



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

ANTH 6916: CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT—KEY CONCEPTS

UNIT OF STUDY OUTLINE

School

School of Social and Political Sciences

Department

Anthropology (Core Unit in the Development Studies Master's Course)

Unit of Study

ANTH 6916

Unit Coordinator and Lecturer

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Consultation hours are on Wednesdays 1–2 p.m., Thursdays 9–10 a.m., or by appointment.

Lecturer

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Consulation hours by appointment.

READ YOUR UNIT OF STUDY OUTLINE. IT HELPS!

This Unit of Study Outline **MUST** be read in conjunction with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Student Administration Manual (sydney.edu.au/arts/current_students/student_admin_manual.shtml) and all applicable University policies.

In determining applications and appeals, it will be assumed that every student has taken the time to familiarise themselves with these key policies and procedures.

KNOW YOUR UNIT COORDINATORS. THEY CAN HELP!

Unit coordinators are listed on undergraduate and postgraduate coursework semester timetables, and can be consulted for help with any difficulties you may have.

Unit coordinators (as well as the Faculty) should also be informed of any illness or other misadventure that leads students to miss classes and tutorials or be late with assignments.

Officially, Ryan Schram is the unit coordinator for this class, but students should feel free to contact either Ryan or Neil Maclean for assistance. Both Neil and Ryan will answer all email about the class, but it may take up to 24 hours to receive a response.

KEY INFORMATION ABOUT THIS UNIT

UNIT DESCRIPTION

The unit introduces students with no background in the social sciences to key social science concepts relevant to a critical understanding of intercultural contexts of communication and project development. The unit will enable students to better conceptualise the social and political contexts within which inter-cultural relationships develop and the enabling and constraining aspects of those contexts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

With full participation in this Unit of Study you can expect the following learning outcomes:

- You will be able to identify the central theoretical paradigms of social science, know the main differences among them, and their roots in social theory.
- You will be able to see how theoretical frameworks inform the methods of social science and the analysis of its observations.
- You will be able to seek out relevant scholarly information on topics which interest you, and to locate specific scholars' arguments and analysis in the traditions of social theory.
- You will develop your own skills of asking new questions and formulating answers which can be investigated, supported with reasoned argument and illustrated with factual evidence.

LEARNING STRUCTURE

This unit consists of a weekly two-hour seminar involving lecture presentations, discussions, and other activities. Attendance at all meetings of the seminar is required.

The coordinators of this unit strive to create an inclusive and supportive environment in the seminar, and thus will work with students to create a space where debate and dialogue can flourish. As we will discuss in class, we also expect that students will contribute to this environment through active class participation and participation in peer learning.

READINGS

Each [week](#), a set of [common readings](#) is assigned for class discussion. With one exception, all of the required readings are made available as a unit reader. Where possible, these are also available on the library eReserve. Where online copies cannot be provided, books are on 2-hour loan in Fisher Library. In addition, the lecturers have

suggested some supplemental readings, and may also suggest a film or web site. They will provide email instructions on how to obtain material not listed in this outline.

The first reader also contains another required text at the back, the full text of an extended ethnographic essay by Parker Shipton entitled *Bitter Money: Cultural Economy and Some African Meanings of Forbidden Commodities*. Due to library policy, only a portion of this book is available on eReserve, so we strongly recommend buying this reader. Each student is required to ensure they have access to the required readings, so please ask the lecturer or a librarian if you are not sure how to get the assigned readings.

ONLINE COMPONENTS

This unit requires regular use of the University's Learning Management System (LMS), also known as Blackboard Learn. You will need reliable access to a computer and the Internet to use the LMS. All assignments will be submitted on Blackboard in their respective drop boxes (see "[Submission of written work](#)")

The easiest way to access LMS sites is through MyUni (click on the 'MyUni' link on the university home page, <http://sydney.edu.au> or link directly to the service at <https://myuni.sydney.edu.au/>). There is a 'Blackboard LMS' icon in the QuickLaunch window on the left hand side of the screen.

If you have any difficulties logging in or using the system, visit the Student Help area of the LMS site, <http://sydney.edu.au/elearning/student/help/>.

