

Anth 4075: Economic Anthropology

☞ University of Georgia ☞ Fall 2008 ☞ Baldwin G20 ☞ Tue, Thu 9:30-10:45 ☞

	Instructor: Dr. Bram Tucker	Graduate assistant: Victoria Ramenzoni
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N.B.: The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

I. Course description:

Anthropology is the study of human diversity; *Economics* is the study of how people make decisions about resources. *Economic anthropology* examines the diversity of peoples' preferences, choices, behaviors, habits, activities, customs, and institutions relating to resources, and their production, consumption, exchange, and investment.

College courses in economics are often limited to business applications, which is to say, economic behavior under capitalism. *Economic anthropology* is equally interested in how hunter-gatherers decide which prey to exploit, how peasants reduce risk, why people give gifts and host feasts, and why rural villagers cooperate to achieve communal goals. Economic anthropology addresses classic questions within anthropology such as how social structure and identity affects individuals' actions, why objects have value, and how people make ends meet. It also addresses classic questions within economics such as the origins of wealth, market value, and social inequality, and how best to help poor people and "develop" poor countries.

During this course we will read and discuss classic, canonic, contemporary, and cutting-edge research articles from economic anthropology. The course is framed around two historical debates: that between the formalist and substantivist economic anthropologists of the 1960s-1980s, and the current debate between normative (rational) and descriptive (behavioral, experimental) economics. One thesis of this course is that these polar viewpoints are less about differences in theory than about the complexity of decision-making for social beings with cultural traditions.

The course's second thesis emerges as we compare our capitalist economy to non-capitalist economies throughout the world. Capitalism's culture of individualism and self-advancement is to some degree antithetical to the social structure and conformity found in other cultures. Does capitalism erode sociality, and is this bad or good? Capitalism generates and maintains social inequalities: bourgeois and proletariat, white collar and blue collar, First World consumer and Third World laborer. Is this inevitable? What can we do about it?

This course is divided into three themes.

Part 1: Value, valuables, gifts, commodities

- How do we decide how much something is worth? How do we compare the worth of two dissimilar things (apples versus oranges? the color purple versus spaghetti)?
- Do individuals make decisions, or does society tell us what to do?
- What is the purpose of economic behavior: personal advancement, or social cohesion?
- Are people necessarily "rational" when it comes to judging value? Does "rational" mean the same thing to everyone in the world?
- Do non-Western people value things the same way as Western people?
- Why is it customary in some societies to give wealth away, while in other societies wealth is hoarded?
- Why do people give gifts? What does it mean to receive a gift?
- How does value change with the introduction of the market economy?
- How does money differ from valuables in non-capitalist societies? How does money change the way things are valued?

Part 2: Individuals, groups, and cooperation

- How does the group influence the decisions of the individual?
- Do individuals make decisions at all, or simply do what the group accepts as normal?
- Why does evolutionary theory predict that we should all be selfish decision-makers? Given this prediction, why do we so frequently cooperate, and work for the good of others?
- Why do we get so angry when we see people cheat (cut in line, pollute, drive carelessly, etc.)?
- How do groups stop individuals from cheating?
- How do groups manage common property, such as natural resources?
- Why do hunter-gatherers share food (most of the time, at least)?

Part 3: Economies: Non-capitalist, colonialist, and capitalist

- If hunter-gatherers satisfy their needs with limited resources despite a lack of material wealth, are they in fact poor?
- Do hunter-gatherers and peasant farmers strive to maximize profits?
- Is it better to work hard for high gains, or work little, spend little, and enjoy more leisure time?
- Who is more wealthy: someone with lots of money and things, or someone with a strong network of friends and allies?
- Why are there peasants in the world?
- Why, in the words of Mel Brooks, are the peasants “revolting?” Why don’t peasants behave the way governments and international development projects expect them to?
- What was political power like in pre-capitalist societies? How does this differ from power under capitalism?
- What is the experience of capitalism in the Third World?
- Is differentiation into social classes inevitable?
- What is poverty? What is wealth? Why is there discrimination?
- Can anyone become wealthy?
- Is social class important in America today?

II. Course objectives

- To expose students to the basic arguments and literature of economic anthropology, so as to encourage students to think about cross-cultural economic phenomena in a more informed and less ethnocentric/Eurocentric way.
- To train students to be more effective readers, by reading actual academic literature including primary sources and summarizing basic arguments in a reading journal.
- To train students to be more effective researchers and writers. Students will use on-line and library sources to research a topic of their choosing, and construct a 5 – 10 page paper, with multiple deadlines and feedback from the instructor.
- To train students to be more effective at oral argumentation, by encouraging them to discuss their ideas and interpretations in class.

