

## Political Anthropology

ANSC 123

Instructor: Dr. Amrita Kurian

Tues/Thurs 3:30-4:50 PM

Email: [akurian@ucsd.edu](mailto:akurian@ucsd.edu)

Office Hours: Tues 5-6 PM or by appointment

Zoom Link: <https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/5653362143>

### **Course Description**

A study of human societies necessarily entails a study of 'politics' and 'power'- between individuals, individuals and institutions, and nations- that determines how we relate to one another. Even so, anthropologists accorded political anthropology the status of a sub-specialization in social and cultural anthropology only after World Wars in the 20th century. Earlier anthropologists saw “primitive” societies they studied as apolitical. Where ethnographers analyzed politics, it was simply as a component of a closed system of actions and beliefs. In the aftermath of the Cold War and postcolonial movements of the post-1950s, anthropologists have had to grapple with the global sinews and institutions of power and its effect on local cultures (and vice versa), not to mention reconciling the shame of having termed porous communities as “primitive”. Today, the pace of connectivity between global networks of power and resistance have further hastened with digital media.

In this course, we conduct an overview of political philosophies used to analyze power and politics in society. Then, we critically engage with ethnographies that applies these political philosophies to real-world scenarios. Since anthropology is heavily influenced by what is happening outside, terms and events like the World War, Cold War, globalization, colonialism, and neoliberalism repeatedly appear in this course. Finally, we analyze how these events affect how politics happens on the ground and how anthropologists approach the study of politics.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

Keeping that in mind, in this course, we will:

- IDENTIFY and ENGAGE with some essential approaches to the study of politics and political systems
- CRITICALLY ASSESS theoretical and political philosophies and ethnographic applications of the same
- APPLY the learning to real-world scenarios
- GENERATE a toolkit for your future research when you leave this classroom

### **Course Requirements:**

Remember, the purpose of this class is to get you to start thinking, independently and together, about new ways to attend to politics, power, and inequality. To enable learning:

- **Time and Effort**- There is a lot to read in this course. Come to class having read the prescribed text. Create annotated bibliographies for your personal use.
- **Courage**- Come prepared to reflect and discuss. Bring a discussion question or comment to the class. You will submit a weekly reflection on the week's readings on the discussion board on CANVAS
- **Generosity**- Bring your expertise to the classroom- as artists, scientists, social scientists, or aspiring health professionals. Try to connect the texts and concepts to real world events you know of.
- **Share**-discuss your knowledge with your peers and the instructor.
- This class will also require you to work in groups and review your peers. Bring your enthusiasm, patience, and collaborative skills.
- **BE PATIENT. BE KIND.**

Black feminist thinker Bell Hooks talks about using the classroom to create a **learning community**. This is a community dedicated to transforming everyone in it – teachers and students alike. It is a community that comes together to share new knowledge but also to transform behaviors, to challenge each other, to take risks, to express and address conflict, and to support each other. It is a community that takes trust and work. I want you to think of your participation in this class in terms of responsibility not simply to yourself but to a learning community.

This is a course we are all on – we all have the responsibility and the power to transform ourselves and help in the transformation of others. This transformation will take time, effort, courage, and generosity – the ability to listen, the ability to talk and share, the ability to critically engage with yourself, the texts, and each other generously. Learn to ask better questions. Challenge yourself as much as you challenge others and me.

**Critiquing ideas is good; criticizing individual people is not.** The topics we will cover in class represent a wide range of personal and political positions that are highly debated and may touch upon particularly sensitive issues. Even if you disagree with a particular viewpoint, you are expected to approach it with an open mind and be always respectful of others. If you ever find a particular issue personally uncomfortable or challenging to discuss in class, I encourage you to visit me during office hours and/or contact me via email to discuss in private.

### **Course Format**

Prescribed readings, including books and journal articles for the course, will be **posted on [canvas.ucsd.edu](https://canvas.ucsd.edu)**. **Electronic copies** of prescribed reading may also be available on UCSD Library Database. Please download the UCSD VPN to access electronic resources at the Geisel Library.

Lecture videos for **Tuesday class will be posted online asynchronously. On Thursdays, we will meet in person** via Zoom. Zoom links to the class and office hours are available on the Canvas homepage.

## ZOOM ETIQUETTE

Synchronous Zoom sessions and chats will be **RECORDED**.

Keep your mics muted upon entering the lecture, and your video feeds **ON** throughout the lecture's duration.

Most importantly, be patient.

**Recorded Lectures** will be made available within 24 hours on the course website. These recordings are intended for anyone who is unable to attend a lecture live (e.g. you are in a different time zone, you are ill, etc.).

