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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11 - 1
Or by appointment

ANTH 385 – Winter 2015

Economic Anthropology



"We are neither hunters nor gatherers. We are accountants."

Sam Gross, 1993. www.cartoonbank.com

Class Time and Location: T,R 9:30 – 10:45 am in EDC 386

Course Description:

The logics of capitalism, and those of what we call economy more broadly, are often thought of as definable, stable and unchanging. These logics rely on the predictability of 'the market' - prices respond to supply and demand. Actors in a capitalist economy are said to always act according to self-interest, and therefore are said to desire maximization, rationalization and profit above all. The financial crisis of 2007 – 2008, however, forced many people to question these assumptions in the face of an increased public debt burden and rising critique of the global banking system.

This class will take up these assumed logics of capitalism and question the singular all-pervasive rationality that is often seen as the defining force of the neoliberal global world order. We will do so by examining not only key anthropological debates about the relationship between economy and other spheres of life (including culture, kinship, gender relations etc), but also by placing emergent ideas and discourse *about* capitalism next to considerations of the *historical conditions* of capitalism's own

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emergence. In particular, special attention will be paid to the development of 'political economy' as defined by 18th century classical economists and the colonial state, its subsequent separation by 19th century neoclassical metropolitan economists into separate realms of 'politics' and 'economy,' its reappearance in the formalist-substantivist debates of the mid-20th century, and its contemporary usage as a way to critique the role of finance in the global economy.

In anthropology, some regions are often conceived of as more fruitful places to study certain topics than others. In this regard, anthropological studies of capitalism previously harkened to capitalism's supposed 'birthplace' – Western Europe, and its cross-Atlantic but still 'Western' counterpart, North America – and contrasted them with 'non-Western' or 'primitive' economies. In this class, we will challenge this disciplinary division of labour by focusing on ethnographies and articles that examine capitalism as a necessarily transnational phenomenon, both historically and contemporaneously, and ask how they might inform a reinvigorated analysis of the phenomenon and location of capitalism.

Course Format:

This course will follow an interactive lecture and discussion style format, accompanied by the occasional film or documentary in class. Readings are crucial and students are expected to come to class having both read the readings and prepared to discuss them and ask questions. Discussion will be a very important component of this class. All course materials, assignment guidelines and any other relevant information or announcements will be posted on the class D2L website.

Course Assignments and Assessment:

This course is reading intensive. With this in mind, the course writing will be used as a supplement to aid students in cementing their reading techniques, their textual comprehension and their ability to translate complex ideas from discussion into a written format. Close weekly readings, detailed in-class discussions of those class readings and oral presentations will form the backbone of this course.

Students are expected to submit 4 one-page précis, deliver two oral presentations, and submit one final take-home exam (questions provided in advance), due at the end of the semester.

Students will be evaluated on the basis of a 100-point system, whereby:

4 one-page précis	40% (each is worth 10%)
6 critical comments and questions	30% (each is worth 5%)
Final take-home exam	30%

Assignment Details :

Précis:

- Students will hand in **4 précis throughout the course of the semester**. Each précis will critically *summarize* and *analyze* one text read and discussed in class before the deadline specified in the course outline.
- In the context of anthropology, the précis must concisely recap the author motives, methods, main arguments, key evidence and conclusions. The précis must also describe the strengths and the weaknesses of the ethnography or article. A complete set of guidelines to writing a précis will be handed in and discussed in class before the due date of the first précis.
- The précis will be no longer than one page (double-spaced, 12 pt font).
- The précis will be handed in **at the beginning of class on the due date**. They are due approximately every 3 weeks.

Critical comments and questions:

- Students will, throughout the course of the semester upload **6 sets of critical comments and questions** to our class website. Each set of comments and questions must address a reading/set of readings from class, and must be uploaded to the class website by 6 pm, the night before the class in which they are to be discussed. For example, if a student wants to upload comments and questions for Ted Bestor's *Tsukiji* (Tuesday, February 3), he/she must upload them by Monday, February 2, 6 pm. You can upload comments on questions for any readings, however, you must have **6 sets by the end of the semester**.
- Each set of critical comments and questions must include the following: (1) **at least 2 sentences** that give a general impression of the readings (i.e. I did/did not like this reading *because...*; I thought it was interesting when the author said... etc etc); and (2) must pose 5 questions about the reading. The questions can either be *clarifying* (i.e. What did the author mean when she wrote...?), *critical* (i.e. Why did they author write X, Y and Z, when we know (from real life, from another reading etc...) that...) or *synthetic* (trying to bring together more than one reading...i.e. Doesn't it seem like both Marx and Weber are obsessed with ideas because both do the following...?)