Mobile Learn

You can also access your LMS sites via the Sydney Uni App for iPhone and Android. The full set of features available on the mobile app for the University LMS can be found in detail in this PDF document: [Features in the mobile App for the University LMS \(PDF\)](#)

To download the University of Sydney mobile app directly to your phone or mobile device you need to be able to access the marketplace associated with your device's operating system.

- iTunes store on your iPhone, iPod touch or iPad
- Play Store or the Android Marketplace (depending on the phone's OS)
- BlackBerry App World® on your BlackBerry® smartphone device
- Palm App Catalog on your HP webOS device

ASSESSMENTS AT-A-GLANCE

Assessment item	Due	Length	Weight
Weekly writings	Tuesdays 11:59 p.m., Weeks 2-13	~100 words each	20%
Essay	14 April, 11:59 p.m.	2000 words	40%
Final essay exam	11 June at noon	2000 words	40%

Once you are at the marketplace or app store:

1. Search for University of Sydney
2. Install the app
3. Open the app and click on the icon 'Bb Learn' to access the LMS
4. Login to the LMS with your UniKey and password.

Important: due to the limitations of mobile devices you cannot submit assignments using the assignment tool. You should not complete graded tests (quizzes) using your mobile device due to the possibility of Internet drop out.

The University's Privacy Management Plan governs how the University will deal with personal information related to the content and use of its web sites. See <http://sydney.edu.au/privacy.shtml> for further details.

ASSESSMENTS AND DUE DATES

There are three types of assessment in this class. The first is a short weekly writing assignment due on Blackboard **every week on Tuesday by 11:59 p.m.** before class. These are opportunities to demonstrate your thought process as it is developing, and to encourage you to prepare for active class discussion. The best 10 responses will count toward your final grade (i.e. you can miss two without losing points).

The second is an essay that asks you read a scholarly source which uses ethnography to present a community's organization and dynamics. You will then make an argument about the theoretical perspective and assumptions which underlie the author's presentation. The essay allows you to demonstrate your skill in finding relevant scholarly information and to apply the ideas from this class as part of a critical analysis. It is due on Blackboard **on 14 April at 11:59 p.m.**

The third is a final take-home essay exam. You will have a choices of several short essay questions dealing with topics from the whole unit. They are due on Blackboard **at noon on 11 June.**

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The grading criteria for the essay and exam are explained in the instructions for each assignment. The weekly writing assignments are graded on a three-point scale. An excellent answer receives three points. An unacceptable answer receives no points. Students should always try to demonstrate how much progress they have made in understanding the main ideas of this class. If you find yourself getting lots of 1s, we suggest talking to the lecturers in office hours about the themes of the course.

This unit uses standards referenced assessment for award of assessment marks. Students assessment will be evaluated solely on the basis of students' achievement against criteria and standards specified to align with learning outcomes. For reference to criteria and standards, please consult the grade descriptors for at SSPS at http://sydney.edu.au/arts/sociology_social_policy/undergrad/assessment.shtml

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Compliance statements

All students are required to submit an authorised statement of compliance with all work submitted to the University for assessment, presentation or publication. A statement of compliance certifies that no part of the Work constitutes a breach of Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Policy.

The format of the compliance statement will differ depending on the method required for submitting your work (see "Assessment submission" below). Depending on the submission method, the statement must be in the form of:

- a University assignment cover sheet;
- a University electronic form; or
- a University written statement.

Assessment submission is online (Blackboard) only

Electronic submission of assessment tasks via the University's Learning Management System will be required by the due date (see "[Online components](#)").

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WEEKLY PLAN

Week 1 (4 III 2015): An invitation to the social sciences

An introduction to the unit. we will discuss the puzzles of our inherently social existence and the pleasures of social theory.

Week 2 (11 III 15): Collective consciousness

Read: Durkheim, chap. 1, Durkheim, chap. 2*

Write: "Consider social facts as things" (Durkheim 1966 [1895]: 14) It is both an axiom of method and rallying cry to pursue the "relentless critique of all that exists" (Marx 1843). What, in your view, calls for a "relentless critique" as a "social fact"? Why? What difference would it make to how people perceived it?

