether this takes the form of Powerpoint or handouts or something else is up to you.

Also don't forget that you have to turn in a written version of your presentation.

Gold Star for the Day:

Based on entirely subjective criteria, the gold star system is my way of rewarding notes and presentations that go above and beyond the usual. Especially thoughtful, creative or well argued work may be awarded a gold star. There is no limit to the number of possible winners per week. Rewards are on the following basis (stars are cumulative; i.e. they don't go away after you use them). Note, rewards may not be used retrospectively:

3 Gold Stars: 1 week off reading notes (to be used whenever you want).

7 Gold Stars: 2 day extension on project of your choice

9 Gold Stars: 1 excused absence from class.

COURSE PLAN:

UNIT 1: CONTROVERSY IN THE KALAHARI

Week 1

M 1/19 Intro and Logistics, Movie *The Gods Must Be Crazy* pt. 1

W 1/21 Movie: *The Gods Must Be Crazy* pt. 2

Readings:

1. amazon.com comments on *The Gods Must Be Crazy*.
2. Richard B. Lee, *The !Kung San: Men, Women and Work in a Foraging Society* (1979), Introduction, Ch. 1 "Fieldwork with the !Kung, Ch. 2 "San, Bushman, Basarwa, a question of names" Pp. 1-38.

Week 2

M 1/26 Arrival Stories: Anthropologists and the Field

Readings:

1. Nisa Pp. 1-39.
2. Lee, *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi* (1993) Pp. 1-22.

Today this class will be divided into three groups. Members of each group will be assigned different portions of Nisa. These readings will be the basis for presentations on Nisa on 2/2. Group 1 will focus on Chs. 1-4, Group 2 on Chs. 5-9 and Group 3 on Chs. 11-15. All groups should read their selections with the goal of critically evaluating notions of cultural relativism

T 1/27 Evening Movie: *The Hunters* 7PM

W 1/28 What do anthropologists do? –Fieldwork, Ethics, Tobacco

Readings:

1. Lee, "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari"
2. Shostak, from *Return to Nisa* "Gifts and Payments" (Pp. 61-77).

Week 3

M 2/2 Cultural Relativism

Nisa Presentations

W 2/4 Understanding Change --Film: N!ai

Readings:

1. G. Kolata, !Kung Bushmen Join South African Army. *Science*, New Series, Vol. 211, No. 4482. (Feb. 6, 1981), pp. 562-564.
2. Toby Alice Volkman Review of Gods Must be Crazy in *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 87, No. 2. (Jun., 1985), pp. 482-484.
3. Nisa 193-211, 309-331
4. Lee, "The Gods Must be Crazy but the State has a Plan."

Week 4

M 2/9

The Revisionist View: *Land Full of Flies*

Readings:

1. Wilmsen 1989, Pp. xi-xviii, 1-32, 33-40, 130-157, 272-281, 315-325.

W 2/11

Point/Counterpoint

Readings:

1. Solway and Lee, "Foragers Genuine and Spurious" *Current Anthropology* Volume 33 Supplement. Pp 187-200 with Wilmsen's reply on p.214.
2. Wilmsen and Denbow "Paradigmatic History of San-Speaking Peoples and Current Attempts at Revision" 1990 31(5): 489-507. And Lee's response 510-512.
3. Lee, "Art, Science, or Politics? The Crisis in Hunter-Gatherer Studies" *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 94, No. 1. (Mar., 1992), pp. 31-43

Week 5*PRESENTATION WEEK*

M 2/16 !Kung San Communities Today

Readings:

1. Paul Lane, *Breaking the Mould?: Exhibiting Khoisan in Southern African Museums* *Anthropology Today*, 12 (5): 3-10. (1996)
2. Renee Sylvain, *Disorderly Development: Globalization and the Idea of "Culture" in the Kalahari*. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp.354-370. (2005).

W 2/18 Making sense of it all; **ROUNDTABLE #1**

UNIT 2: KEYWORDS

Week 6

M 2/23 Anthropological Keywords: **Fieldwork**

Readings:

1. Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Required: Foreword, Introduction, Ch.1, Ch. 22.
2. Recommended, Ch. 3, Ch. 9

T 2/24 Film: "Off the Verandah"

W 2/25 The **Ethics** of a Field **Science**

Readings:

1. Nigel Rappaport: "Surely Everything has Already Been Said About Malinowski's Diary!"
2. Murray Wax: "Tenting With Malinowski"

Week 7

M 3/2 Anthropology as **Science**?

Readings:

1. Radcliffe-Brown, *A Natural Science of Society*, selections.
2. Further discussion of Malinowski, *Argonauts*, Introduction.

W 3/4 Anthropology as **Interpretive** Practice?

Readings:

1. Evans-Pritchard, "Anthropology and History"
2. George Marcus and Michael Fisher, "Ethnography and Interpretive Anthropology" in *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*.

Week 8

M 3/9 Culture vs **Society** US vs. UK;

Readings:

1. Fredrik Barth "Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, 1920-1945" in *One Discipline, Four Ways*."

T 3/10 Film: "Shackles of Tradition" 7PM

W 3/11 Anthropological Keywords: **Culture** – (Boas, Cultural Relativism)

Readings:

1. "Franz Boas: Icy Enthusiasm" in Kardiner and Preble.
2. "Silverman "The Boasians and the Invention of Cultural Anthropology" in *One Discipline Four Ways*

F 3/13 **KEYWORD ASSIGNMENTS 1 & 2 DUE (Via Email)**

SPRING BREAK 3/13-3/29

UNIT 3: MEAD, FREEMAN AND SAMOA

Week 9

M 3/30 Coming of Age in Samoa

Readings:

1. Boas 1928 Preference
2. Mead 1973 Preface
3. Chapters I, II
4. Appendices II, III

W 4/1 Coming of Age in Samoa

Readings:

1. Chapters VII, X, XI (also XIII recommended)

Week 10

M 4/6 Freeman's Account

Readings:

1. Derek Freeman, *Margaret Mead and Samoa* Chapters 5-7 (Also Ch. 4 recommended).

T 4/7 Movie: Margaret Mead and Samoa. 7pm

W 4/8 Freeman, Cont'd

Readings:

1. Chapters 12, 16, 18 (Also Ch. 8-9, recommended).

Week 11 PRESENTATION WEEK

W 4/13 Who hoaxed whom?

Readings:

1. Orans, *Not Even Wrong*, Esp. Intro, Ch.1, 4-5, 8-9.
2. Freeman, Ch. 19 (recommended).

W 4/15 **ROUNDTABLE #2**

UNIT 4: CHAGNON AND THE YANOMAMI

Week 12

M 4/20 The Fierce Controversy

Readings:

1. Chagnon, *Yanomamö*, selections.
2. Borofsky, *Fierce Controversy*, Chs. 1-3

T 4/21 Films: Axe Fight, A Man Called Bee. 7PM

W 4/22 Borofsky Continued

Readings:

1. Borofsky, Chs. 4-6.

Week 13

M 4/27 Fierce Controversy

Readings:

1. Borofsky, Ch. 7 and as much of part II as you can get through.

W 4/29 Fierce Controversy (Review and planning for trial)

Week 14 PRESENTATION WEEK

M 5/4 **Chagnon on Trial 1**

W 5/6 **Chagnon on Trial 2**

M MAY 11, 5PM – FINAL PAPERS DUE