

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Final Year Options

Autumn Term 2012

Students doing Anthropology as Single Major, PLEASE NOTE: you will be doing both options in the Autumn, therefore no preference is required.

Course Length: 12 weeks - Autumn term
Credit: 30 credits

Option 1: Anthropology of Economic Processes

This course explores the economic dimension of social relationships, dealing with production, exchange and consumption practices taking place within specific cultural and historical contexts. It will provide students with an understanding of processes of exclusion and exploitation leading to forms of stratification and class formation. These will be set against wider cultural and economic transformations taking place as the result of colonialism, capitalist penetration and globalisation. Finally, the course will consider how economic relations and processes are experienced, made sense of and - at times- resisted.

Assessment: Coursework: 1000-word concept notes in week 4, 1000-word concept notes in week 8, plus a 4000-word essay in week 1 of the spring term.

Option 2: Religion & Ritual

This option is concerned with the explanation of religious and ritual phenomena. It explores key theoretical issues by examining ethnographic material that deals with – among other things – initiation, myth, witchcraft, symbolism and religious experience. There is also some treatment of more ‘secular’ rituals such as carnival and Christmas. The focus is as much on how people believe as on what they believe; on why they perform rituals as much as what those rituals look like. It explores both classic texts and more recent accounts, to give students a sense of where particular arguments have come from, and where they are going.

Assessment: Coursework: a 2000-word essay in week 6 of the autumn term, plus a 4000-word essay in week 1 of the spring term)

Spring Term 2013

Advanced Topic Options

<u>Course Length:</u>	12 week spring term.
<u>Assessment:</u>	7000 word dissertation, to be submitted in week 5 of the summer term
<u>Credit:</u>	30 credits

The Anthropology of Africa

This course introduces students to contemporary anthropological approaches to culture and society in Africa. The guiding thread is an exploration of the relationship between macro and micro levels of analysis in understanding of African society through a selection of thematic lenses (economy, politics, religion, health, gender, conflict, power etc.)

The Anthropology of South Asia

This course introduces students to some of the most important debates which have defined the study of South Asian societies. Starting with an interrogation of anthropological representations of South Asia, the course will explore debates about caste and hierarchy, leading to a discussion of everyday experiences of - and responses to - caste discrimination. The course will move on to consider the emergence of identity politics in the region, focusing in particular on debates about communal violence and its representation in popular culture and films. Communal identities, as well as power relations between people, are simultaneously expressed and challenged in popular religious practices. The course will introduce students to everyday religiosity, with reference to debates about worship, public religious festivals and pilgrimages. The course will also consider the embodiment of social relations and hierarchy, introducing students to specific understandings of the person, of bodies and health/diseases in relation to local medical systems. The course will then consider the construction and representations of gender relations in everyday life, focusing in particular on changes in positions and roles - and the ritual marking of such changes - during people's lifetime. Finally, the course will introduce discussions about marriage practices, family life and household relations providing a context through which to explore the unfolding and negotiation of power relationships between (gendered) persons and between groups.

Anthropology of the Body

This course explores the body from an anthropological perspective, and considers how different societies and cultures conceptualize and experience the human body. In recent years, anthropologists and other academics have become increasingly interested in the body. Some draw upon a phenomenological approach with its emphasis on the senses, while others attempt to resolve the tensions between experience and agency. The course asks how the body represents a challenge for anthropological research, and explores recent ethnographic contributions to this field. We consider the body as a site on which social and cultural processes are inscribed, where power relations converge and are articulated, and as a site where agency is performed. Topics will include: the Senses and Emotions; Bodies, Race and Power; Techniques of the Body; Body Modifications; 'Fat' and 'Thin': The Politics of Body Shapes, and Bodies as Commodities.

Anthropology of Fertility, Reproduction and Health

The course uses social and cultural perspectives to examine academic and policy work in the area of fertility, reproduction and health. It draws on anthropological insights, especially relating to gender and power, to critically reflect on reproductive healthcare practices in developing and post industrial contexts. The course builds upon some of the topics (procreation, sexuality, motherhood, reproductive technologies), introduced in the second year anthropology course on Kinship.

Current Themes in the Anthropology of Latin America

The aim of this course is to provide a framework for understanding current anthropological issues in the Latin American region, as well as how Latin American anthropology (both anthropology on Latin America and anthropology by Latin Americans) has contributed to the development of the wider anthropological discipline. Some of the themes covered will engage with anthropological understandings of indigeneity, race, gender, colonialism, nation states and environmentalism. The course will be mostly focused on the Amazonian and Andean regions but will also link to other parts of Latin America. Each week will be centred on ethnographic pieces that offer interesting reflections for contemporary issues as well as anthropological theory.

Environmental Anthropology

This course considers the cross-cultural study of relations between people and their environment. Like the focus of many environmental movements, much recent work in ecological anthropology has been crisis-driven, and whilst covering this literature the focus will be broader, taking a wider perspective including the context in which the research itself is being done. Current work on the human dimensions of deforestation, or global climate change, for example, can be informed and strengthened by an understanding of the century-old intellectual lineage of the underlying issues. The course will therefore cover the evolution of environmental anthropology, using ethnographic exemplars that relate to contemporary environmental issues, whilst at the same time probing debates such as (a) the Nature-Culture trap, and beyond; (b) Ecology and Social Organisation, (c) the Politics of Natural Resources and the Environment, (including environmental anthropological contributions to mining, resource conflict etc.), (d) knowing (and the limits to knowing) and researching the environment. Readings will balance anthropological contributions to local knowledge, perspectives and environmental practices, with contributions in political economy, environmental politics and activism. The course will thus both draw on the broad theoretical repertoire of social anthropological theory, and reveal environmental contributions to this.

Human Rights

This course will consider assumptions about human rights, the historical contexts in which they have developed and issues around their operation and implementation. It will draw from a new and growing literature on the sociology and anthropology of human rights which seeks to move beyond the assumptions of legal positivism (rights as 'read off' from human rights covenants) in order to develop the legal realist approach that focuses on the living law in the operation of courts, the police and the everyday understandings that citizens give to notions such as 'truth', 'justice' and 'morality'. Topics will include: natural rights, cultural relativism, group rights, gender and rights, basic rights, rights of the child, rights to refuge and asylum, the UNO, NGOs, transnational corporations and rights, international criminal tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions.

Medicine and Culture

This course is an introduction to the major themes and theoretical debates in medical anthropology. After beginning with some 'classic' anthropological approaches to affliction and healing, we will draw on ethnographic and cross-cultural research in order to explore the complex relationships between medicine, culture, and the social body. In this course we take a critical stance, recognising that knowledge is historically contingent, socially and politically produced, and diversified in practice. At the same time, we consider the pragmatic concerns of a 'clinically-applied' medical anthropology. An emphasis on narrative will help students consider the similarities and differences between biomedical and anthropological approaches to health, healing, and the body.

Please note: it cannot be guaranteed that all the above options will be offered next year