

ANT 3PH3 Winter Syllabus 2015

POWER, DISSENT & HISTORY: TOPICS IN POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Mondays, 11:30 -2:20 Room TSH 122

Instructor: Prof. Andrew Gilbert

Office: CNH 510

Office Hours: Thursdays, 12:30-1:30pm or by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores ethnographically the social and cultural practices through which the exercise of power is legitimized, authorized, and contested, examining such topics as anti-globalization and anti-austerity protests, the links between missionary activity and colonial rule, the relationship between language and legitimacy, and dissent through citizenship practices. We will look at the ways in which many of the concepts we use to understand politics—concepts like hegemony, democracy, sovereignty, and self-determination—can only be understood as part of distinctly political projects themselves. In particular, we pay attention to the relationship between culture, representation, and power. After beginning with a few shorter case studies that include Oceania, Latin America, and South Africa, we explore the possibilities and limits of politics in a North American context. We do this through one in-depth ethnographic case-study of democracy-in-action: a self-conscious global political project—direct democracy—that coalesced around actions designed to disrupt the Third Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course has three main objectives. The first is to familiarize students with some of the ways in which anthropologists have studied politics, and how the study of politics helps us understand how people make sense of the world and act in it. The course thus takes an expansive view on what politics is: from the struggle for power within the fairly restricted domain of government to the projects people seek to implement based on theories about how society is and ought to be. It can even be argued that politics, like culture, is a part of everything humans do, that every relationship and action in the world entails the operation of power. This course will take up each of these approaches through ethnographic case-studies in culturally diverse settings. Students should leave this course with a solid understanding of the relationship between culture and power, and be able to apply advanced knowledge of key theoretical ideas in political anthropology, such as hegemony, ideology, representation, and self-determination.

The second course objective is to develop students' active listening and reading skills, as well as the capacity to synthesize material and think across contexts and media. Coursework and class meetings will be made up of reading, watching visual media, listening to the occasional lecture, in-class discussion, writing, and oral presentations.

The third course objective is to help students develop the crucial skill of testing ideas in critical dialogue with their peers. The organizational format of the class is thus designed to encourage both agreement *and* disagreement while at the same time promoting a spirit of intellectual generosity whereby students feel comfortable taking the kinds of risks that are necessary to developing their own

ideas. In this way and others, students will be encouraged to see one another as a critical resource in their own learning process.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Class meetings will be conducted according to one of two different formats. Weeks 1-2 are designed to provide background to certain conceptual issues and debates within the field of political anthropology and the relationship between history, power and culture. This will include lecture portions, a Socratic-style of discussion of the texts, as well as some in-class group discussion. Students will also form permanent discussion and work groups.

Weeks 3-11 will proceed according to the following format:

Oral Response (+ Follow-up Paper)

No later than Thursday of every week, I will circulate questions for the next week's readings to the class. All students should come to class prepared to answer/discuss these questions, and up to three students will be scheduled to do so in an oral presentation per week. (Three days after the class meeting the students who gave oral responses to the questions are required to submit a written answer to the pre-circulated questions, having had the benefit of class discussion).

Collective Discussion of Readings

Using the questions provided by the instructor and the oral responses by the students, the class will engage in a collective discussion of the readings for that week. Active contributions to this discussion will form the basis of a participation grade.

Reflection and Further Discussion

After discussion of the readings, students will break into groups and generate one question for further discussion, and these questions will then be discussed further as a class in the order voted upon by students. Occasionally, we may view a film or part of a film, and students may be asked to generate discussion questions for the film. Active contributions to this discussion will form the basis of a participation grade.

Conclusion

About 10-15 minutes before the end of class, we will break back up into the course groups and students will collectively come up with a statement on what the take-home points of the class discussion were. One student per group will write up this discussion, and submit it to the rest of the group and the course instructor.

As part of this course, the student groups will choose a current or recent protest movement from a list provided by the instructor and in Weeks 12-13 they will make five-minute presentations that provide an overview of their analysis of some aspect of or writing about these movements to the class, and the class will have a short discussion based upon their work. Based upon the feedback received on their presentations, students will then submit a written paper between of between 1400-1750 words within one week of their presentation. More detailed instructions will be provided halfway through the course.

GRADING

The course grade will be made up as follows:

Oral Responses/Paper:	20% (10% for oral response, 10% for written submission)
Class Participation:	15%
Ten Post-Class Reflections:	40% (4% each)
Final Presentation/Paper:	25% (10% for oral presentation, 15% for paper)

COURSE TEXTS/READINGS

A number of individual articles, chapters, and books form the reading list for this course. Some will be made available in class, some are available on-line, and the others to be purchased or checked out. The following book is required for the course.

David Graeber. 2009. *Direct Action. An Ethnography*. Oakland, CA: AK Press. (Available as pdf on-line; students may also wish to purchase a copy through Amazon, Indigo, Abe Books, etc., or check it out of Mills Library reserve desk).

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

Most questions can and should be asked in class/discussion section or in person outside of class/discussion section. However, if you need to email the instructor or TA, do so with very brief questions (a couple of sentences) and in a form that can be answered briefly (ideally “yes” or “no”). We cannot respond to lengthy questions in writing but are happy to discuss them in office hours. Please do not expect an immediate answer. We will try and answer emails within two days (three if it is over a weekend).

When sending the instructor an email put **ANT 3PH3** in the subject line of your email. Please sign it with your full name and student number. A final note on communication etiquette: when writing the instructor an email, please conform it to the standard greeting in letter-writing practices, i.e. "Dear Prof. Gilbert."