Week 3 (18 III 15): Society worshipping itself

Read: Llewelyn-Davies, Ferguson

Write: Why do Maasai women sing to cows? What does this tell you about the position of the cow in their society?

Week 4 (25 III 15): Action

Read: Weber, Geertz, Adams and Sydie, "Social Action and Social Complexity"

Write: Considering Weber's distinction between instrumental rationality and value-rationality, why do Redfern residents continue to block the construction of student housing on property once owned by the Aboriginal Housing Corporation?

Week 5 (1 IV 15): The spirit of the thing given

Read: Mauss, Shipton chaps. 1–4 (pp. 1–47), Polanyi*

Write: The Luo of Kenya earn money in marketplaces, and also represent money as evil and dangerous. If they do believe that money can harm the earner, why do you think they continue to engage with markets?

Week 6 (15 IV 15): Bitter money

Read: Shipton, chaps. 5–8 (p. 48–83).

Write: Cash transactions among Luo "grind the human fabric into the featureless uniformity of selenic erosion" (Polanyi 1947: 115). Accept or reject this thesis, and explain your reasoning by drawing on readings and discussions to date.

Due: Essay due online at 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday 14 April.

Week 7 (22 IV 15): Abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties

Read: Marx, Scheper-Hughes, Adams and Sydie, "Radical Anticapitalism"

Write: In Chapter 6 of Capital, vol. 1, Marx discusses the 'free labourer' (Marx 1972: 338). What does this mean? Do you have personal work experience that helps you to understand this? Why does the very freedom of labour make it open to exploitation?

Week 8 (29 IV 15): Turtles all the way down

Read: Naveh and Bird-David

Write: Culture is the contemporary term for what Durkheim, Weber and Marx called society. Perhaps then there is no individual who exists *a priori* to society, just systems and sub-systems and sub-sub-systems... Or as Marx once wrote, "[t]he tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living." How would you propose, then, to bring about social change?

Week 9 (6 V 15): The poor are a good investment

Read: Karim

Write: Social programs always involve unintended consequences. Discuss whether the kind of relationships Karim describes fall into this category and explain why you see it that way.

Week 10 (13 V 15): The good life at a great price

Read: Tsing

Write: Tsing talks of both hope and exploitation. Discuss the role of family in linking these. Are the perspectives of Walmart employees rational?

Week 11 (20 V 15): Transnational villagers

Read: Levitt (selections to be announced in class)

Write: Neil and/or Ryan will post a question on Blackboard.

Week 12 (27 V 15): Globalization and its discontents

Read: Bornstein

Write: Classic accounts of society and culture emphasized shared institutions and meanings. Can we talk about a global society if it is based on disagreement, inequality and conflict?

Week 13 (3 VI 15): What emerges from development?

Read: To be announced in class. We will discuss the main themes of the class and where we want to go next.

Write: Neil and/or Ryan will post a question on Blackboard.

Reading week and final exam period

No class this week. Your take-home final exam is due on Blackboard at noon on 11 June.

UNIT READINGS

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

With the exception of Levitt's and Shipton's books, all of these readings are included in the reader for this unit. Shipton's book is available as a separate reader. Recommended readings are indicated with an asterisk.

