

Anthropology and Activism (01:070:383:01; 3 credits)

Prof. Daniel Goldstein – Spring 2016

Course meets: Wednesdays 2:15-5:15

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:00 in RAB 303

Class Meets in: Hickman 207

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Course Description

Anthropologists have long been concerned with the relationship between knowledge and practice, the academy and the “real world.” This is particularly the case because anthropologists so often study the poor and marginalized, facing conditions of social inequality, discrimination, poverty, and limited life chances. Can anthropology and anthropologists have a positive, practical impact on the lives of those they study? Is this possible, or even desirable? What would such an impact look like? Would it make academic anthropology more difficult, or would it in fact facilitate ethnographic research? How does anthropology, and social science more generally, become transformed by such social engagement? How have these concerns been dealt with in the history of the discipline?

These are some of the questions that this class will explore, by examining an activist approach to anthropology that specifically aims to address them. Sometimes also referred to as “engaged” or “public” anthropology, an activist approach advocates for a type of research practice that is academically rigorous, politically critical, and socially concerned, and strives to understand the impacts, ethical dilemmas, political implications, and creative possibilities of an anthropology that reaches beyond the academy. Today, there is a robust but inconclusive discussion of “engagement” in the wider discipline, and what might be the aims, goals, and significance of an engaged or activist anthropology. This course explores this conjuncture of theory, practice, and politics, examining the ways in which argument for an activist anthropology might operate in the world today. Students will read and discuss texts that lay out the argument for engagement, and will debate the ethical and practical implications of engagement for the discipline of anthropology. In addition, students will put into practice some of what they learn through a semester-long project of engaged research.

Course Objectives

This course aims to provide undergraduate students of anthropology the opportunity to explore the possibilities of their work beyond the confines of a traditional academic field. Many students of anthropology often describe themselves as frustrated by the discipline’s limitations, its tendency to separate academic work from broader questions of social justice and transformative action, and to pose questions that it seems unable to answer. Through this course, students will come to appreciate the many ways in which anthropology – its theories, methods, and overall orientation as a field – can touch the lives of the people it studies, and how anthropology offers students many undiscovered possibilities for study, employment, and self-enrichment.

Rules and Regulations

1. Attendance and Lateness You are required to attend all class meetings. Class meets only once per week, and we cover a lot of material in class, so missing any class session can be costly. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences: if you miss class, you miss a quiz, and there are no make-up quizzes. I do not like lateness – please try to be on time for every class, or I may scowl at you.

2. Assignments, evaluations and grading Your grade in the course will be based on your comprehension of the materials studied, using different types of evaluation. You will be graded out of a total of 100 points for the semester. There is no final exam in the class.

- Participation (20 pts) – This course is an upper-level seminar, not a lecture course, so class meetings will consist largely of discussions about your reactions to the readings and my comments on those reactions. So, coming to class prepared to participate in discussions is a course requirement. This means having read, taken notes on, thought about, and reviewed the assigned readings carefully before class starts. In addition, you must bring your copy of the readings to class each week. Participation will be graded for each class session for weeks 2 through 13, for 11 classes total – you may drop your lowest class (which may include a day on which you are absent).

You will be awarded 2 points for each class session in which you actively participate, and in which your participation shows clear evidence that you have done the week's readings. Participating without showing that you have done the readings will not gain you any points.

- **Weekly Reading Notes** (20 pts) – During Weeks 2-13, in preparation for class, you should read the assigned texts and write 2 pages of notes, single or double-spaced. These notes are informal and there is no correct way of writing them. It is expected that each of you will develop your own preferred style. The following are some guidelines to get started:
 - write down the main points, new concepts, important quotes or phrases you would like to remember from the readings, and explain them in your own words;
 - if you are puzzled by the text (or its parts) or would like to know more about a certain subject, write down your questions;
 - you can list the arguments you agree or disagree with and why;
 - use the material from the text to reflect on your research topic, or on another topic that is of interest to you;
 - connect the readings to your own personal experience, or to something you studied in another class;
 - compare and contrast the text with other readings assigned for this class.

Reading notes are due on Sakai (under Dropbox) by the start of class each week. You should also bring a print or electronic copy to class. You will get 2 points for each set of notes, if you complete the assignment on time and critically engage with the readings for the week. Again, you may drop the lowest score or missed class.

