

# ANTY 500: CONTEMPORARY ANTHROPOLOGICAL THOUGHT

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Office hours Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays by appointment (sign up sheet)

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## Course Description.

Cont Anth Thought. 3 Credits. Prereq: graduate standing or consent of instructor. A review of major contributions to current anthropological theory, with an emphasis on the application of theory to anthropological problems. Significant advances in theory, symbolic anthropology, critical theory, cultural studies, postmodernism.

## Readings

(required)

Manu Karuka. 2019. Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Barbara Meek. 2012. We are our Language: an ethnography of language revitalization in a north Athabaskan community. Arizona University Press.

Aihwa Ong 2016. Fungible Life: Experiment in the Asian City of Life. Durham: Duke University Press.

Juno Salazar Parrenas. 2018. Decolonizing Extinction: the work of care in Orangutan Rehabilitation. Durham: Duke University Press.

Lisa Stevenson. 2014. Life Beside Itself: imagining care in the Canadian Arctic. Berkeley: University of California Press.

(optional)

James Scott. 2017. Against the Grain: a deep history of the Earliest States. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Anna Tsing. 2017. The Mushroom at the End of the World: on the possibility of life in Capitalist Ruins. Princeton University Press.

## Course Policies

Graduate seminars combine close reading of monographs, participation in discussion and debate, and analytic writing assignments. Throughout the semester, we will consider several theoretical approaches, concepts and paradigms drawn from and across anthropology subfields. We will analyze contemporary monographs with diverse geographical content from the Pacific Northwest to the Arctic, from East Asia to Southeast Asia. Our aim is to understand the human condition broadly and in comparative perspective, to appreciate the diversity of humanity past and present.

The seminar provides all students the opportunity to relate anthropological theory to research questions, methods, and new knowledge. Our analysis will consider the interplay of ethnography, ethnology, ethology, molecular anthropology, archaeology, ethnohistory and historical archaeology, sociolinguistics and language revitalization. The student may agree, or disagree, respectfully, with viewpoints and conclusions of the authors and other students, in the process of evaluating and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a particular theoretical approach informing the text.

**Pedagogy** This seminar is offered in two sections, Monday (section 2) is taught remotely in the afternoon and Wednesday (section 1) is taught in person in UC 220. Each section will consist of short lectures and group discussion with small group exercises; lectures will address the intellectual context and background of authors and works, or compare theoretical approaches and pose questions for discussion. Each week, students will prepare for class discussion by reading selected sections of the text assigned, and bring to seminar two written questions interrogating key concepts, and two quotes from the readings that are worthy of discussion.

**Assignment** For the final writing assignment, each student will choose a specific theoretical problem, or argument, and draw from readings to evaluate the implications for current and new research, methods and contributions to anthropological knowledge. The intent is to question a theoretical paradigm in greater depth by reviewing the debate, or empirical topic in light of each students' own particular research interests. The final writing assignment should include a bibliography of secondary sources from the readings, or contemporary journal articles from sub-fields of anthropology.

**Grades** are determined equally by class participation (50%) as reflected in weekly attendance and informal writing in class, as well as the final writing assignment (50%). A midterm assessment will be conducted individually to determine a final paper topic and readings, and to give students provisional progress report.

**Grading rubric** includes demonstrating graduate level information literacy, and advanced writing criteria, as defined in the academic catalog, as well as graduate level research skills, namely, a reasoned and evidence-based discussion of a major debate, theoretical approach, or paradigm. The length of the final writing assignment will depend on the topic chosen, in consultation with the instructor.

**Traditional final grades are assigned; +/- is at the discretion of the instructor.**

**Attendance:** Attendance at both sections will be taken, and students should avoid any absences. The instructor is available in office hours each week by appointment, but students should not use the office hours to substitute for seminar attendance. More than two unexplained absences will affect the final grade in the course. Because the two sections cover the same material each week, students who have any symptoms of illness (especially COVID19) or who must self-isolate due to contacts, **SHOULD NOT ATTEND CLASS IN PERSON**, but rather, notify the instructor, and join the remote discussion section on Mondays while recuperating, or make other arrangements. If students miss their registered class meeting for any reason other than illness, they can join the other section on an ad hoc basis.

**Back up Instructors:** In case of illness of the instructor, class discussion of the reading may be facilitated by other faculty instructors from the department.

**Communication:** All electronic communication between the instructor and students must take place through UM email. No private email, or phone texts will be used. Voice mail messages can be left at the office phone number, for example, to notify of an absence due to illness.

**Resources:** Mansfield Library Reference desk and Writing Center resources are available to graduate students for assistance with writing. Information literacy at:

<https://www.lib.umt.edu/services/info-lit/curriculum.php>