- Adams, Bert, and R. A. Sydie. 2001a. "Social Action and Social Complexity [abridged]." In *Sociological Theory*, 169–86. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.
- . 2001b. *Sociological Theory*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.
- Bornstein, Erica. 2001. "Child Sponsorship, Evangelism, and Belonging in the Work of World Vision Zimbabwe." *American Ethnologist* 28 (3): 595–622. doi:10.1525/ae.2001.28.3.595.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1964 [1895]. *The Rules of the Sociological Method*. Edited by George E. G. Catlin. Translated by Sarah A. Solovay and John H. Mueller. New York: The Free Press.
- Ferguson, James. 1985. "The Bovine Mystique: Power, Property and Livestock in Rural Lesotho." *Man* 20 (4): 647–74.
- Geertz, Clifford. 2005 [1974]. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cock Fight." *Daedalus* 134 (4): 56–86.
- Karim, Lamia. 2008. "Demystifying Micro-Credit: The Grameen Bank, NGOs, and Neoliberalism in Bangladesh." *Cultural Dynamics* 20 (1): 5–29.
- Levitt, Peggy. 2001. *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Llewelyn-Davies, Melissa. 1981. "Women, Warriors and Patriarchs." In *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality*, edited by Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, 330–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1972. "Selections from Capital, Vol. 1." In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, edited by Robert C. Tucker, 309–43. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Mauss, Marcel. 1990 [1925]. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies [abridged]*. Translated by W. D. Halls. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Naveh, Danny, and Nurit Bird-David. 2014. "How Persons Become Things: Economic and Epistemological Changes among Nayaka Hunter-Gatherers." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20 (1): 74–92.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1947. "Our Obsolete Market Mentality." *Commentary* (February): 109–117. *
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2000. "The Global Traffic in Human Organs." *Current Anthropology* 41 (2): 191–224. doi:10.1086/ca.2000.41.issue-2.

Shipton, Parker. 1989. *Bitter Money: Cultural Economy and Some African Meanings of Forbidden Commodities*. Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association.

Tsing, Anna. 2009. "Supply Chains and the Human Condition." *Rethinking Marxism* 21 (2): 148–76. doi:10.1080/08935690902743088.

Weber, Max. 1972 [1922]. "On the Concept of Sociology and the Meaning of Social Conduct & Characteristic Forms of Social Conduct [Selections from Economy and Society]." In *Max Weber: Basic Concepts in Sociology*, translated by H. P. Secher, 29–62. Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press.

USEFUL TEXTBOOKS ON SOCIAL THEORY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

These books are textbooks and anthologies of social theory and sociocultural anthropology, and may be useful as an orientation to the social sciences as a field.

- Adams, Bert, and R. A. Sydie. 2001. *Sociological Theory*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press.
- Berger, Peter L. 2011. *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*. New York: Open Road Media.
- Cheater, Angela P. 2003. *Social Anthropology: An Alternative Introduction*. 2nd ed. Routledge.
- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2001. *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. 2nd ed. London: Pluto Press.
- Lemert, Charles C. 2008. *Social Things: An Introduction to the Sociological Life*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

SOCIAL THEORY: A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

If you would like to continue to read up on the big ideas and debates of social theory, why not start with one of these great books? Below is a short, somewhat selective, list of favorite works of the lecturers.

- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Berger, Peter L., and Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Anchor.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dumont, Louis. 1980. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. 2014 [1893]. *The Division of Labor in Society*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

- Fortes, Meyer. 2004. *Kinship and the Social Order: The Legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller. 1991. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. 2006. *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. 2nd ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 2008. *Behavior in Public Places*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Haraway, Donna J. 1991. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1969. *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1932 [1922]. *Argonauts of The Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd.
- Marx, Karl. 1843. "Marx to Ruge: Letters from the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher." *Marxists Internet Archive*. September. <https://www.marxists.org/>.
- . 1887. *Capital, Vol. 1*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. <https://www.marxists.org/>.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1952. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 2011. *The Philosophy of Money*. London: Routledge.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.
- Weber, Max. 1946. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited by C. Wright Mills and H. H. Gerth. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, Eric R. 1982. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

ANTHROPOLOGY: PEOPLE ARE TALKING

People are talking about the manifold diversity and dynamics of society, culture, and change **at the University of Sydney anthropology department seminars**. Please join us for a Thursday afternoon presentation and discussion of the latest research in anthropology and allied fields.

Some of the upcoming speakers are: Katherine Gibson, Melissa Demian, Neil Maclean and Åse Ottosson.

Seminars are held on most Thursdays during the teaching term from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., followed by a light reception and dinner. All are welcome! PG anthropology students contribute no more than \$20 to dinner; the rest is on us!

