PhD Program in Anthropology CUNY Graduate Center

Anthropology 70200: Core Course in Cultural Anthropology

Spring 2018

Prof. Marc Edelman

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Office hours: GC room 6402.08, Wed. 12:30-1:30PM; Hunter room 706N, Tues. 2:30-4:30PM

Course Meeting Time and Place

Wednesdays, 9:30am-12:30pm, Rm. 3212

Course Description

This course introduces students to key current issues and debates in cultural anthropology. It attempts to link these discussions to earlier approaches in order to provide a sense of the genealogies of knowledge in the discipline. This material is intended as part of the preparation for the first exam in the Ph.D. Program. The course also gives students an opportunity to get to know program faculty and their areas of expertise.

The coverage of “topics” is inevitably selective and partial (in both senses of the word). Some very important topics have not been included and we have tried to limit readings to a manageable number. The syllabus is not intended to be exhaustive or canonical, and it may be modified during the semester. Broader bibliographies will be developed in class. Students will be responsible for formalizing these into a more exhaustive document as described below.

Most topics will be covered in two class sessions. The first will be a presentation by a program faculty member. The second will consist of small-group student-led discussions of one or more ethnographies or case studies. In a few cases, indicated below, this pattern will be different. Students will be responsible for reading one of the ethnographies or case studies for each topic and participating in the sub-group that discusses the book that they have read. The purpose of these discussions of ethnographies and case studies is to draw connections between topical fields, analytical frameworks, epistemological perspectives, critical interventions, and ethnographic and historical analyses.

Required readings not available through the Library’s electronic and reserve holdings or through hyperlinks on this syllabus will be posted to Blackboard (although students are encouraged to download assigned journal articles from the CUNY library’s databases, for reasons which will be discussed). Ethnographies should be purchased or borrowed from libraries.
Learning Objectives

a. To encourage a critical understanding of how particular “topics” in anthropology emerge, develop and (sometimes) decline;

b. To analyze the potentials and limitations of ethnographic fieldwork for understanding these topics;

c. To introduce the fields of expertise of members of the Anthropology Graduate Faculty. Each topic is presented by a different faculty member;

d. To aid students in preparing for their First Exams. The “Topics” questions in the First Examination are closely linked to Core Courses I and II;

e. To expose students to possible frameworks for their research and/or introduce them to topics connected to their areas of interest and specialization;

f. To discuss aspects of professionalization that will allow course members to better plan their careers as graduate students and professionals.

Evaluation
Student evaluation will be based upon one 7-10 page essay (40%), a final in-class exam (40%), and in-class performance, including bibliographies and ethnography discussion questions (20%).

Lecture Bibliographies
Students will be assigned to serve as bibliographers for a lecture. Bibliographers will look up full citations for publications mentioned in the lecture and compile a complete lecture bibliography to share with the rest of the class. This will constitute a more complete set of “recommended” readings for the topic. Students can use these bibliographies to help prepare for the first exam.

Discussion Leaders
Each student will serve as discussion leader for one of the assigned ethnographies. This will include helping the class to situate the book within broader histories of thought and contemporary theoretical currents and guiding a critical discussion of its significance. You should take as your starting point the thematic and theoretical perspectives discussed explicitly in the ethnography itself, but you should relate the book to other perspectives discussed over the course of the semester. Leaders will develop a set of questions for class discussion, which will be submitted to the instructor on the day of the discussion.

Final Exam
The final exam will be held on May 23rd. The exam will be in-class and students will write two essays in response to questions that will be provided a week in advance
Week 1: January 31
Prof. Marc Edelman (Hunter College & GC)
Course organization and welcome. Social Movements and Engaged Research


Week 2: February 7
NO CLASS

Week 3: February 14
Social movements and engaged research discussion


Week 4: February 21

Prof. Ismael García-Colón (College of Staten Island & GC), History and Political Economy in Anthropology


Week 5: February 28

Four small-group discussions of ethnographies (only one required, others recommended)


Week 6: March 7

Prof. John Collins (Queens College & GC). What is Post-Interpretive Anthropology, and where has it Gone? Context, Meaning and Truth in Pragmatic Light


Peirce, C.S. “Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs” In Justus Buchler, ed. Philosophical Writings. New York: Dover Press, pp. 98-119 (It would be helpful to absorb this whole dense yet basic essay, but required reading goes only as far as p. 110, “Of thine eye I am eyebeam”).

**Recommended**


**Week 7: March 14 Prof. Mandana Limbert (Queens College & GC), Oil, Energy, and Nation**


Recommended:


Week 8: March 21 Discussion, Oil, Energy, and Nation


Week 9: March 28 Prof. Yukiko Koga (Hunter College & GC), Post-colonialism/Post-imperialism


April 11 NO CLASS. CUNY Follows Friday Schedule.

Week 10: April 18 Discussion, Post-colonialism/Post-imperialism


Week 11: April 25

Prof. Christine Folch (Duke University, PhD GC 2012), Professionalization


Recommended:


Week 12: May 2

Prof. Melissa Checker (Queens College & GC), Environmental Justice and Sustainability


Week 13: May 9 Discussion, Environmental Justice and Sustainability


Week 14: May 16 Discussion, Whither USA? Potentials and Limitations of Ethnography


Week 15: May 23, final examination