III. The grade

Student’s grades will be calculated as follows:

Exam 1:	16 pts	Thu, 25 Sep
Exam 2:	16 pts	Thu, 23 Oct
Exam 3 (Final):	20 pts	Tue, 16 Dec at 8:00 am
Reading journal	10 pts	2 surprise deadlines; final due Thu 4 Dec
Term paper:	28 pts	several due dates (see below)
Attendance:	<u>10 pts</u>	Every class meeting = 1/3 pt
TOTAL:	100 pts	

Exams: The format of exams will be short answer / essay. Exams will occur in class. The final exam will require cumulative knowledge from the course.

- *Can I take an exam late?* Not unless you have a really good reason—trouble with the law, unforeseen illness or death, savage attack by wild baboons, etc. If you are savaged by baboons, I require a note signed by the alpha male, or one of his high-ranking lackeys. Whether a make up exam will be permitted, and the format of a make up exam, are at the discretion of the instructor. The probability that the instructor will permit a make-up is dramatically increased if the student contacts the instructor *before* the exam date.

Reading Journal: One of the goals of this course is to train students to be effective readers of academic literature. To this end, students are required to maintain a reading journal. In this journal, students will write a summary of each reading assigned in class. Please do this in a notebook or bluebook, and bring this with you to each class. There are two surprise due dates when the instructor will collect and grade all annotated bibliographies, so be ready!

- *What do I write?* Students are encouraged to dissect the main argument of each reading, including:
 - The main thesis or objective. What is the author attempting to argue?
 - Evidence: What evidence does the author employ to support the main argument?
 - Major conclusions of the article
 - You may also include your opinions about the reading (labeled as such), or questions you have about it.
- *How long should each entry be?* A few sentences is sufficient. Feel free to draw graphs, etc.
- *Do I have to type / word-process it?* This is not necessary—handwriting will be okay.
- *How will they be graded?*
 - First surprise deadline: 3 pts
 - Second surprise deadline: 3 pts
 - Final deadline, Thu 4 Dec: 4 pts

Points will be awarded for completeness (all articles since last due date) and comprehension. “Comprehension” means either a clear and insightful summary of the article OR good questions that demonstrate your efforts at understanding.

- *What happens if I am absent or forget my journal on a surprise deadline?* Minus 1 pt if turned in by the end of the instructor’s office hours, minus 1.5 pts if turned in by the end of the day. No credit if turned in later. Exceptions for documented medical excuses or attendance to academic conferences.
- Copying someone else’s summary or copying the abstract of the article is cheating (see “academic misconduct” below).

Term paper: The term paper offers students (1) the opportunity to explore a topic of their choosing in greater depth, and (2) an exercise in anthropological writing. Topics should pertain to economic anthropology. Further instructions will be provided on a separate handout. The paper is something you should be working on throughout the semester. The assignment has several parts and due dates.

Part 1: Paper idea	3%	Tue, 26 Aug
Part 2: Annotated bibliography	5%	Tue, 16 Sep
Part 3: Full-sentence outline	8%	Tue, 14 Oct
Part 4: Final paper	12%	Tue, 4 Nov
Part 5: Revised final paper (optional)	<u>12%</u>	Tue, 2 Dec
	28%	

Attendance: Class attendance is very important, both for individual benefits (i.e., encountering all the material) and for the collective social benefits that come from class discussion. As an added incentive to participate, 1/3 pt will be earned for each class attended. Doctors’ notes, obituaries, and attendance to academic conferences are the only justifiable excuses for missing class. If weather, vehicle maintenance, heartache, savage attack by Pleistocene ground sloths, etc. cause you to miss class, the instructor will be sympathetic, but you will not earn the attendance points.

IV. Academic Misconduct: Cheating is for losers

“**Academic honesty**” means performing all academic work without plagiarism, cheating, lying, tampering, stealing, receiving unauthorized or illegitimate assistance from any other person....” http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/ah.pdf

All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A culture of honesty.” Each student is responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. Don’t be a jerk; do your own work!

V. Course bibliography (all readings are mandatory)

All of the following readings are available on the course CD.

Axelrod, R., & W. D. Hamilton (1981). The evolution of cooperation. *Science*, 211, 1390-1396.