**IMP: Students unable to attend lectures on Thursdays, please contact the instructor immediately.**

**IMP: Please email the professor immediately**, if you cannot switch on the camera during class for any reason.

**Please let the instructor or TA know if something affects your ability to participate or access class materials and lectures.** We can work together to accommodate any issues to access and participation in the course and ensure you have an excellent Remote Learning Experience.

## ZOOM RESOURCES:

Download Zoom via <https://zoom.us/download>. Sign up using your UCSD username.

Other student prep info:

For an introduction to Zoom, visit [Student Zoom User Guide](#)  
[Guidelines for attending an online course](#)

See more under [Basics of moving to virtual](#) - Basics for getting ready for class

## Grade Distribution:

- **Class Discussion and Participation- 10%**
- **Class Presentations- 5%**
- **Weekly Discussion Posts & Comments- 5\*8= 40%**
- **Essay Proposal- 5%**
- **First Draft and Peer Review- 10%**
- **Final Essay- 30%**

## Grading Scale:

A+ 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 00-59
A 93-96	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
A- 0-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

- **Class Participation:** Participation is not simply attendance. Students are expected to read the assigned readings, attend sections, and engage in class discussions. You will be graded on your class preparedness, participation, and discussion.

- **Class Presentation:** choose one or more readings to discuss in front of the class for 5-10 minutes
- **Discussion Posts and Comments:** Every Monday by 11:59PM you will submit a discussion post on Canvas on the main themes of the reading due on Tuesday. You will discuss the main hypothesis, relevant methodology, and findings for the readings. There will be bonus points if you apply it to real world events. You will pose a question or critique based on your analysis. Finally, you will comment on the discussion post of at least one of your peers. Here, the comment has to be substantive reflecting your engagement with their post [no “good jobs” and “thumbs ups”]. You will submit a total of 8 posts. You can forgo discussions for two weeks out of 10 as it suits your schedule.
- **Essay:** By Week 6 (Thurs), you will submit a short proposal for an essay based on reading from the class. The essay will require external research in additions to the application of prescribed texts from the syllabus. You can come up with a critique or commentary on one or more theoretical approaches using external research, or apply an approach discussed in class to a real world politics. Week 9, you will meet in groups to review your peer’s revised proposal/first draft. The final essay must be submitted by final weeks for grading.

## Important Policies

**Academic Honesty:** Plagiarism or cheating is a serious offense. It is your responsibility to become familiar with its policies, definitions, and penalties. These rules apply to exams and papers. If you have any questions about proper conduct, please see me. Resources and information on academic integrity can be found at <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/> Students requesting accommodations for this course, please provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), which is located in University Center 202. For accommodations, contact the [Office for Students with Disabilities \(OSD\)](#). Anthropology Liaison: Erin Warren ([anthroadvising@ucsd.edu](mailto:anthroadvising@ucsd.edu))

**COVID 19 Resources:** <https://basicneeds.ucsd.edu/covid/index.html>

If you need a laptop, complete this form: [Student Loaner Laptop Request Form](#) If you have other needs for remote learning, email [VCSA@ucsd.edu](mailto:VCSA@ucsd.edu)

## Community Policy:

ANSC 123, *Political Anthropology*, is governed by UCSD's Principles of Community, which establish the guidelines for this course:

- We value each member of the UC San Diego community for his or her individual and unique talents and applaud all efforts to enhance the quality of campus life. We recognize that each individual's effort is vital to achieving the goals of the University.
- We affirm each individual's right to dignity and strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by mutual respect for each other.

- We value the cultural diversity of UC San Diego because it enriches our lives and the University. We celebrate this diversity and support respect for all cultures, by both individuals and the University as a whole.
- We are a university that adapts responsibly to cultural differences among the faculty, staff, students, and community.
- We acknowledge that our society carries historical and divisive biases based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs. Therefore, we seek to foster understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups, and we promote awareness through education and constructive strategies for resolving conflict.
- We reject acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs, and, we will confront and appropriately respond to such acts.
- We affirm the right to freedom of expression at UC San Diego. We promote open expression of our individuality and our diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity, confidentiality, and respect.
- We are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a community where all people can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of abusive or demeaning treatment.
- We are committed to the enforcement of policies that promote the fulfillment of these principles.

See UCSD [Principles of Community](#)

## **Reading List**

\*\*\* Please note the reading list is subject to minor changes. You will be notified of such changes via email or in class.

