

Rutgers University
Department of Anthropology
Fall 2018

Politics of Culture

070:371 (3 credits)
Tuesday 3:55-6:55pm, via Zoom
Meeting ID: 934 9528 5047
Password: politics

Instructor: Prof. Bridget Purcell
Contact: bridget.purcell@rutgers.edu
Office hours: Thursday 2-3pm, or by appointment. Use this link:

Course Description: This course explores questions of power and politics, using anthropology's cross-cultural and comparative lens. We will delve into the themes of power, authority, and domination; statecraft and transnational governance; everyday forms of resistance and collective action; and violence and disorder, among other topics. We will investigate the ways anthropologists have tried to unsettle taken-for-granted concepts and categories—including the state, democracy, and citizenship—as we examine both “formal” institutions and the politics of the everyday.

The course is organized into three units. In the first unit, we will consider classic anthropological concerns with politics in small-scale, decentralized societies, including the “evolution” of the state form. In unit two, we will trace anthropology's growing concern with the role of the state and the West in the development of world politics, especially by way of colonialism and global capitalism. In the third and final section, we will explore politics in the post-9/11 era, including challenges to the state form posed by capitalist globalization, social movements, and critiques stemming from both the left and the right.

Assignments and Grading: The success of this seminar relies on your commitment to complete all readings, to participate actively in class meetings, and to creatively engage with course themes in your discussion posts and assignments. Grading will be based on:

- **Attendance and Participation (20%):** Your lively, thoughtful participation in class is both encouraged and expected. You should come to class prepared to discuss your understanding of the readings, to articulate the author's key arguments, and to pose questions on points of particular interest or confusion. Please note that any absence that is not formally excused will impact your participation grade.
- **Discussion posts and replies (20%):** By **11:59pm each Monday**, you are expected to post a 1-2 paragraph reflection on that week's readings (I will provide prompts). By **noon each Tuesday**, you must post a 1 paragraph response to a classmate's post. *This only works if everyone commits to posting by the agreed-upon deadlines.*
- **Three essays (in total, 60%):** These essays are opportunities for you to synthesize course readings and themes, and to demonstrate your original thinking and evolving questions. Prior to each assignment, I will distribute a handout with sample essay topics to help you focus your thinking. You are most welcome to visit me during office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss ideas for the essay ahead of time.
 - Essay 1 (4-6p, 15%) is due by class time Week 5, February 16
 - Essay 2 (4-6p, 20%) is due by class time Week 10, March 22
 - Essay 3 (5-7p, 25%) is due one week after our last class, Tuesday May 4 at 11:59pm.

Week 1, 1/19
Order & Disorder

Harney, Stefano and Fred Moten. 2013. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. pp. 103-131.

Week 2, 1/26
State as Destiny

Diamond, Jared. 1997. "From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy" (Ch. 14) in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. pp. 1-15.

Boas, Franz. 1904. "The History of Anthropology," "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology" (Selections on Canvas)

Week 3, 2/2
Ordered Anarchy

Clastres, Pierre. 1967. *Society Against the State*., pp. 189-218.

Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1940. "Preface" in *African Political Systems*. pp. xi-xxiii.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940. "The Nuer of the Southern Sudan." In *African Political Systems*. pp. 272-296.

Week 4, 2/9
Colonialism and the Politics of Knowledge

Truillot, Michel Rolph. 1995. *Silencing the Past*. Selections.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. *The Logic of Practice*. Selections.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Abdelmalek Sayad. 1964 [2004]. "Colonial Rule and Cultural *Sabir*." *Ethnography* 5(4), pp. 445-486.

Week 5, 2/16

Paper 1 due. In-class film and discussion.

Week 6, 2/23

**The Rise of the State:
Language, Power, Legibility**

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. pp. 1-46.

Scott, James C. 1999. "Introduction" and "Cities, People, and Language" in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. pp. 1-8, 53-83.

Week 7, 3/2

**Hegemony & Resistance:
Jokes, Gossip, Open Secrets**

Scott, James C. 1990. "Domination, Acting, and Fantasy." In *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. pp. 17-44.

