

RU Anthropology

Anthropology 3

Term 2

Contemporary Theory in Practice

“Anthropology is the theory-practice of the permanent decolonisation of thought”
Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, 2009

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Office Hours 9am – 11am Monday
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Location: St Peters Rm36

Due to the number of public holidays this term, your timetable will vary from week to week. Please check through this outline carefully to confirm the dates and time of teaching. If content is not covered in the allocated time, we will use 'Shut Up and Read' sessions to catch up.

Course Outline

“Critical thinking is most generally associated with the way it enables us to reflexively move outside of ourselves in ways we could not possibly have seen ourselves, our culture or our society before”

Ghassan Hage in *Critical Anthropological Thought and Radical Politics Today*
in *Critique of Anthropology*, September 2012

This course introduces students to some of the major social theories and tensions that have inspired and informed anthropological analysis and debate since the 1980's. We will investigate a range of theoretical propositions including practice and power, agency, subjectivity, history, social change, performativity, decolonisation, public anthropology, the human economy, new materialism, post-humanism and the politics of ethnographic representation.

In this course theory is demystified, seen not as the achievement of ultimate truth, but as statements about human beings and the worlds they create and inhabit which can be critically engaged with to both understand the world and act within it. Contemporary theory is contextualized within a critical look at the historical trajectory of the anthropological canon since its inception.

As the course engages with contemporary events as they unfold, the RU Connected page will be an important resource to find additional readings and links to areas of interest as they emerge. Please check weekly for new content. You are encouraged to exercise agency in the RUConnected page, sharing your own links and comment threads.

Course Aims

- Introduce students to emerging topics and enduring tensions in contemporary anthropological theory.
- Encourage students to reflect critically on the production of ethnographic knowledge and the emergence of anthropological theory.
- Develop student's critical thinking, writing, reading and presentation skills, including the ability to contextualize anthropological knowledge for publics beyond the academy.

You must read the **Class Readings** BEFORE each session to ensure you are able to follow the line of discussion. Bring these readings and the notes you have made to class, whether in digital or written form. **Further Reading** points you to deeper engagement should a topic pique your interest. There will be no assigned questions for seminars. Students present portions of the material and pose discussion questions based on these.

The two key texts for the course are:

Zakes Mda (2019) 'Zulus of New York'

Francis Nyamnjoh (2017) 'Drinking from the Cosmic Gourd: How Amos Tutuola Can Change Our Minds'

*N.B. This course outline must be read in conjunction with the **Anthropology 3 Guide**. These were issued at registration. In case of loss, replacements are available from the Des Bekker in the Anthropology Departmental Office , price R25. The **RU Anthropology 3 2018** Facebook page has the file uploaded to it*

Assessment

Ethnocharrette Class Presentation – 20%

We will workshop Zakes Mda's 'Zulu's of New York' and Francis Nyamnjoh's 'Drinking from the Cosmic Gourd: How Amos Tutola Can Change Our Minds' using the charrette method, breaking the work down into its parts to create a presentation of these key ideas aimed at a non-academic audience.

The presentations will take the form of a Pecha Kuche.

<https://www.thejournalist.org.za/books/zakes-mda-on-his-new-book-the-zulus-of-new-york>

<https://www.thejournalist.org.za/books/thinking-researching-and-writing-africa-insights-from-nigerias-tutuola>

Essay/Open Book Exam – 80% (Essay 20% Open Book Exam 60%)

You will design your own essay topic in discussion with the course convenor. Pick any aspect or combination from the course – New Materialism, Post-Humanism, Decolonising Anthropology, Public Anthropology, Performativity, Culture, Economy, Agency, Practice and Power- or a theme of your choice that emerges out of discussion. Identify additional sources that relate to a specific issue regarding the aspect you have chosen. Write a scholarly paper in which you refer to these additional sources, the concepts covered during the course, and relevant material drawn from that covered over the entire course. Model your paper on a journal article in which the issue in question is explained and contextualised, material is presented to further develop your argument, and the main points are reiterated in the conclusion. The essay should be approximately **1500- 2000 words**, not including the bibliography.

Draft proposals must be emailed to d.santos@ru.ac.za by Friday **10th May** 2019. These must include:

1. Paper title.
2. Outline of what you want to explore in your paper (750 words).
3. Bibliography of the key sources you intend to use, including at least **FIVE** from the course and an additional **THREE** identified by yourself.

