ANTH3002
The Anthropology of Politics and Power
Session 2, Online-flexible 2022
Macquarie School of Social Sciences

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Chris Houston
chris.houston@mq.edu.au

Credit points
10

Prerequisites
130cp at 1000 level or above

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
Politics and power can be thought of as intimate aspects of our social life and relationships, and hence as aspects of all subjects of anthropological investigation. Processes of domination, resistance and social transformation are inevitably involved in the creation and representation of cultural practices and meanings. In the first half of the unit students will identify and compare the themes - explicit or otherwise - that dominate the composition of a number of classical political ethnographies, while also exploring the wider question of their colonial contexts and how this context influenced the development of anthropological knowledge. Its second half examines how these themes are still relevant in illuminating more contemporary manifestations of power, including forms of political practice such as nationalism and its project of social transformation; violence and terror; gender and agency; resistance and collaboration; and peace-making and reconciliation.

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:

UL01: Apply the concerns of various anthropological writings to contemporary processes of power and politics.

UL02: Discern and discuss the tensions and correspondences between the political institutions of different societies, their representation in ethnographic writing or film, and political processes in the ethnographers’ own society.
ULO3: Demonstrate knowledge of influential ethnographies and debates relevant to the anthropology of politics and power.

ULO4: Write cogently about the sociocultural dimensions of political systems and practices

General Assessment Information

Extensions: Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, a 5% penalty (of the total possible mark) will be applied each day a written assessment is not submitted, up until the 7th day (including weekends). After the 7th day, a mark of ‘0’ (zero) will be awarded even if the assessment is submitted. Submission time for all written assessments is set at 11.55pm. A 1-hour grace period is provided to students who experience a technical issue. This late penalty will apply to non-timed sensitive assessment (incl essays, reports, posters, portfolios, journals, recordings etc). Late submission of time sensitive tasks (such as tests/exams, performance assessments/presentations, scheduled practical assessments/labs etc) will only be addressed by the unit convenor in a Special consideration application. Special Consideration outcome may result in a new question or topic.

Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Each Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Week 7 or Week 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Essay</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Week 7 or Week 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Test</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Week 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Tutorial Participation

Assessment Type 1: Participatory task
Indicative Time on Task 2: 20 hours
Due: Each Week
Weighting: 10%

Students participation in tutorial discussions and activities.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Apply the concerns of various anthropological writings to contemporary processes of power and politics.
- Discern and discuss the tensions and correspondences between the political institutions of different societies, their representation in ethnographic writing or film, and political

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/152202/unit_guide/print
processes in the ethnographers’ own society.

Major Essay

Assessment Type 1: Essay
Indicative Time on Task 2: 45 hours
Due: Week 7 or Week 12
Weighting: 40%

The major essay will account for 40% of the semester’s work. Remember, students will write two essays in total, one from each half of the course, dealing with the major themes under discussion. Essay questions will be self-selected, but this selection will be facilitated by tutorial discussion. Your essay question must be clearly stated in your assignment.

On successful completion you will be able to:

• Apply the concerns of various anthropological writings to contemporary processes of power and politics.
• Discern and discuss the tensions and correspondences between the political institutions of different societies, their representation in ethnographic writing or film, and political processes in the ethnographers’ own society.
• Demonstrate knowledge of influential ethnographies and debates relevant to the anthropology of politics and power.
• Write cogently about the sociocultural dimensions of political systems and practices

Minor Essay

Assessment Type 1: Essay
Indicative Time on Task 2: 25 hours
Due: Week 7 or Week 12
Weighting: 25%

The minor essay will count for 25% of the semester’s work. Please base this essay on any cluster of readings that takes your fancy from the other 6 weeks of group presentations.

On successful completion you will be able to:

• Apply the concerns of various anthropological writings to contemporary processes of power and politics.
Discern and discuss the tensions and correspondences between the political institutions of different societies, their representation in ethnographic writing or film, and political processes in the ethnographers’ own society.

Demonstrate knowledge of influential ethnographies and debates relevant to the anthropology of politics and power.

Write cogently about the sociocultural dimensions of political systems and practices.

**Take-Home Test**

Assessment Type: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task: 22 hours

Due: Week 13

Weighting: 25%

The exam will consist of a combination of short answers to questions that link together topics and themes covered in lectures and tutorials throughout the course.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Apply the concerns of various anthropological writings to contemporary processes of power and politics.
- Discern and discuss the tensions and correspondences between the political institutions of different societies, their representation in ethnographic writing or film, and political processes in the ethnographers’ own society.
- Demonstrate knowledge of influential ethnographies and debates relevant to the anthropology of politics and power.

