

Anth 4075: Economic Anthropology

☞ University of Georgia ☞ Fall 2018 ☞ G32 Baldwin Hall ☞ T, TH 3:30 - 4:45 ☞

Dr. Bram Tucker

bramtuck@uga.edu

Office hours: Tuesdays, Thursdays 11:00am - 12:15pm
and by appointment

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 social identity affects individuals' actions, why objects have value, whether and when it is human nature to cooperate or compete, and how people cope with shortages to 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.

This course is divided into three themes.

Part 1: Value and valuables

- 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)?
- What is the purpose of economic behavior: personal advancement, or social cohesion?
- 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?
- Do hunter-gatherers and peasant farmers strive to maximize profits?
- How does the group influence the decisions of the individual?
- How does money differ from valuables in non-capitalist societies? How does money change the way things are valued?
- Is it better to work hard for high gains, or work little, spend little, and enjoy more leisure time?
- What is the purpose of money: to acquire stuff, to show off to your friends and enemies, or to pay off the powerful?

Part 2: Sociality and human nature: Cooperation and competition

- Why is economic theory based on the assumption that human nature is selfish? Is this accurate?
- Why is evolutionary theory based on the assumption that human nature is selfish? Is this accurate?
- Given theories about the selfishness of human nature, why do people regularly and routinely cooperate?
- Do individuals make decisions at all, or simply do what the group accepts as normal?
- How do groups stop individuals from cheating or breaking rules?
- How do groups manage common property, such as natural resources? How can we better protect natural resources from abuse by those who don't want to follow the rules?
- Why do hunter-gatherers share food (most of the time, at least)?
- Is private property a cultural universal? Why do people own things?
- Do we live with the fact that our neighbors often do better than we do?

Part 3: Markets and other economic systems

- Why do international development agencies see expanding capitalism as the best way to reduce poverty?
- What are economies like before capitalism?
- Is capitalism necessarily good for rural peoples? Does it increase income? Does it exacerbate social inequality? Does it erode social structure?
- Who is more wealthy: someone with lots of money and things, or someone with a strong network of friends?
- 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?
- How do households cope with food shortage, political events, and bad weather? How do they make ends meet?
- What is poverty? What is wealth? What is inequality?
- Is social class important in America today?
- When you buy stuff at Walmart, where does it come from? Who produced it? Are they well compensated for their labor? Does it matter?
- What are markets? What were markets like before capitalism?
- How will climate change affect rural economies?

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.
- 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. Academic Misconduct: Cheating is for losers

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University’s academic honesty policy, “A Culture of Honesty,” and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in “A Culture of Honesty” found at: www.uga.edu/honesty. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

IV. The grade

Student’s grades will be calculated as follows:

Exam 1:	20 pts
Exam 2:	20 pts
Exam 3 (Final exam)	20 pts
Term paper:	30 pts
Attendance/reading check/comprehension check/participation:	<u>10 pts</u>
TOTAL:	100 pts

Exams: The format of exams will be short answer. 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 (because baboons cannot hold pens very well, a paw print would be acceptable in this case). 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.

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	5 %	Thu, 23 Aug
Part 2: Annotated bibliography	5%	Tue, 11 Sep
Part 3: Full-sentence outline	8%	Tue, 9 Oct
Part 4: Research paper	12%	Tue, 13 Nov
Part 5: Optional revision	<u>12 %</u> *	Thu, 6 Dec (Final exam day)
	30%	

Attendance/reading check/comprehension check/participation: Learning involves much more than just studying for exams. First, learning requires that you be present at all lectures and pay attention. And second, learning requires that you be prepared, which means that you complete the assigned readings before the class meeting for which they are assigned and that you look over your notes after each class meeting. To encourage these good learning habits, at every class meeting there will be either an attendance check (for 1 pt) or a question to answer based on the assigned readings or based on previous days' lecture material (for 2 pts).

Doctors' notes, obituaries, and attendance to academic conferences are the only justifiable excuses for missing class. If weather, vehicle maintenance, heartache, savage attack by two-toed or three-toed sloths, etc. cause you to miss class, the instructor will be sympathetic, but you will not earn the missing points.

V. Course bibliography.

All of the following readings are available for download from the electronic Learning Commons, more commonly known as eLC.

Mandatory readings (you gotta do these):

- Axelrod, R., and W. D. Hamilton. 1981. The evolution of cooperation. *Science*, 211:1390-1396.
- Bird-David N. 1990. The giving environment: another perspective on the economic system of gatherer-hunters. *Current Anthropology* 31(2):189-196.
- Boyd, R. and P. J. Richerson. Transmission coupling mechanisms: cultural group selection. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 365:3787-3795.
- Cancian, F. 1989. Economic behavior in peasant communities. In *Economic Anthropology*, S. Plattner, ed. Pp. 127-170. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Dugatkin, L. 1999. The four paths to cooperation. In *Cheating Monkeys and Citizens Bees: The Nature of Cooperation in Animals and Humans*. Pp. 1-37. New York: Free Press.
- Gintis, H., 2000. Game theory: A lexicon of strategic interaction. *Game Theory Evolving*. pp. 3-14. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Godoy, R., Reyes-García, V., Huanca, T., Leonard, W.R., Vadez, V., Valdés-Galicia, C., Zhao, D., 2005. Why do subsistence-level people join the market economy? Testing hypotheses of push and pull determinants in Bolivian Amazonia. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 61 (2), 157-178.
- Graeber, D. 2011a. The myth of barter. In *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. Pp. 21-42. Brooklyn: Melville House.
- Graeber, D. 2011b. Primordial debts. In *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. Pp. 43-71. Brooklyn: Melville House.
- Hardin, G. 1968. The tragedy of the commons. *Science* 162:1243-1248.
- Henrich, J., R. Boyd, S. Bowles, C. Camerer, E. Fehr, H. Gintis, and R. McElreath. 2001. In search of Homo economicus: Behavioral experiments in 15 small-scale societies. *American Economic Association Letters* 91:73-78.
- Kowalewski, S.A., 2012. A theory of the ancient Mesoamerican economy. *Research in Economic Anthropology* 32, 187-224.
- Kuznar, L. A. (2001). Risk sensitivity and value among Andean pastoralists: Measures, models, and empirical tests. *Current Anthropology*, 42(3), 432-440.
- Marx, K. 1993 (1867). The values of commodities, and The Fetishism of commodities. In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. C. Lemert, ed. Pp. 58-67. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Marx, K., and F. Engels. 1993 (1848). Class struggle. In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. C. Lemert, ed. Pp. 43-47. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Mauss, M. 1967 (1925). Chapters 0 and 1 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.
- Lockwood, V.S., 1991. Capitalism, socioeconomic differentiation, and development in rural French polynesia. *Research in Economic Anthropology* 13, 221-243.

- Ostrom, E. 2000. Reformulating the Commons. *Swiss Political Science Review* 6:29-52.
- Plattner, S., 1989. Economic behavior in markets. In *Economic Anthropology*, S. Plattner, ed. Pp. 209–221. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- 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 (2), 153–169.
- Smith, A. 2003 (1776). Import Restraints. Chapter 2 in *The Wealth of Nations*, pp. 568-593.
- Tucker, B. 2017. Do the cultural institutions of identity and ancestor veneration serve adaptive functions in the high-risk subsistence ecology of SW Madagascar? Grant proposal, National Science Foundation.
- Von Neumann, J. and O. Morganstern. 1953. Excerpts from Chapter 1, *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Weiner, A. B. 1994. Cultural difference and the density of objects. *American Ethnologist* 21:391-403. Wilk, R., Cliggett, L., 2007. Self interest and neoclassical economics. Chapter 3 in: *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Winterhalder, B. 1996. A marginal model of tolerated theft. *Ethology and Sociobiology* 17:37-53.
- Yapa, L., 1993. What are improved seeds? An epistemology of the green revolution. *Economic Geography* 69 (3), 254–273.