- **Research Paper** (50 pts) – Each student will write a 10-page paper (double-spaced) analyzing a particular case of activist anthropological research, interpreting it in light of the readings we have done for the course. See Week 13 for possible topics or, better yet, develop your own topic. The following deadlines apply:
 - Individual meeting with instructor: by February 3
 - Paper topic/title: February 10 (2 pts)
 - Abstract and oral presentation: February 17 (3 pts)
 - Preliminary reading list: March 9 (5 pts)
 - Introduction (min. 2 pp, double spaced): April 13 (5 pts)
 - Final paper and oral presentation: May 4 (30 pts)
- **Public Statement** (10 points) – This is the “activist” component of your research project, in which you communicate your findings to a wider public. You must decide what findings you want to communicate to the general public with no specialized knowledge of the topic. It is important that you demonstrate why anyone should care about the issue that you have investigated, so you should frame it as a critique or an opinion piece (op-ed) on existing or proposed policies or problems (again, see the style of some of the pieces in Week 13, or Amy Goodman's columns in Week 6). Your statement should be 750-1000-words in length. It is due along with your paper on May 4, and will comprise part of your oral presentation.

3. **Grading Scale** A = 90 and above; B+ = 87-89; B = 80-86; C+ = 77-79; C = 70-76; D = 60-69; F = 59 and below

4. **Academic Integrity** All students must strictly adhere to the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy, which identifies and defines violations of cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and denying others access to information or material. Full definitions of each of these violations, as well as the consequences of violating the policy, are available at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>.

Books Required for Purchase

- Goldstein, Daniel M. 2016. *Owners of the Sidewalk: Security and Survival in the Informal City*. Durham: Duke University Press. ISBN# 978-0-8223-6045-2.
- Kidder, Tracy. 2003. *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. New York: Random House. ISBN# 0812973011.
- Stuesse, Angela. 2016. *Scratching Out a Living: Latinos, Race, and Work in the Deep South*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN# 9780520287211
- Tuhiwai Smith, Linda. 2012. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd Edition. London: Zed. ISBN# 978-1848139503.

Course Schedule

All readings should be completed by the date of the class meeting listed. Please read the selections in the order in which they are listed in this syllabus.

Week 1: Wednesday 20 January – Course introduction and overview

Week 2: Wednesday 27 January – Historical background: Anthropology and the colonial legacy

- Asad, Talal. 1973. Introduction. In *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, ed. T. Asad. Pp. 9-19. London: Ithaca.
- Berberman, Gerald D. 1968. Is Anthropology Alive? Social Responsibility in Social Anthropology. *Current Anthropology* 9 (5): 391-96.
- Hymes, Dell. 1974. The Use of Anthropology: Critical, Political, Personal. In *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. D. Hymes. Pp. 3-79. New York: Random House.
- Harrison, Faye V. 1991. Anthropology as an Agent of Transformation: Introductory Comments and Queries. In *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Toward an Anthropology for Liberation*, F.V. Harrison, ed. Pp. 1-14. Washington, DC: AAA.

Week 3: Wednesday 3 February – Decolonizing research

- Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and in Chapter 5, the section headed “Twelve Ways to Be Researched (Colonized)” to the end of that chapter

Week 4: Wednesday 10 February – Taking sides: Towards an activist anthropology

- Hale, Charles R. 2008. Introduction. Pp. 1-28 in *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Low, Setha M., and Sally Engle Merry. 2010. Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas. *Current Anthropology* 51 (supplement 2): S203-S226.
- Davis, Dana-Ain. 2006. Knowledge in the Service of a Vision: Politically Engaged Anthropology. In *Engaged Observer*, eds. V. Sanford and A. Angel-Ajani, pp. 228-38. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Speed, Shannon. 2006. At the Crossroads of Human Rights and Anthropology: Toward a Critically Engaged Activist Research. *American Anthropologist* 108 (1): 66-76.

Week 5: Wednesday 17 February – Activist anthropology: Complications

- Brettell, Caroline B. 1993. Introduction: Fieldwork, Text, and Audience. Pp. 1-24 in *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography*, C.B. Brettell, ed. Santa Barbara: Praeger.
- Pierre, Jemima. 2008. Activist Groundings or Groundings for Activism? The Study of Racialization as a Site of Political Engagement. In Hale, *Engaging Contradictions*.
- Lassiter, Luke Eric. 2008. Moving Past Public Anthropology and Doing Collaborative Research. *NAPA Bulletin* 29: 70-86.
- McFate, Montgomery. 2005. The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture. *Joint Force Quarterly* 38: 42-48.

