Anthropology and Activism (01:070:383:01; 3 credits)
Prof. Daniel Goldstein – Spring 2014
Course meets: Tuesdays 12:35-3:35
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:30-4:30; Wednesdays 1:30-3:00
Class Meets in: Bio 205

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? Is activism even appropriate for anthropology? 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 an activist anthropology might operate in the world today. Students will read and discuss texts that lay out the contending positions in this area, and will debate the ethical and practical implications of engagement for the discipline of anthropology. Because my own current activist anthropology focuses on questions of immigration, this theme will provide a particular focus to our readings and discussions.

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.

This is an unusual course requiring an unusual commitment from students. Because one of the principal themes of the course is that anthropology can and should have extra-academic dimensions that impact people’s lives, students will not be required to write traditional term papers or do library research for the course. Instead, students in the course will be required to pursue activist work through community service, coordinated through the university’s CESEP program.

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.
• **Quizzes** (30 points) – There will be an in-class or take-home quiz every week (except for the first and last weeks, for a total of 12 quizzes) based on the course readings for the week. Each quiz is worth 3 points. You may drop the lowest two quiz grades (this includes quizzes missed due to absence for any reason).

• **Community-based project** (30 pts) – Students will work individually and in small groups on a community-based project with a social and political component. These projects have been developed by the professor and CESEP, in collaboration with local community-based organizations. Students will be placed with an organization based on their expressed interests and abilities. Each week, students will work with these organizations on their projects, usually for 2-3 hours per week, for a minimum of 40 hours in the course of the semester. Each project will have some kind of tangible end product, which students will present to their classmates, professor, and community partners at the end of the semester.

• **Final Report** (30 pts) – Each student will write a 7-10 page report (typed, double-spaced) describing their work on the community-based project. Students should reflect on their experience doing this work and link it to the various readings and topics we have discussed in class throughout the semester. No additional research is required, and no bibliography is needed unless you use additional sources not on the syllabus. The report is due on the last day of class.

• **Participation** (10 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. In general, I encourage you to ask questions and be curious. You are welcome to your own opinions about everything we read and discuss in this class, but you must share your perspective in a productive and collegial manner. Additionally, we will spend a lot of time sharing our experiences from our community-based projects, and reflecting on how those relate to the readings we have done and the recurring themes of the class. As such, your insights, comments, and questions will be the basis of our class sessions, and you will be assessed on both the frequency and quality of your interventions.

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](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers).

**Books Required for Purchase**

Course Schedule

Tuesday 21 January – Course introduction and overview

Tuesday 28 January – Taking sides

Illich, Ivan. 1968. To Hell with Good Intentions. Lecture given in Cuernevaca, Mexico, April 20.

Tuesday 4 February – Exploring contradictions? Anthropology and/or activism

* Special guests (via Skype): Prof. Charles Hale, University of Texas-Austin, and Dr. Michal Osterweil, University of North Carolina


Tuesday 11 February – Doing activist anthropology (pt. 1)

Kunnath, George T. 2013. Anthropology’s Ethical Dilemmas: Reflections from the Maoist Fields of India. Current Anthropology 54(6): 740-752; plus commentaries and reply that follow the article.

Tuesday 18 February – Doing activist anthropology (pt. 2)

* Special guest: Prof. Maple Razsa, Colby College

Razsa, Maple. Forthcoming. Chapters on Sakai.

Tuesday 25 February – Immigration, deportation, and protest

**Tuesday 4 March** – Activist anthropology in immigrant communities

*Special guest: Jorge Torres, Unidad Latina en Acción*


**Tuesday 11 March** – Ethical entailments of anthropological activism


**Tuesday 18 March** – Spring Break

**Tuesday 25 March** – An activist/anthropologist: Dr. Paul Farmer

Kidder, Mountains Beyond Mountains. (Start reading during Spring Break)

**Tuesday 1 April** – Satirical activism in America (pt. 1)

Haugerud, No Billionaire Left Behind, Intro and Chapters 1-3.

**Tuesday 8 April** – Satirical activism in America (pt. 2)

*Special guest: Prof. Angelique Haugerud*

Haugerud, No Billionaire Left Behind, Chapters 4-7.

**Tuesday 15 April** – Activism and ethnography in the US (pt. 1)

Bourgois and Shonberg, Righteous Dopefiend. Introduction and Chapters 1-4.

**Tuesday 22 April** – Activism and ethnography in the US (pt. 2)

Bourgois and Shonberg, Righteous Dopefiend. Chapters 5-9 and Conclusion.

**Tuesday 29 April** – In-class presentations of students’ final projects
WELCOME TO THE COLLABORATIVE

The 3 credit course you are enrolled in, **Anthropology and Activism** is affiliated with the The Collaborative, A Center for Community-Based Learning, Service and Public Scholarship. By combining academic study with community service, the Collaborative program offers you the opportunity to get real-world experience and earn course credit at the same time.

The Collaborative program offers a **mandatory** orientation training session so that you can get the most out of your service placement. The orientation session is scheduled as follows:

**Friday, January 31, 2014**
Cook Campus Center
Multi-Purpose Room
Registration:  1:00 pm – 2:00 pm*
Program:     2:00 pm – 3:30 pm

*You can skip the registration and arrive at 2:00 pm if you pre-register. To pre-register, please complete the Student Info. Sheet and the Ethical Consent form and email these two forms to civic@rci.rutgers.edu before the Spring 2014 semester begins OR you can hand in these completed forms when you arrive at the orientation at 2pm.

**Non-attendance** may affect your grade. If you absolutely cannot attend this session, please contact the Collaborative office at, (848) 932-8660, or email us at, civic@rci.rutgers.edu.