Recent Cultural Theory
ANTH 441/541
Fall 2018
Tuesday & Thursday 10:00-11:50am
260 Condon
Professor: Dr. Maria Fernanda Escallón

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 4:00-5:00pm
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Course Description
In this course students will learn how to use contemporary cultural theory to analyze current anthropological debates. Through a deep engagement with theoretical and ethnographic texts as well as in-class discussions, students will practice how to read, critically analyze, and use cultural theory. This class is not designed as a historical survey of anthropological theory. Rather, this course grapples with some of the foundational questions, critical debates and concepts that have been central to our discipline. A key objective of this course is to provide historical context of anthropological ideas. In this course we will explore the socio-historical context of some key anthropological theories and examine how these theories must be understood as part of the broader economic, cultural, and political currents of their time.

Course Structure
This course is designed as a seminar and will focus on the discussion of the assigned readings, class presentations, and critical discussion. The course is designed to foster qualitative research, apply methodological tools from the social sciences, practice classroom discussion, improve public presentation, and strengthen written exposition skills. Students are encouraged to reflect on the theoretical, methodological, and ethical implications of the assigned texts. This is an interactive course and requires students to fully participate, keep up with the readings, engage in discussions, and attend to all sessions. This is not a lecture course.

Learning Outcomes
• Use critical social theory to understand core debates in anthropology.
• Identify how anthropological theory relates to practice and how it is applied in contemporary ethnographic writing.
• Critically analyze theory and understand its usefulness and limitations.
• Interrogate theoretical claims and make use of theory in their own work.
• Generate connections between theoretical discussions and current debates outside anthropology.
• Understand the socio-historical contexts of anthropological theories
Grading Guidelines

1. **Seminar participation and group presentation**: 20% of grade for students enrolled at 400 level, 15% for students enrolled at 500 level. Students are expected to actively participate in all seminar meetings. Classes will be student-led, based on their answers to prompts or questions facilitated by the instructor. Students are encouraged to be creative when participating in class and providing, for example, interesting connections with other readings discussed previously or with news on current events. The class will be divided in groups of 4. Each group will be responsible for presenting to the class the readings on one theory/theorists. Expectations for these presentations will be discussed in class during week 1.

2. **Theory mini-wiki**: 20% of grade for students enrolled at 400 level, 15% for students enrolled at 500 level. In groups of 4, we will develop an “anthropological theory mini-wiki” which will summarize the information on the theoretical approaches and authors we have read throughout the course. Importantly, the wiki should not only be a summary but also include critical reflection on the theories and concepts discussed in class. Each entry should model a standard wiki and include discussion on:

   1) What are the strengths of this particular theoretical perspective? What is it useful for?
   2) What are the limitations of this particular theoretical perspective? Critiques or blind spots.
   3) What are some implications of this theory beyond the academic community?
   4) Select one quote from the readings that illustrates the main (or one of the main) argument/concept presented by the author.

Due online: October 26 by 5 pm.

3. **Midterm Exam** 20% of grade. A midterm exam will be taken in Canvas during the class period on November 1 which covers weeks 1-5. The exam includes short and long answer questions.

4. **Final Presentations**: 20% of grade. The last week will be devoted to student presentations by groups. Students should prepare a 10-minute presentation in groups, which will be followed by a Q&A session, evaluation, and comment from all class participants. These presentations will be based on their research about a contemporary anthropological ethnography and its core theoretical concepts. More details about this presentation and group work will be discussed in class. Power point presentations are encouraged but not mandatory.

5. **Final Exam**: 20% of grade. The final exam will cover material from the entire quarter. It will be available online from 8:00 am to 11:59 pm on December 3, 2018.

6. **500-Level Student Presentation**: 10% of grade. Students enrolled in 500 level will prepare a 15-minute presentation on their own doctoral research topic, with explicit reference to the theoretical background they are using or plan to use. Students should reflect on how certain theories or concepts have informed their research, and what opportunities and limitations their current theoretical framework has provided. Presented in class on November 8.
Grading Scale
A+ = 98-100%  A = 93-97.9%  A- = 90-92.9%
B+ = 87-89.9%  B = 83-86.9%  B- = 80-82.9%
C+ = 77-79.9%  C = 73-76.9%  C- = 70-72.9%
D+ = 67-69.9%  D = 63-66.9%  D- = 60-62.9%
F = < 59.9%
If the class is taken P/NP, a C- or higher is required to pass the course.

Grading Rubric
A: student demonstrates exceptional understanding of and ability to analyze well the course material; an outstanding performance relative to that required to meet course requirements.

B: student demonstrates substantial understanding of the course material, including analytical procedures and theoretical concepts; performance is significantly above that required to meet course requirements.

C: student does the assignments but not more, demonstrating reasonable knowledge of the course material; demonstrates adequate understanding of content and meets course requirements.

D: student demonstrates minimal effort to complete the assignments and/or limited understanding of the class material; does not fully meet the course requirements.

F: student makes little or no effort to complete the assignments and/or limited understanding of the class material; poor written communication skills; performance does not meet the course requirements.

Late Assignments
Late assignments are not accepted in this course and will receive a failing grade. Students must notify the professor as soon as possible if a serious issue arises that prevents them from completing an assignment on time. Late assignments will be accepted only in the event of documented accidents, family emergencies, or illnesses. No make-up examinations will be granted without proper documentation. There is no extra credit offered in this course. If the student is facing a serious issue that intervenes with their academic performance, please notify the professor as soon as possible.