Final take-home exam:

- At the end of the semester, students will be provided with a set of five questions. Students must pick two questions and answer them in the form of two 4-5 page essays (8-10 pages total, 12pt font double-spaced), which will be handed in during exam period. The questions will be broad, and will be meant to

bring together students' understandings from the class readings. Students must address at least 3 – 4 texts from class in each of the take-home questions.

- Students will upload the finals to the Class's D2L Dropbox.

The final mark out of 100, will then be converted to a letter grade as follows:

A+	94.9 – 100%	A	89.9 – 94.8%	A-	84.9 – 89.8%
B+	79.9 – 84.8%	B	74.9 – 79.8%	B-	70.9 – 74.8%
C+	66.9 – 70.8%	C	62.9 – 66.8%	C-	58.9 – 62.8%
D+	54.9% - 58.8%	D	49.9 – 54.8%	F	49.8% and below

A note on plagiarism:

Any use of another person's words, ideas either taken *directly or indirectly* and *without citation* is cause for a plagiarism investigation. This includes material from the internet. You are too smart to plagiarize. And, trust me, it's not hard to spot plagiarism. Any plagiarism will automatically result in a failing grade for the submission. Any student caught plagiarizing will also be subject to additional University sanctions. If you have any questions about citation or bibliographical style, please contact me. Please use the same bibliographical style on all written submissions. Students should familiarize themselves with the Anthropology Department's policy on intellectual honesty:

<http://anth.ucalgary.ca/home/links/intellectual-honesty-guidelines>

Required Texts for Purchase:

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mintz, Sidney. 1986. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books. (Available at the Bookstore)

Text Available online:

Weber, Max. 2002. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Penguin Books. Or any other post-1990 translation/publication. (Available online – you do not have to buy this at the store)

In what follows, (w) denotes that this is a "web resource," and is available on the class D2L website.

Schedule of Readings:

Tuesday, January 13, 2015: The 2008 Financial Crisis and why economic anthropology is relevant today

Williams, Raymond. 1976. *Capitalism In Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press. (Handout)

Thursday, January 15, 2015: Methodological Inquiries: Assumptions about Economy

Krugman, Paul. 2014. Why We're in a New Guided Age In *The New York Review of Books*, May 8. Available at:

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2014/may/08/thomas-piketty-new-gilded-age/>

Gudeman, Stephen. 2015. Piketty and Anthropology In *Anthropological Forum*, 11, pp 1-18. Pay attention to "Piketty's view," "Piketty's Suggestions and Conclusions," "The Anthropologist's Take on Piketty, the Economist," and "Economy for Anthropologists." Skim "Figures and Calculations." (w)

Sgambati, Albert. 2012. A photo essay of Occupy Wall Street, New York City, 2011 in *Dialectical Anthropology*, 36, pp 7-20. (w)

Optional: Thomas Piketty's TED talk on "New thoughts on capital in the 21st century"
http://www.ted.com/talks/thomas_piketty_new_thoughts_on_capital_in_the_twenty_first_century#t-115020

Tuesday, January 20, 2015: The Substantivist – Formalist Debate I

Polanyi, Karl. 1971. *The Economy as Instituted Process*. In *Trade and Market in the Early Empires; Economies in History and Theory*. Chicago: Regnery. pp.243-256. (w)

Thursday, January 22, 2015: No class – Begin preparing readings for next week.

Tuesday, January 27, 2015: The Substantivist – Formalist Debate II

LeClair, Edward and Harold K. Schneider ed. 1968. *Economic Theory and Economic Anthropology In Economic Anthropology: readings on theory and analysis*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. (w)

Thursday, January 29, 2015: The Original Affluent Society : Critiques of the Rational Maximizing Individual

Sahlins, Marshall 1972. *The Original Affluent Society* In *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, pp 1 – 41. (w)

***** FIRST PRÉCIS IS DUE TODAY*****

Tuesday, February 3, 2015: Tsukiji: Critiques of the Rational Market

Bestor, Theodore C. 2004. *Tsukiji: the fish market at the center of the world*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Selections. (w)

Video in Class: *World's Largest Fish Market – Tsukiji Market* (2014) NHK World.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VB6CuHUhM6s>

Thursday, February 5, 2015: Critiques of the Object as Commodity Alone

Kopytoff, Igor. 1997. *The cultural biography of things* In *The Social Life of Things*. Ed. Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp 64 – 91. (w)

