Anthropology of Migration

**(Current Issues in Anthropology – Anthro 291)**

**Instructor: Dawn Wells**

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**Office:**

**Office hours:**

**Class Time:**

**Class location:**

**Course Description**

From ‘Brexit’ to the United States 2016 Presidential Election, and the Syrian refugee crisis, migration has proved itself a hot-button issue in contemporary international and electoral politics. The topic of migration is often studied through a macro lens that privileges demographic trends and state policy. Yet anthropology ties these broader-scale processes with the micro and meso scale of migrant experiences and the formal and informal networks migrants interact with.

While anthropology is a useful lens for connecting the everyday minutia of migrant experiences and migration processes with national discourses and transnational trends, the discipline also foregrounds questions of power. Why is migration a choice for some and not others? Through what processes do certain forms of mobility (and very often people themselves) come to be labelled “illegal”? While the presence of some non-nationals remains not remarked upon? What kind of social, cultural, and economic networks are created through migration? And what kind of absences are produced? These are just some of the questions we will ask ourselves throughout the course as students will be encouraged to reflect on the assumptions and concepts that underlie our often strongly held beliefs about migration.

While a few of the authors surveyed in this course do not call themselves anthropologists, taken together, the selected readings and ethnographic films reflect an anthropological approach to migration.

Topics will include transnational migration, race, the law, terminology, citizenship, the migration industry, and borders. While studying these topics we will explore migration as a subjective experience, and as embodied and representational practice. We will study migration as profit, for example when we examine the increasing number of businesses that are taking on the state’s traditional role as migration regulator. We will also study migration as loss, for example when we examine death in migration, and the social and economic effects of migration for those left behind. While introducing students to key concepts in interdisciplinary migration studies, this course will familiarize students with anthropology-based theories and approaches to migration and will provide opportunities for students to apply these approaches to the experiences and contemporary political discussions that interest them.

This class is open to undergraduate students of all levels, although some form of experience with social science or humanities approaches to the study of power and inequality is recommended. The four key topics (anthropological approaches to migration; how does race travel?; the state; state specters) will begin with “prefacing” lectures that will provide some useful background on contemporary political and theoretical debates. Beyond these framing lectures, classes will be run in a seminar style, and students will be expected to analyze and debate core readings in class.

**Method of Evaluation**

* Class attendance and participation (30%). Classes will be a mixture of lecture, discussion,

and small group-work. Involvement in class discussions and group-work is expected.

* Response papers (30%): Students will submit 3 response papers (less than 1 page) throughout

the semester. These papers will summarize the key theoretical arguments of a chosen reading. Response papers should also include one question, which can focus on clarifying a text’s meaning, how to read across texts, or perhaps a question that the texts raise for future research. Students will share their question with the class and will inform our class discussion.

* Final assignment (40%): Students will expand upon one of their response papers to write a short essay (max 3 pages) that brings their chosen article or chapter into conversation with either another reading selection from the course, or news article or experience of their choice. Students are encouraged to develop this short essay topic in consultation with the instructor.

**I. Anthropological Approaches to Migration**

Session 1 (January 2): Introduction to Anthropology of Migration (Introduction to Course)

Introductions; chance to tweak syllabus based on students’ interests.

Film segments: *Sent Away Boys* (Dir Harjant Gill, India, 2016).

Session 2: (January 3): Approaching Migration Anthropologically

Brettel and Hollifield. “Theorizing Migration in Anthropology.” *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*. 2000. Chapter 5, pp. 97-118.

De León, Jason. *In the Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Chapter 1 pp. 21-37.

Session 3 (January 7): Transnational Mobilities

Schiller, Nina Glick, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc. "From immigrant to transmigrant: Theorizing transnational migration." *Anthropological quarterly* (1995): 48-59.

Berg, Ulla D. *Mobile selves: race, migration, and belonging in Peru and the US*. NYU Press, 2017. Chapter 1, 43-72.

**II. How Does Race Travel?**

Session 4 (January 8): Race and Migration

Nelkin, Dorothy, and Mark Michaels. 1998. “Biological Categories and Border Controls: the Revival of Eugenics in Anti-Immigration Rhetoric.” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 18(5/6):34-50.

Silverstein, Paul. 2005. Immigrant Racialization and the New Savage Slot: Race, Migration, and Immigration in the New Europe. Annual Review of Anthropology 34: 363-377.

Session 5 (January 9): Race and Migration continued

Silverstein, Paul. *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation.*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Chapter 1, pp. 17-34.

Brettell, Caroline B., ed. *Constructing borders/crossing boundaries: race, ethnicity, and immigration*. Lexington Books, 2007. Chapter 2, pp. 59-76.

**III. The State**

Session 6 (January 10): The Law

Torpey, John. *The invention of the passport: surveillance, citizenship and the state*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. (Introduction and Chapter 1: pages 1-18)

Calavita, Kitty. 2007. Immigration, Law, Race, and Identity. Annual Review of Law and Social Science 3:1-17

Session 7 (January 14): The Law continued

De Genova, Nicholas P. "Migrant" illegality" and deportability in everyday life." *Annual review of anthropology* (2002): 419-443.

Film Segments: *Detained* (Dir. Shaon Chakraborty, Anna Persson, Sweden, 2015).

Session 8 (January 15): Citizenship

Ong, Aihwa. *Flexible citizenship: The cultural logics of transnationality*. Duke University Press, 1999. Introduction pp. 1-26 AND Chapter 4 pp. 110-134.

Miller, Toby. 2011. Cultural Citizenship. Matrizes 4(2): 57-72 <http://www.tobymiller.org/images/Cultural%20Studies/culturalcitizenship.pdf>

**IV. State Specters**

Session 9 (January 16): Migration Industry

Gammeltoft-Hansen, Thomas, and Ninna Nyberg Sorensen, eds. *The migration industry and the commercialization of international migration*. Routledge, 2013. Introduction pp. 1-19

Andersson, Ruben. *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine migration and the business of bordering Europe*. University of California Press, 2014. Chapter 1 pp. 33-65.

Session 10 (January 17): Borders

Josiah Heyman and John Symons. 2012. “Borders.” In Fassin (ed.): *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*, pp. 540-554.

Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states*. Duke University Press, 2014. Chapter 5 pp. 115-135.