

Anth 301: Anthropological Theory

Syllabus - Spring 2008 Kathleen Saunders

Required Texts

R. Ron McGee and Richard Warms. 2008. *Anthropological Theory*, 4th edition.

Course Overview

Anthropology is a relatively young academic discipline although interest in the cultural dynamics of "Others" has been recorded since the expansionist expeditions of the Greek Empire. This course is designed to give anthropology majors (and others with an abiding interest in social science) a historical context for the intellectual trajectory of anthropology. Emphasis is on dominant schools of theory that guided the analysis of ethnographic data, first from the "armchair" and later from the "field." Links between general intellectual currents and their manifestation as anthropological theory will be drawn, as well as the influences of historical geo-political events. Finally we will consider the many directions open for the future development of anthropology in the 21st century.

Course Objectives

1. to familiarize students with the historical development of anthropology
2. to explicate the entailments of the major theoretical positions within anthropology
3. to explicate the most salient critiques of major theoretical positions
4. to consider carefully the relationship between epistemology and knowledge claims

Course Format

Lecture, multip-media extravaganzas, open discussion, and small group exercises. Bring your paint shirts. (That's a joke. Lighten up.)

Requirements

I. Meaningful Participation

Reading assignments and work schedules are posted on Blackboard under "Assignments." Class time will often be devoted to discussion, either with the entire class or in small groups. Keeping current with the reading assignments is crucial for meaningful participation. If timely preparation seems lacking, the instructor may give "pop quizzes" as part of the participation evaluation. Don't make me do it, it is soooo fourth grade.

Meaningful participation includes: attendance, obvious preparation, and participation in group and class discussions and projects. In the parlance of WWU, this class is a "community of learners" which means that we have reciprocal obligations to each other to be contributing members to our community's process and progress.

- Simply "being there" is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition.
- Timely preparation is essential.
- Good questions are as helpful to understanding as good answers. Do not be reluctant to ask - if you are unsure, it is likely others are as well.
- In the spirit of justice, students should monitor their own contributions to avoid "free-riding" (no contribution) or "dominating the floor" (more than one's share).

II. Assignments

Each week you will journal the readings according to the TATTERS method detailed under "Assignments." These journal pages will be highly valuable to you when reviewing for the exams.

III. Scholar's Week Paper

You are required to attend Scholar's Week sessions and write three papers (approx. 3 pages each) analyzing the theory employed by the student scholars. Complete details under Assignments. Each paper is worth 25 pts.

IV. Exams

You will have one mid-terms and a final exam. The exams will be a hybrid of objective, short answer, and essay questions.

Suggestions for Success

"Theory" courses have a bad rap for being difficult. While they are "abstract," abstraction is a skill each and every one of you practices each and every day. It's one of the wonders (and wonderments) of being human. So my first suggestion to you is RELAX and be prepared to exercise your intellectual muscles.

My second suggestion is to be brave -- speak up and out. Even if you are dead wrong you are moving the learning process along. There is no penalty and much to be gained from active participation.

My third suggestion is to be professional. You are preparing yourselves for lives and livelihoods based on anthropological training. What you "think" and why you think so matters. Approach this class as a centerpiece to your professional training.

Practically, find a "data collection" system that works for you as you work through the written materials. Minimally, I would suggest a compilation of terms and their definitions, a running list of key theorists and their theories, and a historical timeline of development of the discipline.

Grading

Article TATTER analysis (43 @ 2 pts. each plus possible bonus) 100 pts.

Mid-term exam and in-class final (2 @ 150 ea) 300

Final take-home 50

Scholar's Week Papers 75

Attendance 25

Total 550 pts

Please note: Western and the instructors are committed to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in education. The Office of Student Life, x3844, assists students who require accommodation or assistance to maximize their educational potential. Please advise the instructor during the first week of the quarter if you have specific needs to facilitate learning.

Academic Honesty

Standards of academic honesty will be rigorously upheld. Consult your student handbook for WWU policies concerning academic honesty. As a rule of thumb, any five consecutive words not of the student's original composition must be cited and punctuated as a quote. All material must be attributed as to source unless original with the student or "common knowledge."
(Online at <http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~osl/js/jsacdish.html>).

Blackboard

Blackboard is Western Washington University's online system for course information and communication. The course syllabus, reading and assignment schedule, and supplementary materials can be found on Blackboard. Breaking announcements and news will be posted there. **Check announcements often -- you will be held responsible for them.** If you use an email account other than the one issued to you by the University you must set your University account to automatic forward. I often use email for timely communication, the University provides the tools, and you must ensure that sent messages are received.

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