Week 6: Wednesday 24 February – Democracy Now!

For today’s class we will be visiting the studios and seeing a live taping of the radio program “Democracy Now!” Host Amy Goodman – an anthropology major as an undergrad – will meet with us prior to the taping. In preparation, please read the following, all written by Amy (these links are on Sakai):

- Capital Punishment: A Deadly Policy Walking, April 9, 2015:
http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/capital_punishment_a_dead_policy_walking_20150408
- A Century of Women Working for Peace, April 29, 2015:
http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/a_century_of_women_working_for_peace_20150429

The New Battle for Seattle, June 18, 2015:

http://www.democracynow.org/2015/6/18/the_new_battle_of_seattle

Mississippi Yearning, October 22, 2015:

http://www.democracynow.org/2015/10/22/mississippi_yearning_students_hope_to_remove

We Are Human Beings, We Are Not Dogs, December 10, 2015:

http://www.democracynow.org/2015/12/10/we_are_human_beings_we_are

A Most Unhappy New Year at Guantanamo, December 31, 2015:

http://www.democracynow.org/2015/12/31/a_most_unhappy_new_year_at_guantanamo

Week 7: Wednesday 2 March – Activist research: Ethnographic case #1

Stuesse, *Scratching Out a Living*

Special Guest: Angela Stuesse

Week 8: Wednesday 9 March – Collaborative and indigenous research

Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 12.

Week 9: Wednesday 16 March – **Spring Break**

Week 10: Wednesday 23 March – An activist/anthropologist: Dr. Paul Farmer

Kidder, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*

Week 11: Wednesday 30 March – Activist research: Ethnographic case #2

Goldstein, Daniel M. 2012. Chapter 2, “Getting Engaged,” from *Outlawed: Between Security and Rights in a Bolivian City*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Goldstein, *Owners of the Sidewalk*, pp. TBA

Week 12: Wednesday 6 April – Ethnographic case #2, continued

Goldstein, *Owners of the Sidewalk*, pp. TBA

Goldstein, Daniel M. 2014. Laying the Body on the Line: Activist Anthropology and the Deportation of the Undocumented. *American Anthropologist* 116(4): 839-842.

Week 13: Wednesday 13 April – Addressing the public: Anthropologists speak out on current issues (on Sakai)

Boellstorff, Tom. 2013. Four Anthropological Reactions to the End of DOMA.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/american-anthropological-association/four-anthropological-reactions_b_3517685.html

Gershon, Ilana. 2013. The Samoan Roots of the Mant’i Teo Hoax. *The Atlantic*

<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2013/01/the-samoan-roots-of-the-manti-teo-hoax/272486/>

Goldstein, Daniel M. 2005. Where Lynching Still Lives.

http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2005/06/22/where_lynching_still_lives/

Graeber, David. 2014. Occupy Democracy Is Not Considered Newsworthy. It Should Be.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/27/occupy-democracy-london-parliament-square>

Hindman, Heather. 2015. Writing Good Anthropology in a Time of Crisis: Lessons from the Nepal

Earthquake. <http://savageminds.org/2015/06/05/writing-good-anthropology-in-a-time-of-crisis-lessons-from-the-nepal-earthquake/>

Johnston, Barbara Rose. 2011. Waking Up to a Nuclear Nightmare. [http://www.truth-](http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/251:waking-up-to-a-nuclear-nightmare)

[out.org/news/item/251:waking-up-to-a-nuclear-nightmare](http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/251:waking-up-to-a-nuclear-nightmare)

Luhrmann, Tanya. 2015. The Anxious Americans.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/19/opinion/sunday/the-anxious-americans.html?ref=topics&r=0>

Parry, Marc. 2015. Conflict Over Sociologist's Narrative Puts Spotlight on Ethnography

<http://m.chronicle.com/article/Conflict-Over-Sociologists/230883/>

Scheiber, Noam. 2015. Academics Seek a Big Splash.

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/01/business/beyond-publish-or-perish-scientific-papers-look-to-make-splash.html?smid=nytcore-iphone-share&smprod=nytcore-iphone&_r=1

Week 14: Wednesday 20 April – Activism and organized labor; special guest union president Prof. David Hughes

Readings TBA

Week 15: Wednesday 27 April – No class (make up for Democracy Now! trip)

Week 16: Wednesday 4 May (Special meeting at an undisclosed location; will involve pizza) – Presentations of final papers.