

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
College of Social and Applied Human Sciences
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

ANTH*3690: Engaging Anthropological Theory (FALL 2024)

Instructor: Dr. Karine Gagné
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Office Hours: by appointment
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Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00PM –
2:20PM
Room: TBD

Course Description

This course introduces students to some of the major theories and debates that inform anthropological analyses. During the semester, we will examine theoretical propositions which are central to the history of the development of anthropological thought. This will include evolutionism, functionalism, structuralism, post-structuralism, feminist anthropology, postmodernism, postcolonialism, globalization, multispecies ethnography, and the materiality turn. The range of theoretical frameworks we will investigate concern themes like history, colonialism, decolonization, the politics of representation, subjectivity, agency, structure, social institutions, nature, culture, and power. The first part of the course will focus on classic anthropological theories, from the mid 19th century to the 1950s. We will then focus on the theories that undergird anthropological questionings from the second half of the 20th century to date. We will proceed in a more or less cumulative fashion, so that we will build, week by week, a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual history of anthropology and of theory as a process of development. This will allow us to identify elements of intellectual genealogy in the perspectives we study. Because theoretical reflections are produced by individuals working in specific environments, we will also study the social and historical context behind the emergence of specific theories, and we will look at the biography of the thinkers behind the various schools of thoughts we consider. In order to enable students to better grasp how theories may be applied to thinking about humans, their culture, and their social and political environments, the readings for the course have been selected because they are not only theoretical discourses, but ethnographic cases that support theoretical perspectives. The content of this course will be delivered in video/lectures, films, clips, and slides.

Learning Outcomes

- To analyze, evaluate and apply anthropological theories to address contemporary, historical, social or global issues;
- To critically reflect on culture, social relations and social structures in order to develop a broader and deeper understanding of social problems;

- Situate and critically evaluate one's social and cultural identity and location, power and privilege, within a personal, social, cultural, political and global context;
- Critically reflect upon the personal and disciplinary limits of knowledge and develop an appreciation for uncertainty and ambiguity within interpretation and analysis;
- Engage in classical and contemporary scholarly inquiry to identify and address anthropological questions and issues.
- Demonstrate personal and academic integrity and ethical reasoning.

Required Texts

All the readings are available on Courselink.

Evaluation

Exam 1: 20% (in-class)

Exam 2: 30% (in-class)

Final Take-Home: 35% (take-home)

Quizzes: 15%

Because the exams and assignments focus on the readings covered AND on the content and material discussed in class (including the films and other visual presentations), **students are expected to attend class regularly.**