Bohannon, P. (1997 [1955]). Some principles of exchange and investment among the Tiv. In: R. R. Grinker & C. B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa* (pp. 119-128). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

- Canclain, F. (1989). Economic behavior in peasant communities. In: S. Plattner (Ed), *Economic Anthropology* (pp. 127-170). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dalton, G. (1961). Economic theory and primitive society. *American Anthropologist* 63: 1-25.
- Davis, A., B. B. Gardner, and M. R. Gardner (1945). The system of color-castes. Chapter 2 in *Deep South*, pp.15-58. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dugatkin, L. (1999). The four paths to cooperation. Introduction in: *Cheating monkeys and citizen bees: The nature of cooperation in animals and humans* (pp. 1-37). New York: Free Press.
- Ellis, F. (2000). A framework for livelihood analysis. Chapter 2 in: *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries* (pp. 28-51). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fehr, E. and S. Gächter (2000). Cooperation and punishment in public goods experiments. *The American Economic Review*, 90:980-994.
- Gigerenzer, G., and R. Selten (2001). Rethinking rationality. In: G. Gigerenzer & R. Selten (eds.), *Bounded Rationality: The Adaptive Toolbox* (pp. 1-12). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Gintis, H. (2000). Game theory: A lexicon for strategic interaction. Chapter 1 in *Game Theory Evolving*, pp. 3-14. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Godoy, R. A., M. Gurven, E. Byron, V. Reyes-García, J. Keough, V. Vadez, D. Wilkie, W. R. Leonard, L. Apaza, R. Huanca, E. Pérez (2004). Do markets worsen economic inequalities? Kuznets in the bush. *Human Ecology*, 32:339-364.
- Graeber, D. (1996). Beads and money: Notes toward a theory of wealth and power. *American Ethnologist*, 23(1):4-24.
- Gurven, M., W. Allen-Arave, K. Hill, and A. M. Hurtado (2001). Reservation food sharing among the Ache of Paraguay. *Human Nature*, 12(4):273-297.
- Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162, 1243-1248.
- Hawkes, K., O'Connell, J. F., Hill, K., & Charnov, E. L. (1985). How much is enough? Hunters and limited needs. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 6, 3-15.
- Henrich, J., R. Boyd, S. Bowles, C. F. Camerer, E. Fehr, H. Gintis, & R. McElreath (2004). Overview and synthesis. In: J. Henrich, R. Boyd, S. Bowles, C. Camerer, E. Fehr, H. Gintis (Eds.), *Foundations of Human Sociality: Economic Experiments and Ethnographic Evidence from Fifteen Small-scale Societies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hill, K. (1988). Macronutrient modifications of optimal foraging theory: An approach using indifference curves applied to some modern foragers. *Human Ecology* 16: 157-197.
- Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (2000). Choices, values, and frames. In: D. Kahneman & A. Tversky (Eds.), *Choices, Values, and Frames* (pp. 1-16). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Kuznar, L. A. (2001). Risk sensitivity and value among Andean pastoralists: Measures, models, and empirical tests. *Current Anthropology* 42:432-440.
- Marx, K. (1993 [1867]). The values of commodities, and The Fetishism of commodities. In C. Lemert (Ed), *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings* (pp. 58-67). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1993[1848]). Class struggle. In C. Lemert (Ed), *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings* (pp. 43-47). Boulder: Westview Press.
- Mauss, M. (1967[1925]) Chapters 1 and 2 from *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (pp. 6-45). Ian Cunnison, trans. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Ltd.
- Reed, R. K. (2003). Cultivating the tropical forest. In J. Spradley & D. W. McCurdy (eds.), *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, 11th ed., pp. 134-143. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Sahlins, M. (1968). Notes on the original affluent society. In: R. B. Lee & I. Devore (Eds), *Man the Hunter* (pp. 85-89). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Sahlins, M. (1972). On the sociology of primitive exchange. Chapter 5 in: *Stone Age Economics* (pp. 185-230). Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Sen, A. (1983) Poor, relatively speaking. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 35: 153-169.

Shipton, P. (1997 [1989]). Bitter money: Forbidden exchange in East Africa. In: R. R. Grinker & C. B. Steiner (Eds.), *Perspectives on Africa* (pp. 163-189). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Smith, A. (2003 [1776]). Import Restraints. Chapter 2 in *The Wealth of Nations*, pp. 568-593.

Smith, C. A. (1984). Does a commodity economy enrich the few while ruining the masses? Differentiation among petty commodity producers in Guatemala. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 11(3):60-95.

Thaler, R. H. (2000). From homo economicus to Homo sapiens. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 14:131-141.

Trivers, R. L. (1971). The evolution of reciprocal altruism. *Quarterly Review of Biology*, 46, 35-57.