Incomplete Policy
Incompletes will be given only for extreme circumstances such as a documented critical illness (mental or physical). If there is a serious issue that comes up and causes delays in the student’s assignments or interrupts attendance, it is the student’s responsibility to communicate with the professor immediately. The University does not allow incompletes to be given retroactively.
If a student registers for the class and does not complete the assignments and does not communicate and attain the professor’s agreement for the specific terms for granting an incomplete, the student will be given credit for the work turned in and receive an F for work not turned in. The official University grading policy can be found at http://registrar.uoregon.edu/incomplete_policy.

Computer and Other Electronic Devices Policy
The use of laptops and other electronic devices in class is discouraged. This can be distracting and we want to create an environment that encourages engaged learning. Please refrain from using cell phones and have them in silent mode before class starts.

Communication and Email Message Policy
Official course communication will occur in lectures and through email or Canvas. All written communication should be written in a professional format and include ANTH 441/541 in the subject line. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced via Canvas. Students are responsible for keeping up-to-date with the course information. Please contact the professor during office hours if you have any questions regarding the class content or structure. Professor Escallón does not check email after 6pm weekdays and never on weekends. Generally, expect a 48 hour window for responses to your emails.

Classroom Etiquette

Punctuality Arrive on time. And leave at the end.

Focus Limit conversations with friends to time before and after class.

Be prepared You are expected to come to class having done the readings and ready to be engaged with the lecture and discussion. If you are struggling with the readings, it is your responsibility as a student to get help from the Teaching and Learning Center, your professor, and/or peers. Bring questions. This is your opportunity to really be a student – to study, complete assignments, ask questions, and be open to learning new ideas, concepts and facts.

Accessible Education and Accommodations
The University of Oregon is dedicated to the principles of equal opportunity in education and accepts diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community. Disability is recognized as an aspect of diversity integral to the university and to society. Accommodations will be made for all students needing them in consultation with that student and any other support team members. Contact the Office of Accessible Education (164 Oregon Hall) if you are not already documented but wish accommodation. Please notify the professor during the first week of class of any necessary accommodations.

Required Texts
All required readings will be posted on Canvas.
Academic Honesty
The University Student Conduct Code is available at http://conduct.uoregon.edu. Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, or fabrication (see website for definitions and further information). Students should always properly acknowledge and cite all sources of information, including documents, images, or photographs. Plagiarism is taking and using as one’s own the ideas, concepts, analysis and writings of another without giving appropriate credit through proper documentation. “Proper documentation” includes quotation marks, foot- or endnote citations, or noting that a sentence or paragraph is paraphrased (with references to where the original information was found). Providing assistance to another student who is attempting to cheat or plagiarize is also considered academically dishonest.

If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, it is the student's obligation to clarify the question prior to taking any action. Principles of academic honesty and professional ethics also apply to any use of computers associated with the class. This includes observing all software licensing requirements and respecting copyrights of intellectual property published on the Internet.

The following actions may result in disciplinary sanction according to the university’s academic honesty policies:
• Evidence of collusion when expected to submit individual work (working with someone else).
• Evidence of plagiarism (using someone else’s work without proper citation).
• Multiple submissions (submitting the same paper for more than one class).
• Plagiarism will receive a failing grade.

Additional Help
If you will be working off campus, you will need to download the UO VPN link (virtual private network).

If you have technical issues with any part of the course, contact the helpdesk (541-346-HELP).

I am unable to read papers and assignments in advance. However, there are a number of campus resources to help students. For help with citing sources or developing arguments visit the Teaching and Learning Center: http://tlc.uoregon.edu/subjects/writing/.

Open Learning Environment
The intention and structure of university level courses are to provide open, thoughtful forums for a wide variety of topics and ideas. The University of Oregon affirms and actively promotes the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment at this institution without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other consideration not directly and substantively related to effective performance. We will value each class member’s experience and
contributions and communicate disagreements respectfully. Please notify the professor if you feel any aspect of this course undermines these principles in any way.

Sexual Harassment and Violence
The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based bullying and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. You can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline to be connected to a confidential counselor.

READINGS AND SCHEDULE

All readings should be done before the class for which they are assigned.

September 25. Introduction to the class
Introductions. Overview of class topics, schedule, requirements, policies, and grading.
How to do well in this class?
Selection class partners

September 27. Why is theory useful?

October 2. Theoretical overview. Early 20th century

October 4. Theoretical overview. Early 20th century

October 9. History, politics, and anthropological thought

October 11. Film: *Salmer fra kjørkkenet* (Norway and Sweden) *Kitchen Stories*

October 16. Objectivity and style in perspective
October 18. Cultural Materialism
- Marvin Harris. In: Erickson P. and Murphy L. 2013. Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory

October 23. Cultural Materialism in Historical Perspective

October 25. Thick Description and Interpretative Anthropology


October 30. Contextualizing Geertz

November 1. Midterm due online via Canvas. No class. Exam open from 8:00 AM – 11:59 PM

November 6. Anthropology of Practice

November 8. Practice Theory in Perspective

500 level student presentations

November 13. Guided group research. Library research day 1.
Groups selected by topic affinity
Student selected bibliography

November 15. Library research day 2. Group work.
Student selected bibliography

November 20. Working groups contemporary anthropologists and ethnographies
Student selected bibliography
November 22  
Thanksgiving break. No class

November 27. Student Presentations

November 29. Student Presentations

**FINAL EXAM:** December 3, 2018. 8:00 am to 11:59 pm on Canvas