LAPTOP AND PDA/CELL PHONE POLICY

In class lectures and discussion sections, laptops are strongly discouraged for reasons made clear on the first day of class. If you need or strongly prefer a laptop for taking notes or accessing readings in class for any reason, please come talk with me, and I am happy to make that work. I'll just ask you to commit to using the laptop only for class-related work. Students using laptops for other purposes will be asked to turn their laptops off for the remainder of the course.

Students are required to silence and refrain from using cell phones and other PDAs during class meetings and discussion sections. This includes sending and receiving text messages. Students who violate this rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

LATE AND MISSING WORK

You are responsible for completing all of the learning assessments on the dates for which they are scheduled. In the event of missed course work and/or exam(s), the student must take the following actions:

- 1) Properly submit a McMaster Student Absence (MSAF) Form (note that this can only be used once per term). Please note that policies concerning the use of MSAFs have changed (see <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) OR contact your Faculty office if you have already used the MSAF once.
- 2) Contact the instructor immediately after having submitted the MSAF form or contact your Faculty office (within 24 hours) to provide an explanation for the missed coursework and/or missed exams. Grades will not be re-weighted. You are responsible to schedule an appropriate date to submit your assignment.

If you do not properly submit an MSAF Form, or if you have already submitted one during the semester, some late work (post-presentation papers, take-home points, final papers) will be accepted and assessed a late penalty of half a grade per day up to 5 days (i.e. if you earned a B, it becomes a B- after one day, a C+ after two, a C after three, and so on), after which the assignment will not be accepted without appropriate medical documentation. Other work (in-class presentations) cannot be accepted/submitted late. Emailed excuses do not constitute appropriate documentation. Extensions are impossible with the format of this course.

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

All written work (post-presentation papers, take-home points, final papers) will be submitted in electronic copy through the Dropbox function on the course's ATL website; hard copies may also be required. Ungraded work will **not be accepted** or date stamped by the administrative staff in the Department of Anthropology. All written work are subject to evaluation for originality. This course uses an evaluation service provided by Turnitin.com, which **students may opt out** of; in this case,

Grammarly.com will be used. If you would like to opt out of evaluation by Turnitin.com, please let the instructor know before February 1.

ACCESSIBILITY

McMaster University has an office of Student Accessibility Services (<http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>). Students who require accommodation for documented issues should **contact SAS as early in the term as possible**. McMaster also recently launched MACcessibility, part of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Services to help advance the University's goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. More information can be found at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/hres/index.html>.

WEEK 1: JANUARY 5: INTRODUCTION

WEEK 2: JANUARY 12: POLITICS AND PROJECTS

Reading:

David Graeber 2004. *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press. (1-37, 95-105 required; the rest recommended). (Available as a pdf on-line.)

Eric Wolf. 1990. "Facing Power: Old Insights, New Questions." *American Anthropologist*. 92(3): 586-596 (Accessible through library)

WEEK 3: JANUARY 19: CULTURE AND POWER/HEGEMONY I

Reading: Reading: Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff. 2002. "Of Revelation and Revolution" in Vincent, ed. *The Anthropology of Politics. A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and Critique*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Hand out provided at previous class meeting)

_____. 1986. "Christianity and Colonialism in South Africa." *American Ethnologist*, 13(1): 1-22. (Accessible through library)

WEEK 4: JANUARY 26: CULTURE AND POWER/HEGEMONY II

Reading: Roger M. Keesing. 1994. "Colonial and Counter-Colonial Discourse in Melanesia." *Critique of Anthropology*. 14(1): 41-58 (Accessible through library)

Beth A. Conklin & Laura R. Graham. 1995. "The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Ecopolitics." *American Anthropologist* 97(4): 695-710. (Accessible through library)

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 2: REPRESENTATION AND AUTHORITY

Reading: Pierre Bourdieu. 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Harvard University Press. Selections.

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 9: POLITICS IN PRACTICE IN THE GLOBAL NORTH: ANARCHISM AND ANTI-GLOBALIZATION ACTIVISM I

Reading: David Graeber. 2009. *Direct Action. An Ethnography*. Introduction, Chapters 1-2

FEBRUARY 16: NO CLASS: READING WEEK.

WEEK 7: FEBRUARY 23: POLITICS IN PRACTICE IN THE GLOBAL NORTH: ANARCHISM AND ANTI-GLOBALIZATION ACTIVISM II

Reading: David Graeber. 2009. *Direct Action. An Ethnography*. Chapter 4

WEEK 8: MARCH 2: POLITICS IN PRACTICE IN THE GLOBAL NORTH: ANARCHISM AND ANTI-GLOBALIZATION ACTIVISM III

Reading: David Graeber. 2009. *Direct Action. An Ethnography*. Chapters 5-6

WEEK 9: MARCH 9: POLITICS IN PRACTICE IN THE GLOBAL NORTH: ANARCHISM AND ANTI-GLOBALIZATION ACTIVISM IV

Reading: David Graeber. 2009. *Direct Action. An Ethnography*. Chapters 7-8 (Selections)

WEEK 10: MARCH 16: POLITICS IN PRACTICE IN THE GLOBAL NORTH: ANARCHISM AND ANTI-GLOBALIZATION ACTIVISM V

Reading: David Graeber. 2009. *Direct Action. An Ethnography*. Chapters 9-10

WEEK 11: MARCH 23: POLITICS IN PRACTICE: OCCUPY

Razsa, Maple and Andrej Kurnik. 2012. "The Occupy Movement in Žižek's hometown: Direct democracy and a politics of becoming" *American Ethnologist*. 39(2): 238 – 258. (Accessible through library)

Juris, Jeffrey S. 2012. "Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere. Social media, public space, and emerging logics of aggregation" *American Ethnologist*. 39(2): 259-279.

WEEK 12: MARCH 30: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 13: APRIL 6: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS