



ANTH831

Culture, Commodities and Consumption: Anthropological Approaches to Economic Life

S2 Evening 2018

Dept of Anthropology

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Disclaimer

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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AHH North, W32

Tuesdays 11-1, Piccolo Me, AHH

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MDevStud or MGlobalHlthDevStud or GradCertGlobalHlthDevStud or MDevStudGlobalHlth or GradCertDevStudGlobalHlth or MAppAnth or MDevCult or MIntRel or MPASR or GradDipPASR or GradDipIntRel or MSocEntre or GradCertSocEntre or MPPPMDevStud or MPASRMDevStud or 4cp in ANTH units at 800 level

Corequisites

Co-badged status

ANTH731

Unit description

In the contemporary world, it is often assumed that the economic and the cultural are opposites, that notions of the market or the economy are natural facts rather than cultural constructs, that abstract economic models perfectly capture the messy realm of actual human exchanges, that money corrupts traditional culture. None of these claims, however, stands up on closer inspection. The goal of this class is to peel back the layers of myth and misapprehension surrounding human transactions and get at the complex nexus of economics and culture that shape exchange in particular historical and cultural contexts.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Develop familiarity with anthropological approaches to economic institutions and transactions

Develop the ability to assess received understandings of economic discourses and

practices using anthropologically informed holistic and relativistic descriptions of cultural practices

Question commonly held and taken for granted assumptions about what is 'natural' or 'normal' human economic experience.

Apply a critical, anthropologically informed understanding of economic transactions and institutions to real world situations and phenomena

Describe how global interconnectedness shapes contemporary practices of consumption and structures of inequality.

Analyze how cultural difference affects the interpretation and practice of economic transactions and institutions in different societies.

Improve writing skills, especially structuring of argument, organization, and use of supporting evidence and data.

Prepare a presentation on independent research that effectively summarizes one's research project and conveys its content and importance effectively.

General Assessment Information

Submission and Citation

All essays must be submitted via the turnitin link on the unit iLearn page by 23:59 on the due date.

All words and ideas that are not your own must be cited correctly. See iLearn for further details.

University Late Assessment Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

No consideration for lost work or technology issues

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy (electronic or otherwise) of all written work submitted for each unit. No consideration will be given to claims of 'lost work' or technology issues no matter what the circumstances. It is your responsibility to ensure that your computer is fully compatible with iLearn during exam periods.

Extensions and Special Consideration:

Please view the Special Consideration Policy at: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/my-study-program/special-consideration>

All Special Consideration notifications are to be made online via the University's Ask MQ system.

Remember, the University has determined that some circumstances routinely encountered by

students **are not acceptable** grounds for claiming Disruption of Studies. These grounds include, but are not limited, to:

- Routine demands of employment
- Routine family problems such as tension with or between parents, spouses, and other people closely involved with the student
- Difficulties adjusting to university life, to the self-discipline needed to study effectively, and the demands of academic work
- Stress or anxiety associated with examinations, required assignments or any aspect of academic work
- Routine need for financial support
- Routine demands of sport, clubs and social or extra-curricular activities

Conditions existing prior to commencing a unit of study are not grounds for Special Consideration. The student is responsible for managing their workload in light of any known or anticipated problems. The student is responsible for contacting Student Support Services if they have a chronic condition.

Re-mark of Work During the Semester:

A re-mark will be considered only on the following grounds:

1. Administrative error
2. The feedback provided on the assessment does not justify the grade awarded

Grade Appeals

The Macquarie Grade Appeal Policy is available here: <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Class Preparation: DPG	20%	No	Weekly
Participation in Seminar	20%	No	Weekly
Short Paper #1	10%	No	End of Week 4
Short Paper II	10%	No	End of Week 9
Final Presentation	10%	No	Week 13 in Class
Research Essay	30%	No	End of Week 13

Class Preparation: DPG

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **20%**

Each week, you must fill out a Discussion Preparation Guide and bring it to class. See iLearn for details and sample DPG.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop familiarity with anthropological approaches to economic institutions and transactions
- Develop the ability to assess received understandings of economic discourses and practices using anthropologically informed holistic and relativistic descriptions of cultural practices
- Analyze how cultural difference affects the interpretation and practice of economic transactions and institutions in different societies.

Participation in Seminar

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **20%**

Brief description: Each student is expected to participate actively and constructively in the seminar discussion. See iLearn for how participation will be assessed.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop familiarity with anthropological approaches to economic institutions and transactions
- Develop the ability to assess received understandings of economic discourses and practices using anthropologically informed holistic and relativistic descriptions of cultural practices
- Question commonly held and taken for granted assumptions about what is 'natural' or 'normal' human economic experience.
- Describe how global interconnectedness shapes contemporary practices of consumption and structures of inequality.
- Analyze how cultural difference affects the interpretation and practice of economic transactions and institutions in different societies.

Short Paper #1

Due: **End of Week 4**

Weighting: **10%**

Details: Write a short paper (1250-1500 words, double-spaced) on one of four topics from the **first third** of the unit. In your paper you should make to reference at least 3 of the readings from class, and you should also find at least 2 outside sources. See iLearn for topics and assessment rubric. Essay must be submitted via turnitin (link on iLearn page) by 23:59 on the due date.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Question commonly held and taken for granted assumptions about what is 'natural' or 'normal' human economic experience.
- Apply a critical, anthropologically informed understanding of economic transactions and institutions to real world situations and phenomena
- Analyze how cultural difference affects the interpretation and practice of economic transactions and institutions in different societies.
- Improve writing skills, especially structuring of argument, organization, and use of supporting evidence and data.