### **Week 0: Syllabus and Introductions**

THURS- Sept 23rd

### **Week1: Foundation of Political Anthropology**

TUES- Sept 28th

- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 2005 [1940]. "Nuer Politics: Structure and System" in *The Anthropology of Politics: A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and Critique*. Joan Vincent ed. Malden: Blackwell Publishing. 35-38 (3pp)
- Gluckman, Max 2005 [1940]. "The Bridge": Analysis of a Social Situation in Zululand Gluckman. Joan Vincent, ed. Malden: Blackwell. 53-58 (5pp).
- Frankenberg, R., 2002. The Bridge Revisited. *The Anthropology of Politics. A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and Critique, Oxford, Blackwell*, pp.59-64. (5pp.)

THURS- Sept 30th

- Comaroff, J. L. 1978 Rules and Rulers: Political Processes in a Tswana Chiefdom. *Man (NS)*, 13(1): 1-20. (20 pp.)

## **Week 2: Hegemony's backlash**

TUES-Oct 5

- Williams, Raymond, 1977. "Hegemony" and "Dominant, Residual, and Emergent", in *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (108-114, 121-127) (12pp).
- Hall, Stuart, 1986. "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." *Journal of communication inquiry* 10.2: 5-27 (22pp).

THURS- Oct 7

- Gramsci, Antonio, 1971. *The Prison Notebooks*, eds. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith. New York: International Publishers. (Read pp. 5-14, 245-265)

## **Week 3: Biopolitics and Citizenship**

TUES- Oct 12

- Foucault, Michel, 1991. "On Governmentality". in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Government Rationality*, Burchell, Gordon, and Miller, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (87-104). (17 pp.)
- Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York, 1978), pp. 135–150 (15pp.)

THURS- Oct 14

- KIPNIS, A.B. (2008), Audit cultures: Neoliberal governmentality, socialist legacy, or technologies of governing?. *American Ethnologist*, 35: 275-289. (14pp.)  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1425.2008.00034.x>

## **Week 4: States of Exception**

TUES- Oct 19

- Mbembé, Achille, 2003. "Necropolitics.", Libby Meintjes (trans). *Public culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40.
- Agamben, Giorgio, 1998. *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, (pp 166-180)

THURS- Oct 21

## **Week 5: Globalization and Neoliberalism**

TUES- Oct 26

- Theidon, Kimberly. "Gender in transition: Common sense, women, and war." *Journal of Human Rights* 6.4 (2007): 453-478 (25pp).
- or
- Kline, Nolan. "Policing Race and Performing State Power: Immigration Enforcement and Undocumented Latinx Immigrant Precarity in Central Florida." *City & Society*.

THURS: Oct 28

- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph 2001. "The Anthropology of the State in the Age of Globalization," *Current Anthropology*, 42(1): 125-138.
- Ho, Karen. 2005. "Situating Global Capitalisms: A View from Wall Street Investment Banks." *Cultural Anthropology* 20(1): 68-96.

## **Week 6: State and Recognition**

TUES- Nov 2

- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. "Introduction" & Chapter 2 in *Economies of abandonment*. Duke University Press, 2011.

THURS- Nov 4

- Fraser, Nancy, Axel Honneth, and Joel Golb. *Redistribution or recognition?: a political-philosophical exchange*. Verso, 2003.

## **Week 7: State and Bureaucracy**

TUES- Nov 9

- Mitchell, T. P. 1991 The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics. *The American Political Science Review* 85(1): 77-96
- Scott, J. C. 1998 Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition, New Haven: Yale University Press. 11-52

THURS- Nov 11

Veteran's Day

## **Week 8: Expertise & Bureaucracy**

TUES- Nov 16

- Krupa, Christopher, and David Nugent, 2015. "Off-centered states: Rethinking state theory through an Andean lens." *State theory and Andean politics: New approaches to the study of rule*, pp.1-31 (30pp).

THURS- Nov 18

- Hetherington, Kregg. 2011. *Guerrilla Auditors: The Politics of Transparency in Neoliberal Paraguay*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 1-23, pp. 143-183; pp. 184- 222

## **Week 9: Digital Politics**

TUES- Nov 23rd

- Janine Wedel, 2014. "Privatizing Media, Performing 'Truth'," pp. 101-144, in *Unaccountable: How Elite Power Brokers Corrupt Our Finances, Freedom, and Security*. New York and London: Pegasus Books.

THURS

Thanksgiving Holidays

## **Week 10: Disagreement, Worldings, and the "Otherwise":**

TUES

- Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and philosophy*. U of Minnesota Press, 1999. Postero, Nancy, and Eli Elinoff. "Introduction: A return to politics." *Anthropological Theory* 19.1 (2019): 3-28.

THURS

- Li, Tania Murray. "Politics, interrupted." *Anthropological Theory* 19.1 (2019): 29-53.
- Bonilla, Yarimar and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States." *American Ethnologist* 42(1):4-17.

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