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1 If you need help with your assignment, please contact:

- the academic teaching staff in your unit for guidance in understanding or completing this type of assessment
- the Writing Centre for academic skills support.

2 Indicative time-on-task is an estimate of the time required for completion of the assessment task and is subject to individual variation.

**Delivery and Resources**

**ABOUT THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF POWER AND POLITICS**

This unit introduces students to many of the vital political practices generating social life in the present. It also introduces students to some of the key literature associated with the
anthropology of politics and power. Our exploration of both the practice of power and its analysis will be organized around three enduring questions: the ‘secret of order’, the ‘secret of change’, and the ‘secret of action.’

In the first half of the course students will identify and compare the themes – explicit or otherwise – that dominate the composition of a number of classical political ethnographies, while also exploring the wider question of their colonial contexts and how this context influenced the development of anthropological knowledge. The second half of the unit examines how some of these themes may still be of relevance in illuminating more contemporary manifestations of power, including forms of political practice such as nationalism and its project of social transformation; violence and terror; gender and agency; resistance and collaboration; and peace-making and reconciliation. A continuing concern of the course will be to explore how the writing of ethnography and the making of ethnographic film – that is, textual and visual representations – are implicated in these issues.

Politics and power can be thought of as intimate aspects of our social life and relationships, and hence as aspects of all subjects of anthropological investigation. Processes of domination, resistance and social transformation are inevitably involved in the creation and representation of cultural practices and meanings. Accordingly, the specific investigation of these issues is of great help in contributing to students’ understandings of the present, as well as to their comprehension of other units in the anthropology programme at Macquarie. Appropriately, the various and competing ways that the anthropology of politics has been conceptualized and delimited has meant that political anthropology itself has been described as a “running intellectual battleground.” One key reason for this resides in the historical political context of anthropology. Anthropology is a discipline more immediately familiar and hence more immediately implicated than other disciplines with the transformations produced by European power upon the non-European world. For a long intellectual moment, colonialism’s primary object of control constituted anthropology’s primary object of investigation. For this very reason, in this course we will seek to explore both the anthropology of politics, and the politics of anthropology.

Classes
Anth 3002 involves a two-hour lecture-seminar. Part of this weekly seminar will be used for lectures, part for films and part for discussion. The lecture-seminar will be recorded but much discussion will be lost in this process. Students are strongly encouraged to attend the weekly lecture/seminar.

Students are also required to attend face-to-face weekly tutorials. Please check the timetable for room/schedule details.

Unit Schedule
Lecture and Tutorial Programme ANTH 3002 [This is a Provisional schedule that may change slightly]
Note: All tutorial readings and core articles are found on the library website in the e-reserve section (you can search for ANTH302 in e-reserve or follow the link on iLearn). All listed secondary readings are in three-day loan (books), electronic reserve (journal articles) or available in electronic data bases.

Part One: The Political Anthropology of Colonialism

The first six weeks of the course introduce students to the key issues in anthropology’s long historic encounter[s] with state and stateless societies, which raise many fascinating questions about how such societies instituted themselves politically. Yet these questions also arose in the context of both the planned and unplanned colonial transformation of those societies, generally by the very nation states and business corporations of the European anthropologists themselves. As a consequence, anthropologists have always been studying and constructing moving targets – albeit more or less consciously: political regimes undergoing multiple transformations in which anthropologists themselves were implicated, with political institutions and practices in flux as incorporation into global flows of capital, ideologies and social practices proceeded.

Week One: Introduction to Political Anthropology and its Key Concepts

Film: First Contact

Tutorial Activity: Discussion of First Contact, Course Overview and Assessment Details

Week Two: Anthropology, Colonialism & Science

Film: Robert Gardner’s The Nuer

Tutorial Question: Given Feuchtwang’s analysis of the relationship between the colonial State and anthropological knowledge, who should fund anthropological research?

Tutorial Reading:


Week Three: World Systems Theory, Global Cultural History & Anthropology
Film: Joe Leahy’s Neighbours

Tutorial Question: Using Kahn’s discussion, give some examples of how ideas of cultural difference might be connected to contemporary processes of power.

Tutorial Reading:

Part Two: Representing Politics
In the next three weeks of the course we will seek to ground some of the above claims in the complexities of a number of ‘classic’ political anthropology texts, seeking to clarify the assumptions ethnographers have made about culture, structure, historical change, conflict, authority, and individual activism in the process of representing particular societies. Student seminar presentations make up a proportion of the seminar sessions.

