Political Anthropology
Classic to Contemporary Concerns
Spring 2019

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Course Description
Political Anthropology is a vast field covering the spectrum of human political organization past and present. In addition to documenting the organization of political life in small-scale societies, political anthropologists are concerned with the incorporation of such societies into wider political orders via colonialism, capitalism and processes of predatory expansion. The field equally seeks to understand the similarities and differences between indigenous, non-western and non-modern polities, and modern states. As few so-called ‘traditional societies’ remain to be discovered - or have ceased to exist - political anthropologists are increasingly preoccupied with the nation-state and global/planetary processes. At the same time, the preoccupations of political anthropology are down-shifting in scale to consider molecular and what have been coined ‘microbiopolitical’ processes. With this in mind, the course combines classic themes and case studies in political anthropology with interrogations of issues of new interest to anthropology such as border security and migration policy, climate change and the notion of the ‘anthropocene,’ energy extraction and large scale infrastructure, and multispecies relations. Some of these topics force scholars and students of anthropology alike to chart new ground at the same time they return us to core questions about strategies of human cooperation, the regulation of human mobility and the humans’ place in nature.

Whatever the specific scale, location, or time-period at hand, this realm of anthropological inquiry hinges on four fundamental concerns. 1. The problem of order: How is political life structured? Through what mechanisms are human (and human/non-human) social relations regulated and power distributed? 2. The problem of inequality: How is the unequal distribution of power and resources achieved and sustained? How are inequalities experienced and how is opposition to them expressed? 3. The problem of culture: In what ways are cultural symbols, beliefs and practices bound up with political life? How do they represent and reinforce systems of domination as well as resistance? 4. The problem of violence: How is violence expressed and contained? How does it contribute to both the constitution and breakdown of specific political orders?

In this class, we bring these perspectives to bear on case studies from around the world, including the contemporary US. The course also attends to the politics of anthropological practice and the dangers, risks and ethics of anthropological research or the role of anthropology in revealing the dynamics of political abuse and empowerment. The course will be meaningful to students interested in activism and social change, environmental and international matters, indigenous rights, public policy, and science and technology issues and careers. By developing students’ familiarity with the tools and tenets of anthropological inquiry through critical discussion and debate, informed reading and research and interaction with guest speakers and scholars, the ultimate goal of the class is to cultivate an informed skepticism with regard to received and new knowledge so we can all ask better questions about distant, emergent and familiar places, problems and phenomena.
Promoting ‘experiential learning,’ the course will include guest lectures from visiting scholars as well as participation in the Center for African Studies conference ‘ENERGY|Africa’ focused on Energy Politics and Energy Futures. Complementing course-based reading and discussion, students will interact with visiting scholars and practitioners for this event scheduled for March 21-23. Students should expect to devote 2-4 hours on Friday March 22 to this event, which will culminate in a writing assignment worth 15%. If you have scheduling concerns, please contact Dr. Chalfin by Feb. 1 to make alternate arrangements.

**Required Books:**

All other reading will be posted on CANVAS. The professor reserves the right to make minor changes to reading assignments.

**Assignments:**

**Undergraduate:**
- Each class: 5 terms, 2 questions, 2 observations/conclusions, 200 word post on Canvas 5% x 10 classes = 50%
- Energy Politics Conference Reporting Mar 22: Interview 5% and Write-up 10% = 15%
- Class Participation including two class “Raconteur/Wrap-ups” = 10% (sign-up by Jan 21)
- Midterm Essay due March 1 @ 9a = 10%
- Final Assignment due April 29 @ 9a = 15%

**Graduate:**
- Same as above except that ‘Each class’ = 25% total (2.5ea) and there is a final 10 page annotated bibliography on the topic of your choice related to the course themes and your own research interests for 25% also due April 29.

Other than the posting on CANVAS required for each of 10 classes, all written assignments should be submitted on-line to bchalfin@ufl.edu.

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**Class 1. Jan 8 Introduction and Course Overview**

**Class 2. Jan 15 NO CLASS MEETING**

**Part 1: Foundations of Political Anthropology**

**Class 3. Jan 22 - Fundaments of Human Political Organization**

**Required Reading:**
- R. Lee, *The Dobe Ju/'huansi*, Holt, 1993, Chs 1,3,4,5 (only read p61-66),6,7,11 (read Ch.7 carefully).

**Graduate Required and Undergraduate Optional Reading:**
In-class: FILMS (John Marshall Kalahari Peoples series)


**Class 4. Jan 29 - Tribal Societies, Violence, and Political Order**

**Required Reading:**
N. Chagnon, *Yanomamo*, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1997, Chs. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7

In-class: FILMS (N. Chagnon and T. Ash Series)

**Class 5. Feb 5 - Predatory Expansion and Anthropological Ethics**

**Required Reading:**
American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics” www.aaanet.org

In-class: Debate

**Class 6. Feb 12 - State Authority, Ritual, and Resources**

**Required Reading:**

In class: FILM: S. Lansing, Three Worlds of Bali

**Graduate Required and Undergraduate Optional:**

**Class 7. Feb 19 – Explaining the Nation-State**

**Required Reading:**

**Class 8. Feb 26 - Domination, Resistance, and Social Movements**

**Required Reading:**

**Midterm Writing Assignment Due Friday March 1, 9a (or before) – 10%**

**No Class Mar 5 - SPRING BREAK**

**Part 2: New Directions in Political Anthropology**

**Class 10. Mar 12 – Infrastructure and Technopolitics**

**Required Reading:**

In-class: G. Hecht, Technopolitics. [http://www.theory-talks.org/2014/07/theory-talk-64.html](http://www.theory-talks.org/2014/07/theory-talk-64.html). Theory Talk #64: Gabrielle Hecht on Nuclear Ontologies, De-provincializing the Cold War, and Postcolonial Technopolitics

**Class 11. Mar 19 – Energy Politics and Energy Futures**

**Required Reading:**
Attendance Required Friday March 22, 2019 – CAS CARTER CONFERENCE
ENERGY|Africa: From Technopolitics to Technofutures
Interview Conference Participant and Write-up of Conference Session

Class 12. Mar 25 – Carter Conference Recap and Recuperation
Conference Interviews and Write-ups Due by 2p.

Class 13. Apr 2 – Anthro-politics and the Anthropocene

Required Reading:


Graduate Required and Undergraduate Optional:

What should a political anthropology the Anthropocene look like?

In-class: Skype Conversation with Matt Watson

Class 14. Apr 9 - The Politics of Security, Migration and Emergency

Required Reading:
G. Feldman, The Migration Apparatus, Stanford, 2012. Ch.4 Border Control

In-Class: https://limn.it/issues/systemic-risk/

Guest Lecture: Making and Mapping the Afro-Euro Border, Laia Soto Bermant & Philippe Rakewicz

Class 15. Apr 16 - WRAP-UP

Final Paper Assignment and Graduate Student Bibliography Assignment Due Monday, Apr 29, 9a – 15%