See <http://sydney.edu.au/arts/anthropology/events/> for the schedule for Semester 1, 2015. (Nb. Seminars are not held every week, so check the department's calendar for the dates of seminars.) For more information, contact the 2015 symposium convener, Terry Woronov at terry.woronov@sydney.edu.au.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS UNIT

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic honesty is a core value of the University. The University requires students to act honestly, ethically and with integrity in their dealings with the University, its members, members of the public and others. The University is opposed to and will not tolerate academic dishonesty or plagiarism, and will treat all allegations of academic dishonesty or plagiarism seriously.

The University's Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Policy 2012 and associated Procedures are available for reference on the University Policy Register at <http://sydney.edu.au/policies> (enter "Academic Dishonesty" in the search field). The Policy applies to the academic conduct of all students enrolled in a coursework award course at the University.

Under the terms and definitions of the Policy,

- "academic dishonesty" means "seeking to obtain or obtaining academic advantage (including in the assessment or publication of work) by dishonest or unfair means or knowingly assisting another student to do so.
- "plagiarism" means "presenting another person's work as one's own work by presenting, copying or reproducing it without appropriate acknowledgement of the source."

The presentation of another person's work as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement is regarded as plagiarism, regardless of the author's intentions. Plagiarism can be classified as negligent (negligent plagiarism) or dishonest (dishonest plagiarism).

An examiner who suspects academic dishonesty or plagiarism by a student must report the suspicion to a nominated academic in the relevant faculty. If the nominated academic concludes that the student has engaged in dishonest plagiarism or some other sufficiently serious form of academic dishonesty, the matter may be referred to the Registrar for further disciplinary action under the terms of the Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Policy 2012 and Chapter 8 of the University of Sydney By-Law 1999 (as amended).

USE OF SIMILARITY-DETECTING SOFTWARE (TURNITIN)

Students should be aware that written assignments submitted in this Unit of Study will be submitted to similarity detecting software known as Turnitin. The detection and identification of work that may be suspected of plagiarism is an academic judgment for the unit coordinator, and similarity detecting software is one of the tools that an examiner or marker may use to inform a decision that plagiarism has occurred.

Turnitin searches for matches between text in your writ-

ten assessment task and text sourced from the Internet, published works and assignments that have previously been submitted to Turnitin for analysis. It produces an originality report showing matches with various sources, and an overall level of match or similarity index.

There will always be some degree of text-matching when using Turnitin. These are caused by the use of direct quotations, technical terms and phrases, and the listing of bibliographic material. This does not mean you will automatically be accused of plagiarism.

Further information about Turnitin is available at http://sydney.edu.au/arts/current_students/plagiarism_and_turnitin.shtml.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION AND EXTENSIONS

You can apply for an extension, a special consideration (SC) or special arrangement (SA) for any of the written work in this class. You do not need to state a detailed reason for why you need a simple extension; it is OK to say, "I am not feeling well" or "I have another essay due this week." For SC and SA, you must follow the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences policy. The Faculty assesses student requests for assistance relating to completion of assessment in accordance with the regulations set out in the University Assessment Policy 2011 and Assessment Procedures 2011. Students are expected to become familiar with the University's policies and Faculty procedures relating to Special Consideration and Special Arrangements.

Students can apply for:

- Special Consideration - for serious illness or misadventure
- Special Arrangements - for essential community commitments
- Simple Extension - an extension of up to 5 working days for non-examination based assessment tasks on the grounds of illness or misadventure.

Further information on special consideration policy and procedures is available on the Faculty website at http://sydney.edu.au/arts/current_students/special_consideration.shtml.

OTHER POLICIES AND PROCEDURES RELEVANT TO THIS UNIT

The Faculty's Student Administration Manual is available for reference at the "Current Students" section of the Faculty Website (http://sydney.edu.au/arts/current_students/). Most day-to-day issues you encounter in the course of completing this Unit of Study can be addressed with the information provided in the Manual. It contains detailed instructions on processes, links to forms and guidance on where to get further assistance.

STAYING ON TOP OF YOUR STUDY

Learning means doing something new, so everyone in this class will be doing something that they have never done before. It is OK to ask for help and advice along the way; it's not a sign of failure to ask for help. My best advice for students is that whenever you have any concerns about what you are doing, or your progress in the unit, you should immediately **get in touch with one of the unit lecturers** and ask to discuss the class. You don't even need a specific reason. You can email a lecturer for an appointment, or drop into office hours (see cover).

