

ANTH 261 - Fall 2003
Culture, Power, History
TR 1:30 – 2:45, Blodgett 201

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 3 – 5: 30 PM, & by appointment

Although ethnographic and historical interpretations have often emerged as the intellectual by-product of colonial encounters, there still remains a methodological (and moral) uneasiness about this genesis, and a professional tendency among some historians and anthropologists to redirect their discipline's genealogy toward a more palatable ancestry. In an attempt to examine and learn from the uneasy unions between historical and ethnographic approaches, this course will examine the common empirical ground, as well as the fundamental theoretical and methodological differences between ethnographic and historical research. Departing from a review of important debates (such as the theoretical foundations of historical ethnography, comparative theories of colonialism, the practice of oral history, and innovative approaches to the study of native sources), this course will feature several case studies—drawn primarily from colonial and post-colonial encounters in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the South Pacific—that will shed light on the often uneasy scholarly and conceptual interaction of these two disciplines. Students will be encouraged to cross disciplinary boundaries as they work on research projects.

Required texts

Sahlins, Marshall	<i>Islands of History</i>	Chicago
Trouillot, Michel-Rolph	<i>Silencing the Past</i>	Beacon Press
Cohn, Bernard	<i>Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge</i>	Princeton
Said, Edward	<i>Orientalism</i>	Vintage Books
Lan, David	<i>Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe</i>	U California Press
Warren, Kay & Jean Jackson	<i>Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State</i>	Texas

Evaluation

Participation	25 %
2 position papers	20 %
Midterm take-home exam	25 %
Research paper & presentation	30 %

Participation (25 %)

You will prepare for class by taking notes on the readings (more on this later), and coming to class prepared to discuss the main points they raise. Do not ever be afraid to ask questions about the readings or the discussions in class—you are now a member of a self-constructed intellectual space which you are helping to build with each class! This grade reflects quality, relevance, and willingness to learn rather than sheer volume.

2 position papers (20 %)

You will write two brief position papers (4 pp. each) in response to analytical questions about anthropological and historical issues raised by the study of colonialism, globalization, and political hegemony, which will be due on Sept. 30 and Nov. 25. Details about these assignments will be distributed well in advance of the due date.

Midterm examination (25 %)

This exam will cover the readings and discussion for the first half of the course. You will select 2 out of 4 questions from the exam, and write two short essays (4 – 5 pp. each) in response to these questions. The examination will be handed out a week before Fall Break, and it is due at the end of the break; however, you may elect to turn it in before the break so you can have a (relatively) guilt-free vacation.

Final research project & presentation (30 %)

This course requires the completion of a research paper (at least 15 pp., excluding notes & bibliography). Since many of you may be working on projects located near the intersection of anthropological and historical approaches, it will be to your advantage to employ the theoretical references you will discuss in class as building blocks for your project's framework.

You will provide me with a one-page project statement (and a tentative bibliography) by **Oct. 7**, turn in a brief outline & expanded bibliography for the project on **Nov. 4**, and a final draft of your project, along with a bibliography and standardized source citation, on or before **Dec. 16 at 5 PM**. Not only do you get to develop a project of your choice; you will also have the opportunity to dazzle us with your knowledge of the topic in a brief presentation at a social hour + roundtable. If necessary, presentations will be organized in pairs by topic.

I may assign one or two brief reaction papers (1 – 2 pp.) for **extra credit**; if you turn in a good, well-thought essay, you will benefit from a 5 % increase in your grade.

Attendance and extension policy

Attendance and lateness will be noted at each session. You should aim to have, at most, **one** unaccounted absence. After two unaccounted absences, your final grade will be lowered by **at least** half a letter grade, and possibly more, at the instructor's discretion. Contact the Dean of Students if you have any personal or health emergency; they will notify all of your professors, and your grade will **never** suffer as a result.

Please note that extensions for turning in your work will be given only under **exceptional** circumstances (i.e., family emergency or illness cases corroborated by the Dean of Students) and on a case-by-case basis. This means that **most** extensions and **all** requests for an incomplete grade are in practice granted at the discretion of the Dean of Students.

Course schedule

Readings marked with (★) are available at the ANTH 240 Blackboard site (blackboard.vassar.edu), or will be distributed as photocopies

DATE

READINGS

WEEK 1

T Sept 2

Introduction: Colonialism, power, and historical consciousness

I. Structures, stories, histories

R Sept 4

Marx's analysis of capitalist production

* Marx, Karl, "The Fetishism of Commodities" (435 – 443); "The Division of Labor," "The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation," "Primitive Accumulation," "The Historical Tendency of Capitalist accumulation (476 – 488). McLellan, D. (editor), Karl Marx. Selected Writings, Oxford 1987.

WEEK 2

T Sept 9

Spirits of resistance, structures of meaning

* Ong, Aihwa. *Spirits of Resistance* (355 – 70). In *Situated Lives*.
* Lévi-Strauss, Claude, "The Structural Study of Myth" (206 – 231). In *Structural Anthropology, Volume I*.

R Sept 11

Ethnographic writing as a structural narrative

* Certeau, Michel de. *The Writing of History: "Ethno-Graphy"* (209 – 237).

WEEK 3

II. Western historiography & non-Western historical consciousness

T Sept 16

History and power

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, *Silencing the Past*: Chapter 1.

R Sept 18

The power of historiographical silence

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, *Silencing the Past*: Chapter 3

WEEK 4

T Sept 23

Manipulating the present through the past

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph, *Silencing the Past*: Chapter 4.

R Sept 25

From "myth" to historical consciousness

* Turner, Terence. "History, Myth, and Social Consciousness among the Kayapó of Central Brazil." In Hill, Jonathan (editor) *Rethinking History and Myth*: 195 – 213. Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1988.

FILM: The Kayapó

T Sept 30

POSITION

PAPER 1 DUE

Local historical consciousness: Upending the received narrative

* Salomon, Frank, "Unethnic Ethnohistory: On Peruvian Peasant Historiography and Ideas of Autochthony." *Ethnohistory* 49 (3): 475 – 506, 2002.

R Oct 2

Instructor at conference

III. Colonial projects, social change, and historical consciousness

WEEK 6

T Oct 7

PROJECT

Invisible wars: Colonial projects and native beliefs

* Gruzinski, Serge, *Images at War*, "War" (30 – 60), Duke 2001.

