

**Seminar: Contemporary Theory in Cultural Anthropology  
Spring 1997  
Professor Donna Goldstein  
(first time offered)**

**Course Schedule:** Wed. @12:00-2:30 Hale 455  
(Will attempt to change to Wed Evening at 6:00)  
**Office Hours:** Tues. and Thurs. 3:30-5:00 p.m.

**Course Description/Rationale:**

This seminar introduces a variety of theoretical perspectives that are either core to cultural anthropology or are referred to often enough to be deemed worthy of reading and being familiar with. It is not an attempt to cover every theoretical “school” or set of ideas within cultural anthropology; rather, it is an attempt to highlight a few of the positions that have gained intellectual space in the last 15 years.

Since the cultural core course covered many theorists pre-1970s, this course emphasizes post-1970 theoretical challenges within the discipline—some of these challenges are embodied, however, in literature from other disciplines and from other time periods, thus the attempt is to work back and forth between the dialogue of anthropology with other disciplines, its period of self-reflection, and experiments. The attempt (in this short time-frame) has also been to choose theories and then the use of theories in practice in the form of ethnographies. It is an imperfect attempt, however, since it is rare that any one ethnography is mono-theoretical or that a theoretical piece is necessarily devoid of ethnographic data.

Over the past decade, sociocultural anthropology has undergone a period of intensive and critical self-examination with respect to its theory, its methods, and its uses. Simultaneously, this period has been one in which there has been a particularly rich cross-fertilization between anthropology and such disciplines/areas as history, comparative literature, gender studies, ethnic studies, and cultural studies. The seminar seeks to have intellectual exchanges that are exciting, thought-provoking, and that inspire participants to see the relevance of diverse theoretical trends to methodological choices and ethnographic productions. It acknowledges that the choice of texts in no way represents the entire discipline.

**Texts:** All of the following books will be available for purchase at the Bookstore, but please check since in some cases you will only be responsible for selections within some texts and may choose not to purchase the book. (I would like to be sensitive to the fact that many of you have limited budgets).

- Foucault, M. 1980. Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. 1976. The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller. New York: Penguin Books.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1995. How “Natives” Think: About Captain Cook, For Example. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Obeyesekere, Gananath. 1992. The Apotheosis of Captain Cook. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mintz, Sidney. 1985. Sweetness and Power. New York: Penguin Books.
- Sanjek, Roger, ed. 1990. Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. (selections)
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis. Boston: Beacon Press. (selections)

**Required Packet**

The packet of articles will be placed in the graduate student lounge and is available for you to make your own copies. Please be considerate to your fellow students and copy the packet in a one to two hour time slot. Buchanan's has a good copy deal @ 5¢/copy. Be careful with the pages so that everyone can use the feeder and please return promptly with pages in the right order and facing in the same direction. Please pay attention to single versus double-sided. There are some of each in the packet, thus you will need to look at each article before passing it through the feeder.

**Course Requirements:**

**Readings and Class Discussion:** We will conduct the course as a seminar. Therefore, all students are expected to have completed the assigned required readings prior to each class and be prepared to engage in class discussion. This is extremely important for the success of the course. Be prepared with at least three reactions, comments, critiques and/or questions in response to each of the readings for each class. Regular attendance is expected of all students. Every other week a one-pager discussing the week's readings is required. The class will be divided into 2 groups, A and B, during the first week's class, and the grouping you choose determines when you write your one-pagers. This class is limited to 15 students and advanced graduate students in anthropology will be given preference.

**Presentations:** Students are expected to give **2** formal, ten to fifteen minute presentations on one or more of the week's readings over the course of the semester. You should organize your presentation on the assumption that everyone has already done the reading in question, and therefore you should spend no more than a few sentences to summarize the reading. Most of your presentation should focus on addressing the key issues raised in the reading, the apparent agendas (theoretical and otherwise of its author(s)), your critiques of the reading (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, whether or not the argument or analysis is convincing), and what the significance of the reading is in the grand scheme of anthropological theory. Close by suggesting some aspects of the reading and the problems it raises which you feel are interesting areas for further class discussion, particularly those aspects which you may not have had time to address during your presentation. Do a practice run of your presentation beforehand in order to make sure that you do not exceed the time limit.

**Short Papers: Six one-page papers** are due. Please hand in 2 copies. One will be returned to you and one will be kept on file. They are due every other week. They should be interesting, engaging and explore one idea from the readings in detail.

**Longer Papers: Two 5-7 page papers** are due for the course. Your papers represent an opportunity for you to critically respond to course readings, lectures, and discussions. You may choose your own thematic topic, but they should focus on either a section of readings, or a week's readings. Usually, better papers take a smaller topic and focus on one idea in-depth.

**Participation in Editorial Groups (for Longer Papers):**

I suggest that all students participate and take advantage of editorial groups. I will arrange for each student to belong to one editorial group for the semester. You will have the opportunity to meet during one class meeting to discuss/edit your first paper, and you are encouraged to meet in early May before handing in your second paper.

**Grading:**

Participation in Class Discussions and Two Presentations.....	20%
Six One-Pagers (Due Every Other Week).....	30%
2 Longer (5-7 page)Papers (including final paper).....	50%

**Note: Final Papers Due on May 7 @ 12:00 in my box.  
No Late Papers or Incompletes.**

**Note: By the end of the semester, each participant will have, at minimum:**

- **cooked twice (as either head chef or helper)**
- **presented twice (a good strategy is to present the same week you have a one-pager due)**
- **written 6 one-pagers reflecting on readings**
- **written 2 5-7 page papers reflecting on themes or set of readings from course**

**Class Culture:**

I hope the organization of this class will encourage it to be more of a “salon” atmosphere where ideas are exchanged and differing perspectives are respected. I am hoping that the combination of good food, and a highly motivated group of participants (as presenters and one-page writers) will help to make this seminar not only intellectually stimulating, but also a pleasant place to be. I ask that participants be courteous and respectful to others.









