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ANTY 500.01: Contemporary Anthropological Thought

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Course Description:
Contemporary anthropology in the last three decades has gone through a number of theoretical and methodological transformations with regard to the major concepts, goals, and concerns of anthropology as a scientific discipline. These theoretical issues, historically and today, remain central to the development of anthropological knowledge. The purpose of seminar is to explore these concepts to illuminate the relationships between our thinking about people, our discipline, and the relevance of anthropological concepts to changing conditions in the world. During the course, we will analyze the manner in which anthropology, as a science of humanity, must struggle with our enterprise to comprehend human behavior.

Course requirements:

Discussion: Each student is required to read everything assigned for that particular discussion period and to attend class prepared to discuss critically all the assigned readings. Your ability to articulate and analyze the reading materials and the ideas of your classmates in an in-depth fashion will determine a portion of your grade. Discussion is worth 30 percent of your grade. (See Guide to Discussion on Moodle.)

Discussion leaders: Each week I will randomly appoint one person to lead the discussion of each article. Your performance as a discussion leader counts for 1/3 of your discussion grade.

Reading Journal: All students will post a weekly reading journal entry over that week’s assigned readings. These will be posted on Moodle and are due on Tuesday by midnight. Reading Journals are worth 10% of your grade. (See Guide to Reading Journal on Moodle.)

Annotated bibliography of no less than 30 sources about a contemporary theoretical position. Ideally of the thirty annotated sources five sources will be data oriented case studies that apply that theory to address an anthropological issue. The bibliography is to be posted on Moodle and is due on Wednesday, December 4, and is worth 15 percent of your grade. (See Guide to Bibliographies on Moodle.)

Research paper: You must choose a contemporary theoretical position (from the rise of neo-evolutionism to the present). In the paper, discuss that theory's central tenets, identifying the major proponents of the theoretical position, and critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the theory, as well as its relationship to other theoretical positions. You will determine topic, but the instructor must approve your topic. The paper is not a description, but a piece of analytical research that is theoretically and methodologically focused to sharpen your research skills. Ideally, the final paper should be a publishable piece. The project must be 20 to 25 typed pages, formatted in the American Anthropologist style. The paper will constitute 30 percent of your final grade. The paper is to be posted on Moodle and is due in class on Wednesday, December 4. (See Guide to Papers on Moodle.)

Presentations: Each student will provide a synthesis of your work, pointing out the major tenets of the theory, its strengths and weaknesses to understanding anthropological problems, as well as its relationship to other theoretical positions. The presentation should open new directions for critical discussion and provide you with the opportunity to give your opinion. Ideally the presentation will be about 10 minutes in length, followed by a class questions. You will be graded on presentation, organization, content, delivery style, and ability to respond to questions. The purpose of the oral presentation is to provide you with the experience of delivering a paper at a conference. The presentation is worth 15 percent of your grade. (See Guide to Presentations on Moodle.)

Extra Credit: Select as many as the recommended readings you wish and write a critical review of the work(s), discussing the work's relevancy to anthropology as a mode of inquiry. The work must be at least five typed pages formatted in the American Anthropologist book review style. The assignment is to be posted on Moodle and due the last day of seminar. Each extra credit assignment is worth 25 points. (See Guide to Reviews on Moodle.)
Academic Honesty: The University of Montana expects its students to be academically honest, particularly in regard to plagiarism. “Plagiarism is the representing of another’s work as one’s own.” Both copyright laws and University policies are rigid as concerns plagiarism. Consult the current “Student Conduct Code” for details regarding penalties for plagiarism.

Students with Disabilities: If you need special accommodations, you should contact Disability Services for Students to make arrangements and let me know if there is anything I need to be aware of or that I need to do to assist you.

You will need to check your university email regularly, several times a week, as this is the principle means that I have to communicate with you outside of class. Failure to do so could adversely affect your grade.

Required readings:
Online articles available on Moodle

PROVISIONAL COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 - Introduction & Overview

MATERIALISM

Week 2 - Neo-Evolutionary Theories

Week 3 - Adaptation, Ecology, & Cultural Materialism

Week 4 - Political Economy

Week 5 - The Biosocial Interface

IDEALISM

Week 6 - Scripts, Discourse, & Grounded Theory
Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab and Oyster Fisheries;” Roche, Neaigus, & Miller, “Street Smarts and Urban Myths;” Ortner, “Patterns of History.”

**Week 7 - Structure, Habitus, & Agency**


**Week 8 - Intrepretivism & Symbolism**


**POSTMODERNISM**

**Week 9 - Feminism & Identity**


**Week 10 - Representation & Critique**


**Week 11 - Power & Postcoloniality**


**Week 12 - Place & Landscape**


**Week 13 - Globalization**


**Week 14**

**Thanksgiving Holiday**

**No Class**

**Week 15 - Presentations**

**Dec 4 (Wed)**

**Papers & Bibliographies Due**

**Week 16 - Presentations (Class Meets on Thu., Dec 10, at 1:10-3:10pm)**