Due date for essays: **21st May 2019**

You will receive your essay with feedback by Monday 27th May in time for SWOT week revision. During the exam period you will write a take-home exam in which you revise your essay according to the comments and suggestions made.

Week 1

Monday 15th April

14.15pm-15.55pm

Practice and Power 1

A strength of contemporary ethnography is its linking of structure and practice, micro and macro-analysis, historical, economic, political and cultural factors. Back in 1959, C. Wright Mills called for the development of a 'sociological imagination' which pays attention to the relationship between everyday life and public issues. Grounding theory in the materiality and intimacy of everyday life remains vital to the relevance of anthropology. This session introduces the course with a careful overview of how theoretical propositions in anthropology have emerged in response to global shifts of the past few decades. We also consider how 'new' the current state of crisis is.

Class Reading

Sherry B. Ortner (2016) *Dark Anthropology and its Others: Theory since the Eighties* in HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 6 (1) 47 -73

Tuesday 16th April

16.05 – 16.55

Shut Up and Read!

In this session we take the opportunity to read for the course in a supportive and productive environment. You are encouraged to bring a blanket, food, hot drinks and other accoutrements to ensure that the experience is one which is nurturing and restorative. We will use the time to focus especially on the presentation readings 'Zulus of New York' by Zakes Mda and 'Drinking from the Cosmic Gourd' by Francis Nyamnjoh.

Wednesday 17th April

14.15pm-15.55pm

Practice and Power 2

Class Reading

Jafari Sinclair Allen and Ryan Cecil Jobson (2016) *The Decolonizing Generation: (Race and) Theory in Anthropology Since the Eighties* in *Current Anthropology* Vol 57 (2) 129 – 150

Further Reading Practice & Power

Harrison, F. V. (1992). The Du Boisian Legacy in Anthropology. *Critique of Anthropology*, 12(3), 239–260.

Faye Harrison (1997) *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Toward an Anthropology of Liberation*

Hylton White (2019) – What is Anthropology That Decolonial Scholarship Should be Mindful Of? (Under Review)

Fluehr-Lobban, C. (2000). Anténor Firmin: Haitian Pioneer of Anthropology. *American Anthropologist*, 102(3), 449-466.

Ghassan Hage 'Critical Anthropological Thought and the Radical Political Imaginary' 2012

Talal Asad (1973) – *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*

Week 2

Tuesday 23rd April

16.05 – 16.55

Shut Up and Read!

Wednesday 24th April

14.15pm-15.55pm

Culture, Structure & Agency

In social analysis, the tensions between structure and agency have long been a source of debate. To what extent are people shaped and constrained by the cultural, social and historical framework they inhabit, even as that framework is in a state of constant re-negotiation? How much autonomy do individuals have to shape their own life choices, and how does this intersect with the inevitable foreclosure of some outcomes by structural constraints? How do anthropologists come to know the social world's their interlocutors inhabit, constrained as they are by their own positioning?

Class Reading

Rosaldo (1989) "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage," *Culture & Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*, pgs.1–24

Jackson (2013) "Introduction" and "Thin," *Thin Description*, pgs.11–19; 149–55

Further Reading Culture, Structure & Agency

Archer, Margaret. (1996). *Culture and Agency : The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Introduction & Chapter 1).

Keane (2003) "Self-Interpretation, Agency, and the Objects of Anthropology: Reflections on a Genealogy," *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 45: 222–248

Ingold (2013) "Bodies on the Run," Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture, pgs.91–108

Geertz (1973) "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," Interpretation of Cultures, pgs.1–30

Bourdieu, Pierre (1972) Outline of a Theory of Practice

Week 3

Monday 29th April

14.15-15.55

Economy and Morality

As the global economic and ecological crisis deepens, framed in some quarters as a 'crisis of capitalism', anthropologists have sought to respond to the impasse by theorizing on the emergence of the world system, and the various ways that people and societies are incorporated into it. Over these 2 sessions we consider feminist critiques, propositions for a 'Human Economy' and 'People as Infrastructure', as well as the reverse-gaze theoretical critique of cannibalistic consumer capitalism from the perspective of those incorporated unequally into the world economy, and operating on its margins. We also consider grassroots responses to the problematic intersection of resource scarcity and privatization, and the cruelty of promises of progress that cannot be realized.

