ANTH3002

The Anthropology of Politics and Power

Session 2, Online-flexible 2023

Macquarie School of Social Sciences

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Lecturer and Unit Coordinator
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Lecturer and Unit Coordinator
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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:

ULO1: Apply the concerns of various anthropological writings to contemporary processes of power and politics.

ULO2: 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

Late Work Information and Penalties: 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-time sensitive assessment (incl. essays, reports, posters, 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.

PARTICIPATION

Weight: 20%

Due: Weekly

Note: ANTH 3002 has both face-to-face tutorials and an external, online only enrolment, in which participation will be graded via iLearn discussion boards only. Please see below for instructions on participation depending on your enrolment. You only need to fulfil the requirements of your enrolment mode - not both.

1) Face-to-Face Tutorial Participation (On Campus):

You are expected to complete the weekly readings before class and come to class prepared to discuss the material. Class attendance is required. No more than two absences will be accepted.
Participation is worth 20% of your grade.

**Active participation** entails contributing thoughtful comments regarding readings, films, and group discussions during each tutorial meeting. Students who regularly make positive contributions to class discussions and display serious engagement with required readings will receive extra credit towards their final grades.

2) **External/Online Only Student Participation (iLearn Discussion Board):**

Each week, external students will be required to complete **two activities** on the weekly discussion thread found within the ANTH3002 Tutorial Discussion Forum (above):

1. Each student should post one (1) unique question related to the unit material for the rest of the class to consider. This could be tangentially related, or inspired by the reading/lecture directly. It doesn’t have to be a spectacular insight by any means. In short, bring something intellectually stimulating to the table that came to your mind during the week as a result of your reading the tutorial material and listening to the lecture. Feel free to share external links, readings, audio/visual material - whatever you like, as long as it is related to the core topic of the week in question.

2. **Each student should then answer another (1) student’s posted question**, or, one of the questions posted by Chris or Paul. Each student’s response should be around **250 words**. This is obviously not going to be rigidly enforced, but we all know what 250 words looks like, as opposed to a few lines of text.

**ESSAY PLAN: Weight: 10%**

**Due:** September 29th (by 23:59pm)

**Brief Description:** This is a two-page plan in which you sketch out the research essay that you will be submitting in Week 10. For the research essay, you must select a case study of your own choice from any week of the course. Please consult with either Paul or Chris on essay topics.

**RESEARCH ESSAY: Weight: 40%**

**Due:** October 13th (by 23:59pm)

**Brief Description:** You will write a research paper of 2000 words (+/- 10%) on a self-selected topic.

**TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM: Weight: 30%**

**Exam Opens:** 27th October (Friday), 5:00pm

**Exam Closes:** 3rd November (Friday), 11:59pm
Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Hurdle</th>
<th>Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay plan</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Week 8, 29/09/2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Week 10, 13/10/2023</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tutorial participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Test</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Week 12, 27/10/2023</td>
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</tbody>
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Essay plan

Assessment Type 1: Plan
Indicative Time on Task 2: 25 hours
Due: Week 8, 29/09/2023
Weighting: 10%

This is a two-page plan in which you sketch out the research essay.

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

Essay

Assessment Type 1: Essay
Indicative Time on Task 2: 45 hours
Due: Week 10, 13/10/2023
Weighting: 40%

Brief Description: The take-home exam will consist of a combination of short answers to questions that link together topics covered in the unit material so far. The questions will be made available under the 'Take-Home Exam' section on iLearn on the 27th October after 5 pm. You must submit your responses through the Turnitin by 11: 59 pm on November 3rd (7 days total).
Essays will deal with major themes related to the unit, using case studies to investigate issues of political order, questions of political change, or the arguments around political agency.

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.

**Tutorial participation**

Assessment Type: Participatory task

Indicative Time on Task: 20 hours

Due: Weekly

Weighting: 20%

Student participation in 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 processes in the ethnographers’ own society.

**Take-Home Test**

Assessment Type: Quiz/Test

Indicative Time on Task: 22 hours

Due: Week 12, 27/10/2023

Weighting: 30%
The exam will consist of a combination of short answers to questions that link together topics and themes covered 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.

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

Unit Description:

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.

*Unit Rationale:* 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 seminar. Part of this weekly seminar will be used for lectures, part for films and part for discussion.

Internally-enrolled students are also required to attend the weekly tutorial.

**Required texts**

All readings for tutorial are found on the iLearn site of the unit. Many other readings for essays are found on the library website under ANTH3002 in e-reserve (or follow the link on iLearn). Some other listed readings are on three-day loan (books) or e-reserve (journal articles).

**Unit Schedule**

*Lecture and Tutorial Programme*

*Note:* Depending on unit convenors' interests, there may be some changes of topic from the provisional schedule posted below.

**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:** 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:**

Chapters One and Two, in *The Dawn of Everything*, David Graeber and David Wengrow.

**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:


Potential readings for essays on this topic:


[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:


Potential readings for essays on this topic:


**Week Six: The Secret of Action**

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

**Tutorial Reading:**


**Possible readings for essay on this topic:**


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

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**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.

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**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:**

**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:**


**Readings for possible essays on this topic:**


**Week Nine: Domination & Resistance (1): Theoretical Problems**

**Tutorial Question:** How might we understand relations between gender, language and power in Australia?

**Tutorial Reading:**


**Readings for possible essays on this topic:**


Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. New Haven, Yale University Press.


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

**Film:** Divorce Iranian Style

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


**Readings for possible essays on this topic:**


**Week Eleven: Violence and Terror**

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


**Readings for possible essays on this topic:**


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

**Film:** We Are All Neighbours

**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?


**Week Thirteen: Tying up the Loose Ends of an Anthropology of Power and Politics**

**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.

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](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/](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:

- **IT Support**
- **Accessibility and disability support with study**

[https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/155846/unit_guide/print](https://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/155846/unit_guide/print)
• Mental health support
• Safety support to respond to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and sexual assault
• Social support including information about finances, tenancy and legal issues
• Student Advocacy provides independent advice on MQ policies, procedures, and processes

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.