Tuesday, February 10, 2015: Where did our assumptions come from: The Origins of Political Economy

Smith, Adam 2007. *Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations*. Petersfield; Harriman House. Book IV Of Systems of Political Oeconomy, Ch. I: Of the Principle of the Commercial, or Mercantile System. (w)

Thursday, February 12, 2015: The Origins of Political Economy in Colonialism

Smith, Adam 2007. *Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations*. Petersfield; Harriman House. Book IV Of Systems of Political Oeconomy, Ch. VII: Of Colonies. (w)

Pagden, Anthony 1995. *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 4: Expansion and Preservation; Ch. 6: The Calculation of Benefits. (w)

Tuesday, February 17, 2015 – No Class; Reading Week

Thursday, February 19, 2015 – No Class; Reading Week

***** SECOND PRÉCIS IS DUE TODAY*****

Tuesday, February 24, 2015: The Coal Question

Jevons, Stanley. 1865. *The Coal Question: an Inquiry Concerning the Progress of the Nation, and the Probability of the Exhaustion of our Coal Mines*. Introduction, Chap. 6: Of British Invention, Chap.7: Of the Economy of Fuel, Chap 18: Concluding Remarks. Full text available at: [http://www.eoearth.org/article/The_Coal_Question_\(e-book\)](http://www.eoearth.org/article/The_Coal_Question_(e-book))

Thursday, February 26, 2015: Where did Political Economy Go? The Rise of Neo-Classical Economics

Ricardo, David. 1817. *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*. Selections TBA from: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/ricardo/Principles.pdf>

Tuesday, March 3, 2015: Capitalist Formations: Karl Marx the Economist and Ethnographer

Marx, Karl. 1978. *Capital*. (selections) In *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Ed. Robert C. Tucker, New York: Norton, pp.302-317(inclusive), 329-361, 403-415; *On Imperialism in India*. Pp.653-664. (w)

Thursday, March 5, 2015: Material/Ideal Configurations I

Marx, Karl. 1978. *The German Ideology* In *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 147-176. (w)

To be read in class:

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm. 1977. *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford, Oxford University Press. (selection <15 pgs) (Handout)

Tuesday, March 10, 2015: Material/Ideal Configurations II

Weber, Max. 2008. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Oxford University Press. Selections. (w)

Thursday, March 12, 2015: World Trade and the World System

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press. (selections) (w)

To be read in class:

Braudel, Fernand. 1992. *Perspective of the World*. Trans. Sian Reynolds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. Intro, Chaps. 2 and 3.

Tuesday, March 17, 2015: Sugar: The Commodity in History

Mintz, Sidney 1986. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books. Introduction, Chapter 1: Food, Sociality and Sugar and Chapter 2: Production.

***** THIRD PRÉCIS IS DUE TODAY*****

Thursday, March 19, 2015: Sugar: The Commodity in History II

Mintz, Sidney 1986. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books. Chapter 3: Consumption.

Tuesday, March 24, 2015: Sugar: The Commodity in History III

Mintz, Sidney 1986. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books. Chapter 4: Power and Chapter 5: Eating and Being.

Thursday, March 26, 2015: The Commodity in Theory, in Body (Fetish)

Marx, Karl 1978. *The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secrets In The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp.319-329.

Tuesday, March 31, 2015: Occupying Finance

Appel, Hannah. 2014. Occupy Wall Street and the Economic Imagination *In Cultural Anthropology*. 29:4, pp. 602-625.

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press. Introduction.

Thursday, April 2, 2015: Producing Wall Street I

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapter 1: Biographies of Hegemony: The Culture of Smartness and the Recruitment and Construction of Investment Bankers.

Tuesday, April 7, 2015: Producing Wall Street II

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapter 2: Wall Street's Orientation: Exploitation, Empowerment and the Politics of Hard Work.

***** FOURTH PRÉCIS IS DUE TODAY*****

Thursday, April 9, 2015: Shareholder Value

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapter 4: The Neoclassical Roots and Origin Narratives of Shareholder Value.

Documentary in Class: *Thieves by Law*. (2010) Dir. Alexander Gentelev.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w8zME-uDtw>

Tuesday, April 14, 2015: Liquid Lives

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapter 5: Downsizers Downsized: Job Insecurity and Investment Banking Corporate Culture, and Chapter 6: Liquid Lives, Compensation Schemes and the Making of (Unsustainable) Financial Markets.

*****THE FINAL TAKE-HOME IS DUE MONDAY, APRIL 27 BY 4PM.*****