

## ANG 6931 FOUNDATIONS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

*Offered annually, Fall semester*

### Course Objectives:

This course is required for all graduate students in the Department of Anthropology. Foundations I provides students with an understanding of the history of anthropology, including the discipline's political-economic and institutional contexts and the changing epistemological and philosophical strains and guiding assumptions underlying anthropological practice. It is intended to serve three related purposes:

- To (re-)acquaint students with the history of anthropology through the study of the work of major theorists and schools of thought. This will especially focus on socio-cultural anthropology, but will include histories of archaeology, biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and centrally, of applied anthropology.
- To provide an understanding of the ways in which social scientific disciplines are located in political-economic and institutional matrices in order to make students aware of the traditions out of which arise their own anthropological work, as well as some of the effects of their anthropological interventions.
- To make students aware of the history of applied anthropology and the various uses to which anthropology has been put in the past as a way of contextualizing contemporary practicing anthropology.

These goals are pursued through presentations by instructors, guest speakers, and students, through classroom discussion, through reading assignments, and research projects. Key themes include:

- The historical understanding of how, when, and why key anthropological concepts like "culture," "cultural evolution," "cultural relativism," and so forth, as well as key practices such as extended ethnographic fieldwork, became part of the anthropologist's repertoire.
- That anthropological theory can be seen as a historically-changing series of paradigms, or theoretical frameworks as evinced in the sets of questions and the rules for their answers, that pertain to particular anthropological epistemologies and traditions of praxis.
- That anthropological activity and theorizing arises in particular socio-economic contexts, and that applied anthropological avowedly seeks to not only understand these contexts but to effect change as well.

Students should expect to learn and understand:

- Major theorists and schools of thought in the history of anthropology
- To identify historical anthropologists with their theoretical arguments
- The development of academic anthropology in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere
- The relationship between the discipline's subfields
- How the development of anthropology has been related to specific historical forces, socio-economic contexts, and political forces
- The ways in which funding sources influence the development of scholarship
- The historical establishment of applied anthropology in the United States and elsewhere
- Case studies of applied anthropological experience
- Why the history of anthropology has become an important area of interest within contemporary anthropology

Depending on the interests and expertise of different faculty members, other topics in the history and epistemology of anthropology may be introduced, such as various theories in the history and philosophy of science, issues relating to the location of anthropology within the tradition of the humanities, or the ways anthropological writing has been subjected to themes and theories in literary studies.