Help is most useful when you seek it early, so don't wait till the last minute. This also applies to all the different resources the university and faculty of arts and social sciences offers for staying on top of your work.

For full information visit http://sydney.edu.au/arts/current_students/staying_on_top.p.shtml.

WRITING AND ACADEMIC SKILLS

The Learning Centre assists students to develop the generic skills, which are necessary for learning and communicating knowledge and ideas at university. Programs available at The Learning Centre include workshops in Academic Reading and Writing, Oral communications Skills, Postgraduate Research Skills, Honours, masters Coursework Program, Studying at University, and Workshops for English Language and Learning. Further information about The Learning Centre can be found at http://sydney.edu.au/stuserv/learning_centre/.

The Write Site provides online support to help you develop your academic and professional writing skills. All University of Sydney staff and students who have a Unikey can access the WriteSite at <http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/>.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences has units at both an Undergraduate and Postgraduate level that focus on writing across the curriculum or, more specifically, writing in the disciplines, making them relevant for all university students. To find out more visit http://sydney.edu.au/arts/teaching_learning/writing_hub/index.shtml and http://sydney.edu.au/arts/teaching_learning/pg_writing_support/index.shtml.

Another Learning Centre site, Clearer Writing, provides a variety of different concepts for thinking about how you

make your own writing clearer and what to look for when you revise your drafts. It can be found here: http://learningcentre.usyd.edu.au/clearer_writing/

In addition to units of study on writing, The FASS Writing Hub offers drop-in sessions to assist students with their writing in a one-to-one setting. No appointment is necessary, and this service is free of charge to all FASS students and/or all students enrolled in WRIT units. For more information on what topics are covered in a drop-in session and for the current schedule, please visit http://sydney.edu.au/arts/writing_hub/writing_support/index.shtml.

THE LIBRARY

The Library offers students free, online tutorials in library skills at <http://sydney.edu.au/library/skills>. There's one designed especially for students studying in the Humanities and Social Sciences at <http://libguides.library.usyd.edu.au/>. And don't forget to find out who your Faculty Liaison Librarians are.

PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral and academic support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is provided by the STAR Team in Student Support services, a dedicated team of professional Aboriginal people able to respond to the needs of students across disciplines. The STAR team can assist with tutorial support, mentoring support, cultural and pastoral care along with a range of other services. More information about support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can be found at http://sydney.edu.au/current_students/student_services/indigenous_support.shtml.

OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

Disability Services is located on Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building G20; contact 8627 8422 or email disability.services@sydney.edu.au. For further information, visit their website at <http://sydney.edu.au/stuserv/disability/>.

Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS) are located on Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building G20; contact 8627 8433 or email caps.admin@sydney.edu.au. For further information, visit their website at http://sydney.edu.au/current_students/counselling/.

THE PLEASURES OF THEORY: A RATIONALE FOR THE UNIT DESIGN

THE MEANING OF LIFE

Development, as a project to improve the human condition, is usually driven by the question: "How?" How can we solve the problems of poverty, hunger, and disempowerment? How should policy be made and implemented? How can development workers help others improve their conditions of existence? In this class, however, we take a step back from particular policy debates to ask "Why?", not why do we seek to improve, but why there is poverty, inequality, hunger and domination. To ask these questions is also to ask why there is any form or order

human lives. So we also must ask: "Why do we have this society?" and "Why do we find so many societies, with both much in common and much that is different?" In asking these questions, we take part in a great conversation which began many centuries ago. This class is your invitation and your introduction to the terms of this conversation.

When we consider the question of development, we must conclude that there are four key conditions of development practice: (1) it takes place within social systems; (2)

those social systems are internally contested and diverse; (3) it attempts to change social systems; (4) it is an intercultural project. Thus we must specifically debate why each of these four conditions emerges. This class is a very general introduction to social theory, but we do try to come back to these four conditions and apply our new-found theories to them specifically. Rather than readings on rituals and suicide statistics by country (or French magicians, Ghanaian musicians, US megachurch Christians and all the other people social scientists study), we have chosen several cases taken from the lives of cowherds, cashcroppers, microcredit entrepreneurs, migrants, Walmart shoppers, and many more people dealing with how to make ends meet, and how to find happiness; in other words, while our key concerns are how to conceptualize human existence, our key examples will be to address issues of development.

