ANTH 688: Social Theory I  
MW 10-11:50AM  
5 credits

This course is the first of two graduate courses on social theory/cultural anthropological theory offered by the Department of Anthropology. ANTH 688 is designed as a historical survey of cultural anthropological theory until the mid-1970s. ANTH 689, taught Winter 2016, continues the chronology to the present. Cultural anthropology students must take both courses. Archaeology and bio-anthropology students may take one or the other, although ANTH 688 is strongly suggested.

Theoretical frameworks are the basis of analysis and thus it is important to understand their history. Furthermore, the history of social theory has informed the current disciplines of Anthropology and related sister disciplines (Sociology, Folklore, Geography, etc). Although this class follows a kind of “intellectual history” approach that categorizes the evolution of anthropological thought as a progression of “schools,” each leading to the next, we hope to avoid the illusion of a single master narrative for cultural anthropology. Rather, different theories may be said to speak to each other across time.

The class will be run interactively, with discussion and mutual respect. Discussions will foster critique, debate, and some degree of discomfort as we question some of the traditional foundations of theory and analysis. Students will take the lead in discussion (see below). I welcome conversation during office hours, by appointment, or by email or telephone. I have a comment bag available at every class.

Readings are posted on Canvas under Module: Readings. No books are required. However, you might find the 4 books below useful (they are on reserve). There are also many other books to consult on anthropological theory.

These websites are useful: http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php
http://www.anthrobase.com/Browse/home/hst/hist-links.htm
Please turn off mobile devices during class. Computer use is permitted for class related activities. Plagiarism is not tolerated at the UO. Cases of plagiarism (from other students or published materials) will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. If you have a documented disability and need accommodation, please contact Disability Services.

Course Objectives:
- Explain why social theory is important, and what theory explains.
- Trace the major theoretical frameworks in Cultural/Social Anthropology from the 1920s-1970s, in the framework of intellectual history.
- Analyze specific theoretical frameworks such as evolutionism, cultural relativism, functionalism, structuralism, French structuralism, Marxism, materialism, world-systems theory, cultural ecology, psychological anthropology, feminism, and symbolic and interpretive anthropology.
- Explain how these frameworks dialogue with each other.
- Identify the relevance of early social history to current debates in Anthropology and related sister disciplines (Sociology, Folklore, Geography, etc).

Course requirements
1. **10%** of the grade is based on attendance. Late arrivals and departures will count as an absence.
2. **25%** of the grade is based on oral participation. Discussion is the mode of the course, and students will lead the class. 10% is based on general participation, and 15% is based on presentations. Students are required to pick at 2-3 dates on which to present and lead discussion in class on the issues raised in the readings. The first date should be during the first 4 weeks of classes. Using Canvas Discussions the presenter is required to post a summary/outline and questions for discussion on the readings prior to the oral presentation (approximately 2-3 pages, double spaced). In your posting, provide a summary of the main points of the reading, including definitions of key terms; in the interest of sharpening critical faculties, students may wish to comment on the strengths and/or the weaknesses of the author’s arguments. The oral presentation should also include a profile of the author and the context of the publication. **The deadline is 6 PM of the day previous to the presentation.** All students are encouraged to use Canvas Discussions to post ideas, responses and questions. Innovative presentations are fine!
3. **30%** of the grade is based on a take-home essay mid-term, due Monday Oct. 26 in class. Exams will require synthesizing the materials, comparing them, contextualizing them, and critiquing them. You may also bring in other materials if you wish.
4. **35%** of the grade is based on a take-home final, due Wed. Dec. 9, noon. The final will concentrate on the second part of the term but there will be opportunities for broad synthesis.

**Grades:** 600-level courses in the Department of Anthropology are graded. To pass the course, it is necessary to get at least a B-. If the student does not pass the course, s/he may retake it the following year.
Course Schedule

1. Sept. 28: Introduction to the course. Antecedents to Anthropology. I will post my PPT on Canvas.

2. Sept 30: 19th Century Evolutionism and Boasian Critique/Cultural Relativism


3. Oct. 5: Foundations of Sociological Thought


Optional video: sociology Prof. Dan Krier on concepts of mechanical vs. organic solidarity (critique visuals!): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3VwoihGP_i8

4. Oct. 7: Functionalism and Structural Functionalism


5. Oct. 12: Functionalism and Structural Functionalism


Optional:


For more sources on Marxism, see http://www.marxists.org/subject/students/index.htm


http://www.iwallerstein.com/intellectual-itinerary/


12. Nov. 4: Childhood, Gender, and the Individual

Mead, Margaret. Introduction to Coming of Age in Samoa (1928) in P. Erickson and L. Murphy, Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory, Broadview, 155-164.


13. Nov. 9: Lévi-Strauss and French Structuralism


14. Nov 11: Feminism


15. Nov 16: Anthropology of Women: Feminism and Marxism


16. Nov. 18: Symbolic Anthropology: Turner and Douglas


17. Nov. 23: Interpretive Anthropology: Geertz


18. Nov 25: Interpretive Anthropology: Geertz as Ethnographer


19. Nov 30: Beyond Geertz: Critique


Take-home final exam is due Wed. Dec. 9, 12:15 PM.