Week Four: The Secret of Order
Tutorial Question: For what reasons does Clastres accuse western political philosophy of ethnocentrism?

Tutorial Reading:

Recommended Readings for Essay:


[See also review essay on ‘Anthropology of colonialism’ in Annual Review of Anthropology 1993]

Week Five: The Secret of Change

Tutorial Question: Can we speak of exploitation in pre-capitalist societies?

Tutorial Reading:


Recommended Readings for Essay:


Week Six: The Secret of Action

Tutorial Question: What might a focus on the purposive political actions of individuals simultaneously obscure?

Tutorial Reading:


Recommended Readings for Essay:


[See also ‘Overview: Sixty years in Anthropology’, by Barth in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2007]

**Part Three: The Political Anthropology of Modernity**

The most recent globalization of the world economy has encouraged anthropologists to theorize the ways tensions and accommodations between local, national and global forces impact on the political processes and the social relations of societies represented in their ethnographic writing. It has also encouraged a re-thinking of how we might understand the human diversity traditionally studied by anthropologists and paradoxically both produced and managed by nation states and modern modes of governance. This section will centre on some of the questions these studies raise, on the effects and unintended consequences of self-conscious modernizing projects of different nation-states and elites, and on the political legacy of European colonialism.

*Week Seven: Project Modernity (1): Nationalism, Republicanism and Language Reform in Turkey*

**Film:** *Triumph of the Will*

**Tutorial Question:** In Scott’s contrast between high modernist planning versus practical knowledge/ local practices, which side do you come down on?

**Tutorial Reading:**

Scott, J. (1998) ‘Nature and Space’ (Chapter One), in *Seeing Like a State*. Yale University Press,
New Haven.

Week Eight: Project Modernity (2): Soviet Collectivism

Film: Three Songs of Lenin

Tutorial Question: In their discussion of ‘primitive’ society, how are Marx and Sahlins’ contrasting interpretations related to their different analysis of capitalism?

Tutorial Reading:


Recommended Readings for Essay:


Week Nine: TBA

Week Ten: Domination & Resistance (1): Theoretical Problems

https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/152202/unit_guide/print
**Tutorial Question:** How might we understand relations between gender, language and power in Australia?

**Tutorial Reading:**

**Recommended Readings for Essay:**

**Week Eleven: Domination & Resistance (2): Islam and Gender**

**Film:** *Divorce Iranian Style*

**Tutorial Question:** Do Muslim women need saving (from Islam)?

**Tutorial Readings:**

**Recommended Readings for Essay:**
Significance of Resistance’, in *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, No 3.


**Week Twelve: Violence and Terror**

**Tutorial Question**: Can Das’ discussion of witnessing be applied to Primo Levi’s work?

**Tutorial Readings**:  


**Recommended Readings for Essay**:  


**Week Thirteen: The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation**

**Tutorial Question**: In projects of reconciliation, is it just to make victims the primary actor, expecting them to initiate what those in power are unwilling to do?

**Tutorial Reading**:  
Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma. Routledge, London.

ANTH 302: Reserve List

Books:


* Asad, T (ed.) Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter


** Articles from Journals **


** Policies and Procedures**

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au). 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
- Assessment Procedure
- Complaints Resolution Procedure for Students and Members of the Public
- Special Consideration Policy

Students seeking more policy resources can visit Student Policies (https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/policies). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.
Student Support

Macquarie University offers a range of Student Support Services including:

- Unit guide ANTH3002 The Anthropology of Politics and Power

To find other policies relating to Teaching and Learning, visit Policy Central (https://policies.mq.edu.au) and use the search tool.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/admin/other-resources/student-conduct

Results

Results published on platform other than eStudent, (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) 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 or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

Academic Integrity

At Macquarie, we believe academic integrity – honesty, respect, trust, responsibility, fairness and courage – is at the core of learning, teaching and research. We recognise that meeting the expectations required to complete your assessments can be challenging. So, we offer you a range of resources and services to help you reach your potential, including free online writing and maths support, academic skills development and wellbeing consultations.

Student Support

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

The Writing Centre

The Writing Centre provides resources to develop your English language proficiency, academic writing, and communication skills.

- Workshops
- Chat with a WriteWISE peer writing leader
- Access StudyWISE
- Upload an assignment to Studiosity
- Complete the Academic Integrity Module

The Library provides online and face to face support to help you find and use relevant information resources.

- Subject and Research Guides
- Ask a Librarian

Student Services and Support

Macquarie University offers a range of Student Support Services including:
Student Enquiries
Got a question? Ask us via AskMQ, or contact Service Connect.

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.