“I AGREE WITH YOU, IN THEORY. IN THEORY, COMMUNISM WORKS... IN THEORY!”

As social scientists, our purpose is to explain society, and to arrive at a better theory of society and culture. We recognize, however, that these stories of society do not merely repose in Cloud-cuckoo-land. All social policies and plans are driven by one or the other theory of society and culture. Thus, learning theory is, in that sense, practical. It is also, arguably, ethical. If we do not study the theory of society, then we can never challenge the assumptions that underlie putatively practical policy programs, let alone improve them.

This class will cover the foundational concepts of Western social science theory starting with Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. Each of these great thinkers differed, yet in their own ways, they each also forced people to confront “the reality of society” (Polanyi 1947: 115) or the fact that society is a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. Durkheim has been the most influential theorist of the facticity of society as a moral and institutional framework that both governs and motivates the way we act. Weber recognised both the peculiarly systematising qualities of modern political, legal and economic institutions and the complexities of understanding the rationality of individual action under those conditions. Marx provided what has remained one of the most powerful critiques of the new form of value that has dominated the development of modern social systems: the commodity. Finally, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, we consider the way in which development is itself as aspect of contemporary governance that seeks both to change society but also the motivation of individuals and of the ways in which they evaluate their lives.

As mentioned, our exploration of social theory will be linked to case studies. These each address three main themes. Firstly, they are intended as illustrations of how theory enables the analysis of empirical facts. Secondly, they indicate the diversity of the cultures that humans generate when bringing society into being, and the problems this raises for grand theories. Thirdly, the case studies illustrate the complex relationships generated by the systematising and commodifying aspects of modernity under different cultural conditions.

In the final section of the unit we address the main critique of this foundational social theory. In assuming that society is a total system, it posits a homogeneity and fixedness which does not exist. In assuming that social forms develop through patterns of meaningful human actions, it also presumes that all people, at bottom, have the same kinds of motivations. To problematize these ideas, we examine both global scale of the movement of people and goods, and feminist theorisations of the family as perspectives from which to critique such holistic assumptions.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In 2012, the International Monetary Fund extended loans to Spain, once one of the world’s great colonial powers. In other words, an institution which intervenes in impoverished postcolonial societies to create conditions necessary for economic takeoff was now being trained on a society that had supposedly already launched. In this post-crisis world, we have to ask whether there is such a thing as development at all.

This leads to another aspect of classical social theory which is relevant for a course on development. Durkheim, Weber and Marx were each interested in explaining why European, industrialized, capitalist societies came into being. Each of these people lived, more or less, at or near the end of the “long nineteenth century,” or from the French Revolution to the First World War (Hobsbawm 1962). During this time, many revolutionary social changes took hold and created the world we basically live in today. We have learned to call this ‘modernity’. For Durkheim, Weber and Marx, one of the main questions of the social scientist was “Why modern society?” In different ways, they come to see the modern revolution as a rupture, a break with the past and the birth of a new era. The rupture of modernity meant different things to each of them, and meant different things to each generation of social theorist who followed them. What they tended to assume was that the crisis they each witnessed was the development of something new, a new way of life and a new system. In general this has meant that social theory has tended to associate the principles of order and structure with tradition, custom and moral norms of the group and conversely connect the principles of choice and change with individuals. In this class we discuss the implications and limits of this way of thinking. Ultimately, though, we find we must ask another question, “What if there is no modernity?” By the end of the class we will be able to look back at a time when the future was new, and see it in a new light. Rather than finding change to be a development, we see flux, disorder, and uncertainty. Society increasingly appears to be different than we thought it was. Social theorists, back to the drawing board!

Neil Maclean and Ryan Schram (with Terry Woronov), January 27, 2015

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