Short Paper II

Due: **End of Week 9**

Weighting: **10%**

Details: Write a short paper (1250-1500 words, double-spaced) on one of four topics from the **second third** of the unit. In your paper you should make to reference at least 3 of the readings from class, and you should also find at least 2 outside sources. See iLearn for topics and assessment rubric. Essay must be submitted via turnitin (link on iLearn page) by 23:59 on the due date.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Question commonly held and taken for granted assumptions about what is 'natural' or 'normal' human economic experience.
- Apply a critical, anthropologically informed understanding of economic transactions and institutions to real world situations and phenomena
- Improve writing skills, especially structuring of argument, organization, and use of supporting evidence and data.

Final Presentation

Due: **Week 13 in Class**

Weighting: **10%**

Brief description: Each Student will present for 15-20 minutes on the topic of their Research

Essay during the last meeting of the session. See iLearn for further details.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Develop the ability to assess received understandings of economic discourses and practices using anthropologically informed holistic and relativistic descriptions of cultural practices
- Describe how global interconnectedness shapes contemporary practices of consumption and structures of inequality.
- Prepare a presentation on independent research that effectively summarizes one's research project and conveys its content and importance effectively.

Research Essay

Due: **End of Week 13**

Weighting: **30%**

Details: For the final class project you will conduct a commodity chain analysis of a commodity of your choice. Your paper (3000-3500 words) will "follow" the varied travels of your chosen commodity; including a discussion of its history, a mapping of its key sites of production, distribution and consumption, an overview of varied impacts (positive and negative) created across the world by that commodity. Your commodity chain analysis will pay attention to its "social life" as well as to how its travels have been shaped by (and shape) class, race and gendered power. For this assignment, you should do significant independent research. See iLearn for further information. Essay must be submitted via turnitin (link on iLearn page) by 23:59 on the due date.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Question commonly held and taken for granted assumptions about what is 'natural' or 'normal' human economic experience.
- Apply a critical, anthropologically informed understanding of economic transactions and institutions to real world situations and phenomena
- Describe how global interconnectedness shapes contemporary practices of consumption and structures of inequality.

Delivery and Resources

Please check university timetable for class meeting times and location.

All required readings will be available on electronic reserve, iLearn, the Multisearch feature of the MQ Uni Library website, or the internet.

Check the unit iLearn page frequently for up to date information.

Unit Schedule

Week	Seminar Topic	Assessment
1	Commodity Fetishism 101/About the Class	
2	Global Connections and Frameworks/ False Universals	
3	Cultural Economies/ Wealth and Poverty Beyond the Bottom Line	
4	Beyond North Atlantic Universals I: Exchange	<i>Short Paper #1 due</i>
5	Beyond North Atlantic Universals II: Money	
6	Beyond North Atlantic Universals III: Consumption in Critical Perspective	
7	Following the Thing/Friction in the Commodity Chain	
Mid-semester Recess		
8	Follow the Mobile I—Extraction	
9	Follow the Mobile II—Production	<i>Short Paper #2 due</i>
10	Follow the Mobile III—Consumption	
11	Follow the Mobile IV—The Cloud	
12	Follow the Mobile V—E-waste	
13	Student Presentations	
		RESEARCH ESSAY DUE

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)

- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** *The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.*)

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway) (<https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway>). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central](http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central) (<http://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central>).

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: <https://students.mq.edu.au/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Final Presentation

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop familiarity with anthropological approaches to economic institutions and transactions
- Develop the ability to assess received understandings of economic discourses and practices using anthropologically informed holistic and relativistic descriptions of cultural practices
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- Apply a critical, anthropologically informed understanding of economic transactions and institutions to real world situations and phenomena
- Analyze how cultural difference affects the interpretation and practice of economic transactions and institutions in different societies.
- Prepare a presentation on independent research that effectively summarizes one's research project and conveys its content and importance effectively.

Assessment tasks

- Class Preparation: DPG
- Participation in Seminar
- Short Paper #1
- Short Paper II
- Final Presentation
- Research Essay

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop the ability to assess received understandings of economic discourses and practices using anthropologically informed holistic and relativistic descriptions of cultural practices
- Question commonly held and taken for granted assumptions about what is 'natural' or 'normal' human economic experience.
- Apply a critical, anthropologically informed understanding of economic transactions and institutions to real world situations and phenomena
- Describe how global interconnectedness shapes contemporary practices of consumption and structures of inequality.
- Improve writing skills, especially structuring of argument, organization, and use of supporting evidence and data.
- Prepare a presentation on independent research that effectively summarizes one's research project and conveys its content and importance effectively.

Assessment tasks

- Class Preparation: DPG
- Participation in Seminar
- Short Paper #1
- Short Paper II
- Final Presentation

- Research Essay

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- Prepare a presentation on independent research that effectively summarizes one's research project and conveys its content and importance effectively.

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Improve writing skills, especially structuring of argument, organization, and use of supporting evidence and data.
- Prepare a presentation on independent research that effectively summarizes one's research project and conveys its content and importance effectively.

Assessment tasks

- Short Paper #1
- Short Paper II
- Final Presentation

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Develop familiarity with anthropological approaches to economic institutions and transactions
- Describe how global interconnectedness shapes contemporary practices of consumption and structures of inequality.
- Analyze how cultural difference affects the interpretation and practice of economic transactions and institutions in different societies.

Assessment tasks

- Class Preparation: DPG
- Participation in Seminar
- Short Paper #1
- Final Presentation
- Research Essay