Wedeen, Lisa. 1999. *Ambiguities of Domination*. pp. 1-31; 87-142.

Week 8, 3/8

**Identity & Violence:
Memory, Haunting, Affect**

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2012. *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*. Intro (1-17, 27-33 only); and Chapters 1-4 (through page 96).

Pearson, Heath. 2015. "The Prickly Skin of White Supremacy: Race in the 'Real America.'" *Transforming Anthropology* 24(1), pp. 43-58.

****Spring Break****

Week 9, 3/22

The Neoliberal State & its Margins

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France*. pp. 239-263.

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend*. Intro, Ch. 1, Ch. 3, Conclusion. pp. 1-46; 79-115; 297-320.

Week 10, 3/29

Paper 2 due. In-class film and discussion.

Week 11, 4/5
Borders, Security, Migration

Brown, Wendy. 2014. "Waning Sovereignty, Walled Democracy." *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. MIT Press. pp. 7-43.

DeLeon, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California Press. Selections.

Week 12, 4/12
Pluralism and the Politics of Recognition

Hale, Charles. 2002. "Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights, and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34, pp. 485-524.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. 1999. "Settler Modernity and the Quest for an Indigenous Tradition." *Public Culture* 11(1), pp. 19-48.

Russel Rickford. 2016. "The Fallacies of Neoliberal Protest."

Week 13, 4/19
Refusal

Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press. Selections.

Sojoyner, Damien. 2017. "Another Life is Possible: Black Fugitivity and Enclosed Spaces." *Cultural Anthropology* 32(4), pp. 514-536.

Week 14, 4/26
Order & Disorder, revisited

Graeber, David. 2004. *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Selections.

Cemgil, C and Clemens Hoffmann. 2016. "The 'Rojava Revolution' in Syrian Kurdistan: A Model of Development for the Middle East?" *IDS Bulletin* pp. 53-76.

Purnell, Derecka. 2020. "How I Became a Police Abolitionist." *The Atlantic*.

Alexander, Michelle, and Marc Lamont Hill. 2012. "Reform vs. Abolition."

Davis, Angela. 2005. "Abolition Democracy." In *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture*.

Appendix A: Weekly Schedule

Mon	Tue	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
-reading-	<p>12pm response post due</p> <p>3:55-6:55 class meets</p>		<p>3-4pm bp office hours</p> <p>4pm bp weekly e-mail, w/ pages & discussion prompts</p>	-reading-	-reading-	-reading-
<p>11:59pm discussion post due</p>						

Appendix B Learning Goals

Course specific learning goals:

- 1) Analyze politics from an anthropological perspective—that is, one rooted in the concrete practices of everyday life, in contexts distant and familiar.
- 2) Gain a critical understanding of power, both at the macro level of policies and structures, and at the micro-level of subjectivity and relationships.
- 3) Use anthropology’s comparative lens to appreciate the vast range of sociopolitical forms and practices – not only in other times and places but here and now.

Departmental learning goals:

- 1) Students are able to demonstrate proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills
- 2) Students are able to demonstrate proficiency using current methods in their major fields, including library research
- 3) Students are able to express themselves knowledgably and proficiently in speaking and writing about central issues in their major field

Appendix C

Additional Course Policies

Accommodations: Students seeking accommodations should consult the Office of Disability Services at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu>, dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu, or (848) 445-6800. You should do this as soon as possible, but definitely before assignments are due. Students who suspect they may have an undiagnosed learning disability or other disability may visit the Office of Disability Services for assessment and guidance.

Absence reporting: If you should need to miss class for any reason, please let me know prior to the class meeting. This is a courtesy, but it does not excuse the absence. In some circumstances (religious observance, serious illness, certain athletic events), your absence may be formally excused, given appropriate documentation.

Academic Integrity: Please, familiarize yourself with the principles and policies of academic integrity. <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. If you have questions, ask me. I cannot tolerate plagiarism or intellectual dishonesty.