

Economies and Culture
ANTH 163 T-Th 2-3:20; location Golding 101

Fall 2019

Professor Elizabeth Ferry

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Brown Hall 226 Office hours Th 10-12 and by appointment

Description:

We learn about the “economy” and “the market” as self-contained units that obey complex natural laws that in an ideal world operate free from things like culture, religion, and politics, even though they rarely do in practice. This course foregrounds the aspects of economic activity that other perspectives often place in the background. We will see how economies are infused all the way through by culture and examine the cultural assumptions of the very idea of things like “efficient markets” and “natural prices.” We’ll do this in two ways – through the work of anthropologists on economies that operate according to very different premises, and through cultural analyses of capitalist market-based economic worlds.

Learning goals:

Students will learn about the relationship between economies and culture as studied in the field of “economic anthropology”

Students will examine the premises of economic ideas such as the application of scarce means to alternative ends as a guiding principle of all economic activity

Students will learn about economies in diverse cultural contexts.

Students will productively and respectfully debate different approaches to economic activity.

Students will write short critical analyses and reflections of ethnographic and historical texts.

Students will master basic concepts in economic anthropology and will be tested on these in a midterm exam.

This class fulfills the Difference and Justice in the World (DJW) requirement

Recommended prerequisites: it is recommended (not required) that students have taken an introductory or other course in anthropology or economics before taking this class.

Expected Workload:

Success in this 4-credit course is based on the assumption that you will spend an average minimum of 9 hours outside of class on readings, class preparation and assignments.

Disability Accommodations:

Brandeis seeks to welcome and include all students. If you are a student who needs accommodations as outlined in an accommodations letter, please talk with me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as you can. I want to support you.

In order to provide test accommodations, I need the letter more than 48 hours in advance. I want to provide your accommodations but cannot do so retroactively. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Support (SAS) at 781.736.3470 or access@brandeis.edu.

Academic Integrity:

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult [Rights and Responsibilities](#) for details concerning academic integrity.

Books (available at the Brandeis University Bookstore, for purchase online or on reserve):

Fabiana Li, [Unearthing Conflict: Corporate Mining, Activism and Expertise in Peru](#).
Daromir Rudnycky, [Beyond Debt: Islamic Experiments in Global Finance](#)

All other readings will be available on LATTE. There will also be a course pack for sale in the first week of class, for those who do not wish to print out the readings.

Laptops, tablets, phones, etc **may not** be used during class, except with permission of the instructor or as part of specific, previously announced in-class activities.

Course Requirements:

Attendance and participation 20%

Participation includes LATTE postings:

Please post a brief quotation from the readings with a question or comment. The content will not be graded, but I will draw on the questions and comments to shape the next day's discussion. To receive credit, postings must be made by 4 pm on the day before class.

3 short papers (3-5 pages) 20% each

Midterm 20%

There will be periodic announcements (via LATTE and in class) of Extra Credit events on campus and in the Boston area. If you attend one of these events and submit a 750-1,000-word reflection on it and its relation to themes discussed in class, you will receive 3 points on your attendance and participation grade. You may attend as many as you wish but can only get extra credit for one. Reflections may be submitted via LATTE on or before the last day of class. If you wish to suggest an extra credit you must do so at least 24 hours before the event, so that others have time to attend if they wish.

August 29: Introduction and discussion of syllabus, expectations and course objectives

Part One: Precursors

September 3: John Locke, "Of Property" in the second treatise in government

September 5: Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations, chapters 1-3

September 10: Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof” ;

September 12 W.E.Dubois “The Black Worker,” and “the White Worker”

September 17 Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”

September 19 Ruth Landes The Ojibwa Woman “Occupations” to p 148 – apologies for poor copy quality – online version is clearer

September 24: “Malinowski on the Kula”

September 26: Thomas Hoerber, Hayek vs. Keynes: a Battle of Ideas, Introduction review and consolidation; discussion of paper 1

No class October 1 – Brandeis closed

No class October 3 – Brandeis Monday

Part 2: Economic Anthropology -- Fundamentals

October 8 Karl Polanyi “The Economy as Instituted Process”
First paper due

October 10: Bohannon, Paul, “Principles of exchange and investment among the Tiv
spheres of exchange game

No class October 15 – Brandeis Monday

October 17 Scott Cook, “The Obsolete Anti-Market Economy
Stephen Gudeman, “Necessity or Contingency: Market and Mutuality”

October 22 Roy Rappaport, “Ritual Regulation among a New Guinea People” Sarah Besky, “Monoculture”

October 24 Ismael Garcia-Colon, “We Like Mexican Laborers Better” Sidney Mintz, “the Folk-Urban Continuum and the Rural Proletarian”

November 5 *midterm*

Part 3: Economies and Cultures – Contemporary Views

(Note: an optional extra session on The Mushroom at the end of the World will be scheduled during this period. Details to follow)

November 7 Fabiana Li Unearthing Conflict
Discussion of paper 2

November 12 Fabiana Li, Unearthing Conflict

November 14 guest speaker TBA

November 19
Debarati Sen, “Affective Solidarities;” Elizabeth and Stephen Ferry “Slow Gold” and
“La Chatarrera”

November 21, film –Patricia Álvarez Astacio “Entretejido”
Paper 2 due

November 27-29 Thanksgiving Break

December 3 Daromir Rudnyckyj, Beyond Debt
discussion of paper 3

December 5 Daromir Rudnyckyj, Beyond Debt;

December 10 conclusion

December 15 paper 3 due