Course Description

This seminar examines the major issues that have confronted anthropologists as they have analyzed economies, and as they have contributed to the wider debates in economic discourse. After an initial overview of the classic contributions to neoclassical economics and so-called "substantive" or Polanyian studies of economic formations, the seminar will undertake an analysis of anthropology's contributions to the study of capitalism. Emphasis will also be placed on the important analyses undertaken by anthropologists and like-minded social scientists on local economies embedded in societies non-capitalist or anti-capitalist in orientation.

Please note that our modus operandi will be to divide the readings among us, as typically there is more reading here per week than anyone can probably handle. Each student will cover at least one ethnography for the class, giving a short report and circulating a short precis and critique among all of us. Moreover, this syllabus is as much a bibliographic reference of sorts as it is an actual assignment list. The latter we will determine a week or two before each class.

In addition, students are invited to submit proposals at any time, but no later than mid-term say, for a longer writing project that they would like to do for the seminar.

Books and Materials

Most our readings will be on e-reserve. Those that we can't for one reason or another put on e-reserve or get on e-reserve in time will be on file in the Brockway Room.

If economic anthropology is new to you, you may want to browse to standard short texts on the field:


The following books have been ordered at Labyrinth Books. I have noted that some are required, which means there will be at least 15 copies on hand. The
others are recommended which means that there probably be no more than 5 on
hand. You probably don’t have to buy any of them, at least not new. But you
may want to, and hence the book order.

Required: (=15 copies at Labyrinth)

Stephen Gudeman, *The Anthropology of Economy*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell,
2001), paper.

Richard Wilk, *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropol-

Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of
Our Time*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1944).

Joseph Schumpeter, “Can Capitalism Survive?” from *Capitalism, Socialism,

J.K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of
Minnesota Press, 2006).


Recommended: (=5 copies at Labyrinth)


Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption, and

Mary Beth Mills, *Thai Women in the Global Labor Force: Consuming Desires,

University Press, 1988).

Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic

Paul Stoller, *Money Has No Smell: The Africanization of New York City*,

Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen and Maria Mies, *The Subsistence Perspective*,


**Course Outline:**

**8/31: Orientation**

**9/7: Lessons Derived from Depression and War**


9/14: Anthropology Assimilates and Stakes Its Claims


9/21: The Golden Moment: Spreading Prosperity around the Globe and Its Critics


Ethnographies:


**9/28: No class**

**10/5: The High Tide of Structuralism and Its Critique, with Some Surprises**


Ethnographies:


10/12: The Seventies Crack and the Re-Ordering of Economic Anthropology


Eric Wolf, “Modes of Production,” Europe and the People without History, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982),


Ethnographies:


10/19: The Gendering of Economic Anthropology


Ethnographies:


10/26: The Rise or Return of Culturalist and/or Local Economic Anthropology


Ethnographies:


11/2: Globalization, Development, and Their Critiques


Ethnographies:


11/9: Markets, Value(s), and Property


Ethnographies:


11/16 and 11/23: No class

11/30: Gifts and Exchange


Ethnographies:


**12/7 and 12/14: Economic Alternatives**