Class Reading

Choose one post from the Society for Social Anthropology's blog series 'Generating Capitalism' <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/series/generating-capitalism>

Njamnjoh, F (2018) Eating and Being Eaten: Cannibalism as Food for Thought (Introduction)

Steven Robins (2019) 'Day Zero', Hydraulic Citizenship and the Defence of the Commons in Cape Town: A Case Study of the Politics of Water and its Infrastructures (2017–2018) Journal of Southern African studies. 45(1):5-29

Abdoumalig Simone (2008) "People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg" in Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis

Further Reading Economy & Morality

Hart, K (2010) The Human Economy: A Citizens Guide

Fiona C Ross (2010) Raw Life, New Hope: Decency, Housing and Everyday Life in a Post-Apartheid Community

Ahmed, S (2018) Living a Feminist Life

Manning, M (1983) How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society

Wallerstein, E (2004) World Systems Analysis: An Introduction

Jean Comaroff & John L. Comaroff (2012) Theory from the South: Or, how Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa, Anthropological Forum, 22:2, 113-131

Berlant, L (2011) Cruel Optimism

Paul Stoller (2001) Money has No Smell: The Africanisation of New York City

Kalyan Sangal (2007) Re-Thinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post-Colonial Capitalism

Tuesday 30th April
16.05 – 16.55
Shut Up and Read!

In this session we take the opportunity to read for the course in a supportive and productive environment. You are encouraged to bring a blanket, food, hot drinks and other accoutrements to ensure that the experience is one which is nurturing and restorative.

Week 4

Monday 6th May

14.15-15.55

Public Anthropology

"If we make the world through social practice, we can unmake and remake the world through social practice" Sherry Ortner. This week we consider the theoretical implications of public anthropology as a mode for acting on and in the world, as both a mode of research practice, activism and pedagogy. Looking at case studies of anthropologists involvement in indigenous environmental protests, the underground trade in organs and transforming pedagogy in a South African university, we examine the concepts of crisis, chronicity and precarity to examine a range of contemporary conditions that anthropologists have sought to represent and been involved with.

Class Reading

Scheper-Hughes, N (2000) The Global Traffic in Human Organs in *Current Anthropology*, Vol 41, Number 1

Gillespie, K. 2011. *Teaching dissent: Reflections from a Johannesburg classroom.* *Critical Arts* 26 (1).

<http://appalachianmagazine.org/stories/id/715>

Further Reading Public Anthropology

Dana Powell (2017) *Landscapes of Power: Politics of Energy in the Navajo Nation*

Dominique Santos, Ntsiki Anderson & Daniel Hutchinson (2018) *Fox Palaces: The Playful Occupation of a Johannesburg City Park in Children's Geographies*

Nixon, Robert (2011) "Introduction." In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, pp. 1–14. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Adams, Vincanne, Taslim Van Hattum and Diana English. 2009. "Chronic Disaster Syndrome: Displacement, Disaster Capitalism, and the Eviction of the Poor from New Orleans." *American Ethnologist* 36(4): 615–636

Klein, Naomi. 2007. "Introduction – Blank is Beautiful: Three Decades of Erasing and Remaking the World." In *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, pp. 3–26 New York: Picador

Graeber, D (2008) *Direct Action: An Ethnography*

Philippe Bourgois (2016) *Righteous Dopefiend*

Ryan Jobson - Road Work: Highways and Hegemony in Trinidad and Tobago." *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 23(3): 457

Tuesday 7th May

16.05 – 16.55

Shut Up and Read!

In this session we take the opportunity to read for the course in a supportive and productive environment. You are encouraged to bring a blanket, food, hot drinks and other accoutrements to ensure that the experience is one which is nurturing and restorative.

Week 5

Monday 13th May

14.15- 15.55

Performance & Performativity

We consider performativity as a process of subject formation. Following Butler, the concept of performativity has been explored in anthropological studies of gender and sexuality. Scholars of ritual have also used the concept of performative action and performativity to look at how rituals work to have effect in the world. Other types of performances have been also analyzed. Anthropologists and other scholars studying economies see economic performativity, the practices of economists and other financial experts, as not simply descriptive of their subject but also serving to shape it. The act does not simply represent another mode of reality; it plays with modes of reality and is generative.

Class Reading

Nadia Davids (2017) "Sequins, Self & Struggle": an introduction to the special issue, *Safundi*, 18:2, 109-116,

Strathern, Andrew, and Pamela J. Stewart. (2008) "Embodiment Theory in Performance and Performativity." *Journal of Ritual Studies* 22, no. 1. 67-71

We will also view extracts from 'Paris is Burning' (Dir: Jennie Livingstone) and Spring Queen (2014) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGTKIAzeOH4> for discussion.