Optional readings (to sate your curiosity, prepare you for grad school, etc.; but, not necessary to pass this course).

- Basen, I., 2011. Economics has met its enemy, and it is economics. *Globe and Mail* (Oct 15).
- Bakx, K., 1988. From proletarian to peasant: Rural transformation in the state of Acre, 1870-1986. *Journal of Development Studies* 24 (2), 141–160.
- Bird-David, N., 2017. Before Nation: Scale-Blind anthropology and foragers' world of relatives. *Current Anthropology* 58 (2), 209–226.
- Denning, G., Kabambe, P., Sanchez, P., Malik, A., Flor, R., Harawa, R., Nkhoma, P., Zamba, C., Banda, C., Magombo, C., Wangila, J., Sachs, J., 2009. Input subsidies to improve smallholder maize productivity in Malawi: Toward and African green revolution. *PLoS Biology* 7 (1), 0002–0010.
- Dow, S.C., Earl, P.E., Foster, J., Harcourt, G.C., Hodgson, G.M., Metcalfe, J.S., Ormerod, P., Rosewell, B., Sawyer, M.C., Tylecote, A., 2009. *Letter to Her Majesty the Queen*.
- Friedman, M., 1970. The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. *The New York Times Magazine* Sep 13.
- Curven, M., Kaplan, H., and Hill, K. 2002. From forest to reservation: Transitions in food-sharing behavior among the Ache of Paraguay. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 58 (1), 93–120
- Curven, M., Jaeggi, A.V., von Rueden, C., Hooper, P.L., Kaplan, H., 2015. Does Market integration buffer risk, erode traditional sharing practices and increase inequality? A test among Bolivian forager-farmers. *Human Ecology* 43, 515–530.
- Hill, K. 1988. Macronutrient modifications of optimal foraging theory: An approach using indifference curves applied to some modern foragers. *Human Ecology* 16:157-197.
- Krugman, P., 2009. How did economists get it so wrong? *The New York Times Magazine* Sep 2.
- Millhauser, J.K., 2017. Debt as a double-edged risk: A historical case from Nahua (Aztec) Mexico. *Economic Anthropology* 4, 263–275.
- Richerson, P., Baldini, R., Bell, A.V., Demps, K., Frost, K., Hillis, V., Mathew, S., Newton, E.K., Naar, N., Newson, L., Ross, C., Smaldino, P.E., Waring, T.W., Zefferman, M., 2016. Cultural group selection plays an essential role in explaining human cooperation: A sketch of the evidence. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 39, 1–68.
- Scoones, I., 2009. Livelihoods perspectives and rural development. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 36 (1), 171–196.
- 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.
- Trawick, P., and A. Hornborg. 2015. Revisiting the image of limited good: On sustainability, thermodynamics, and the illusion of creating wealth. *Current Anthropology* 56:1-27.
- Vasquez, I., 2001. Ending mass poverty. Washington: The Cato Institute.
- Wilk, R., Cliggett, L., 2007. *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Yapa, L., 1993. What are improved seeds? An epistemology of the green revolution. *Economic Geography* 69 (3), 254–273.