Warner, W. L. (1945). Introduction: Deep South—a social anthropological study of caste and class. In A. Davis, B. B. Gardner, and M. R. Gardner, *Deep South*, pp. 3-14. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Winterhalder, B. (1996). A marginal model of tolerated theft. *Ethology and Sociobiology*, 17, 37-53.

V. Web-CT

Your instructor seriously dislikes WebCT. There is no WebCT page for this course.

VI. Course schedule

This schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. All schedule and reading changes will be announced in class.

PART 1: VALUE, VALUABLES, GIFTS, COMMODITIES

DATE	TOPIC / EVENT	READING ASSIGNMENT
19 Aug, Tue	Framing the course	Dalton (1961) Thaler (2000)
21 Aug, Thu	Formalism part 1: The marginalist revolution and neoclassical models of choice	Winterhalder (1996)
26 Aug, Tue	Formalism part 2: Indifference, preference, and the search for equivalency PAPER IDEAS DUE	Hill (1988)
28 Aug, Thu	Formalism part 3: Risk and time preference	Kuznar (2001)
2 Sep, Tue	Critique of formalism: The psychology of choice	Kahneman & Tversky 2000 Gigerenzer & Selten 2001
4 Sep, Thu	Substantivism part 1: Mauss's "The gift"	Mauss (1967 [1920])
9 Sep, Tue	Substantivism part 2: Structural-functionalist approaches to exchange reciprocity	Sahlins (1972), pages 185-230.
11 Sep, Thu	Substantivism part 3: Economic spheres	Bohannon (1997 [1955])
16 Sep, Tue	Video: What some graduate students think about formalism and substantivism ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE	<i>Take a reading break.</i>
18 Sep, Thu	The labor theory of value and commodity fetishism	Marx (1867) Shipton (1997)
23 Sep, Tue	Values, valuables, and money	Graeber (1996)
25 Sep, Thu	EXAM 1	

PART 2: INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND COOPERATION

DATE	TOPIC / EVENT	READING ASSIGNMENT
30 Sep, Tues	Why does evolutionary theory predict selfishness? Why do ants and ground squirrels work together anyway?	Dugatkin (1999)
2 Oct, Thurs	Reciprocal altruism and the problem of cheaters	Trivers (1971)
7 Oct, Tues	Hunter-gatherer food sharing	Gurven et al. (2001)
9 Oct, Thurs	Cooperation and defection: Game theory	Gintis (2000)
14 Oct, Tues	Evolutionary game theory FULL SENTENCE OUTLINE DUE	Axelrod & Hamilton (1981)
16 Oct, Thurs	“The tragedy of the commons”	Hardin (1968) Fehr & Gächter (2000)
21 Oct, Tues	Are we really so selfish? Experimental evidence for social preferences	Henrich et al. (2004)
23 Oct, Thurs	EXAM 2	

PART 3: ECONOMIES: NON-CAPITALIST, COLONIALIST, AND CAPITALIST

DATE	TOPIC / EVENT	READING ASSIGNMENT
28 Oct, Tue	Foraging economies	Sahlins (1968) Hawkes et al. (1985)
30 Oct, Thu	Conservation and development versus horticulture	Reed (2003)
4 Nov, Tue	“The peasants are revolting” Apparent peasant irrationality FINAL PAPER DUE	Canclini (1989)
6 Nov, Thu	Adam Smith and the Neoliberal (free-market) view of capitalism	A. Smith (1776) Marx & Engels (1848)
11 Nov, Tue	Marx and Engels and social differentiation	C. A. Smith (1984)
13 Nov, Thu	More perspectives on market integration	Godoy et al. (2004)
18 Nov, Tue	Poverty	Sen (1983)
20 Nov, Thu	Film about social class in America, “People Like Us.”	Warner (1945) Davis, Gardner, & Gardner (1945)
25 Nov, Tue	THANKSGIVING BREAK, no class	<i>Celebrate American colonialism by consuming turkey...</i>
27 Nov, Thu	THANKSGIVING BREAK, no class	<i>...or tofuky if you prefer...</i>
2 Dec, Tue	Wealth OPTIONAL FINAL PAPER REWRITE DUE	Ellis (2000)
4 Dec, Thu	Conclusion, “People like us.” FINAL COURSE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE	
9 Dec, Tue	Beware! The University in its wisdom and infinite power has turned this otherwise normal Tuesday into a Friday. Go to your Friday class, not to Economic Anthropology. Even if you really, really want to attend Economic Anthropology.	

FINAL EXAM: Exam: Tue, 16 Dec at 8:00 am.