Further Reading Performance & Performativity

Gillian Tett (2009) *Fool's Gold: How the Bold Dream of a Small Tribe at J. P. Morgan Was Corrupted by Wall Street Greed and Unleashed a Catastrophe*

Roberte Hamayon (2015) *Why We Play: An Anthropological Study*

Jackson (2005) *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*
"Real Natives," pgs.151–172 "Real Names," pgs.197–223
"Real Loves," pgs.224–230

Donald MacKenzie, Fabian Muniesa & Lucia Siun (2008) *Do Economists Make Markets? On the Performativity of Markets*

Tuesday 14th May
16.05 – 16.55
Shut Up and Read!

Wednesday 15th May
14.15- 15.55
New Materialism & Post
Humanism: Promise &
Problematics 1

Emerging meta-theories, drawn from the cosmological frameworks of indigenous societies, which seek to reconceptualise human relations with the other-than human realm, offer great liberatory potential in acknowledging our emeshment in a web of transactions between animate and inanimate beings. Moving beyond the post-structuralist erasure of the biological body and the sociobiological erasure of the cultural body, new materialism and post-humanism extends the ongoing deconstruction of the human/nature binary. Future possibilities and responses to the threat to life posed by the Anthropocene are theorized without being tethered to the human body as the ultimate subject. However, ideas about the human subject rooted in the colonial imaginary being reproduced uncritically have been highlighted as key risks associated with this movement.

We will view the current Blue Planet Live series, considering what a theoretical viewpoint that includes a thorough examination of power and structure adds to the analysis of the material presented.

Please read Beth Collier's article at
<https://mediadiversified.org/2019/03/26/wwf-human-rights-abuses-and-the-need-to-decolonise-conservation/>

And George Monbiot's blog at
<https://www.monbiot.com/2018/09/12/plastic-soup/>

Class Reading

Zakiyyah Iman Jackson (2015) Outer Worlds: The Persistence of Race in Movement "Beyond the Human" in GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies Vol 21, Number 2-3, Queer Inhumanisms

<http://sites.bu.edu/impact/previous-issues/impact-winter-2017/posthuman-anthropology-facing-up-to-planetary-conviviality-in-the-anthropocene/>

Further Reading New Materialism & Post-Humanism

Eduardo Viveiros De Castro (2015) The Relative Native: Essays on Indigenous Conceptual Worlds

Conty, A. F. (2018). The Politics of Nature: New Materialist Responses to the Anthropocene. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 35(7–8), 73–96

Niehaus, Isak (2019) [Seeing Through Dreams: On the Efficacy of Antiretroviral Drugs in the South African Lowveld](#) in *Journal of Southern African studies*. 45(1):197-213

Donna Haraway (2007) When Species Meet

Jane Bennet (2010) Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things

Zimitri Erasmus (2017) Race Otherwise: Forging a New Humanism for South Africa

Radhika Govindrajana (2019) Animal Intimacies: Beastly Love in the Himalayas

Eduardo Kohn (2013) How Forests Think

F. David Pleat (1996) Blackfoot Physics (Chapter 1 & Chapter 2)

Week 6

Monday 20th May

14.15-15.55

Screening: Awake: A Dream From Standing Rock.

How does the protest against the South Dakota pipeline at Standing Rock speaks to themes in this course? What are the links with movements around the world seeking social and environmental justice such as South Africa's Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM or the Shack Dwellers) and Brazil's Movement dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST or the Landless Workers Movement), the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) and the All-India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA)?

Tuesday 21st May

16.05-16.50

Ethnocharrette & Pecha Kuche
Workshop: The Art of
Representation

Using the 'ethnocharrette' methodology, we will use the session to deconstruct Zakes Mda's 'Zulus of New York' to make a presentation for a non-academic audience of how the novel's use of historical and ethnographic data speaks to the theoretical themes and content of the course.

<https://www.thejournalist.org.za/books/zakes-mda-on-his-new-book-the-zulus-of-new-york>

<https://www.thejournalist.org.za/books/thinking-researching-and-writing-africa-insights-from-nigerias-tutuola>

Wednesday 22nd May

14.15-15.55

Ethnocharette & Pecha Kuche
Workshop: The Art of
Representation

We will continue the work of preparing your presentations.

Thursday 23rd May

14.15-15.55

Presentations & End of Term
Celebration