Part 1: Value and valuables

Date	Activity	Have this read before class:
Tue, Aug 14	Lecture: Why economic anthropology is extremely interesting and very important	Nothing, but read this syllabus. <i>Optional: Basen 2011; Dow et al. 2009; Krugman 2009</i>
Thu, Aug 16	How to write a great term paper	Read the posted "guidelines."
Tue, Aug 21	Lecture: Formalists on value	Wilk and Cliggett, chapter 3
Thu, Aug 23	Discussion: Two examples, one marginally interesting and the other will leave you feeling indifferent (marginal utility and indifference analysis) PAPER IDEAS DUE	Winterhalder 1996. Read pages 37-42 and try to decipher the graphs in Figure 1. <i>Optional: Hill 1988. Read as much as you need (esp pages 169-182) to decipher Figure 9.</i>
Tue, Aug 28	Lecture: More on the utility of utility: risk and expected utility theory	Kuznar 2001
Thu, Aug 30	Discussion: Mauss's <i>the Gift</i>	Mauss, chapters 0-1.
Tue, Sep 4	Lecture: Substantivist approaches to value	Sahlins 1972. Read pages 185-230.
Thu, Sep 6	Discussion: Value and valuables	Wiener 1994
Tue, Sep 11	Discussion: Origins of money ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE	Greaber 2011, chapters 2 and 3
Thu, Sep 13	Lecture: Marx, the labor theory of value and commodity fetishism	Marx, K. 1993 (1867)

Part 2: Sociality and human nature: Competition and cooperation

Date	Activity	Have this read before class:
Tue, Sep 18	Lecture: How economists think we think	Von Neumann & Morgenstern 1953; Gintis 2000
Thu, Sep 20	EXAM OVER PART 1 OF THE COURSE (Tuesday is Yom Kippur, thus the exam is Thursday)	
Tue, Sep 25	Discussion: How evolutionary biologists (of the 20th century) think we think	Dugatkin 1999 <i>Optional: Gurven et al. 2002</i>
Thu, Sep 27	Lecture: Evolutionary and experimental game theory	Axelrod and Hamilton 1981 Henrich et al. 2001
Tue, Oct 2	Discussion: Let's try a whole different set of starting assumptions about human nature	Bird-David 1990 <i>Optional: Bird-David 2017</i>
Thu, Oct 4	Lecture: The tragedy of the commons	Hardin 1968
Tue, Oct 9	Discussion: Collective action FULL SENTENCE OUTLINES DUE	Ostrom 2000
Thu, Oct 11	Discussion: Cultural group selection	Boyd and Richerson 2010 <i>Optional: Richerson et al. 2016</i>
Tue, Oct 16	Lecture: Case study from SW Madagascar	Tucker NSF 2017
Thu, Oct 18	EXAM 2	

Part 3: Markets and other economic systems

Date	Activity	Have this read before class:
Tue, Oct 23	Lecture: Tucker's unwritten paper about markets in SW Madagascar	Plattner 1989
Thu, Oct 25	Discussion: Mesoamerican markets at the time of contact: Capitalism yet?	Kowalewski 2012 <i>Optional: Millhauser 2017</i>
Tue, Oct 30	Lecture: Formalism and the logic of economic growth	Smith 2003 (1776) <i>Optional: Friedman 1970</i> <i>Optional: Vasquez 2001</i>
Thu, Nov 1	Lecture: Marxism and the logic of differentiation	Marx and Engels 1993 (1848) <i>Optional: Trawick and Hornborg 2015</i>
Tue, Nov 6	Discussion: Case studies in growth and differentiation	Lockwood 1991 <i>Optional: Smith 1984</i> <i>Optional: Bakx 1988</i>

Thu, Nov 8	Discussion: Case studies in rural market integration	Godoy et al. 2005 <i>Optional: Gurven et al. 2015</i>
Tue, Nov 13	Lecture: The peasants are revolting! PAPER DRAFT 1 DUE	Cancian 1989
Thu, Nov 15	Discussion: Agricultural intensification	Yapa 1993 <i>Optional: Deming et al. 2009</i>
Tue, Nov 20	THANKSGIVING: rest and relax!	
Thu, Nov 22	THANKSGIVING: Frantically catch up!	
Tue, Nov 27	Lecture: The livelihoods approach: capitals and capabilities	Sen 1983 <i>Optional: Scoones 2009</i>
Thu, Nov 29	Discussion: Students' choice	

Final exam: The final exam calendar says Thur., Dec. 6, 3:30 - 6:30 pm. PAPERS DRAFT 2 DUE