

LIVING IN AN EMOTIONAL WORLD (ANTH 227)

DR. SAIBA VARMA
SSB 269//SPIRO LIBRARY
THURSDAYS 4-6:50 PM
OFFICE: SSB 286
OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAYS, 3:30-5 PM, AND BY APPOINTMENT

This earth will grow cold,
a star among stars
 and one of the smallest,
a gilded mote on blue velvet—
 I mean *this*, our great earth.
This earth will grow cold one day,
not like a block of ice
or a dead cloud even
but like an empty walnut it will roll along
 in pitch-black space...
You must grieve for this right now
—you have to feel this sorrow now—
for the world must be loved this much
 if you're going to say "I lived" ...
—*Nazim Hikmet*

COURSE MANIFEST

Questions of emotions and how they relate to the body and social change are not new to anthropology. However, in recent years, the “affective turn” in the humanities and humanistic social sciences has brought renewed attention to affect and its effects. While the humanities have emphasized *affect*—as potential or capacity, not set in cultural meaning—as their primary consideration—anthropologists have traditionally foregrounded *emotion*—feelings that are culturally shaped. Rather than extensively debate the merits of affect versus emotion, this course will engage both concepts in depth, and will consider the “affective turn” in light of recent social and political transformations, including late capitalism, biopower, terror, and technologies of control. This course will provincialize affect theory’s inherent Eurocentrism and counteract it through engagements with affect from nonwestern philosophical traditions.

This course will also examine the relationship between emotions and scholarly knowledge, particularly anthropology and ethnography. We will deconstruct given liberal/Enlightenment divides between emotions as private/feminine/irrational and rationality as public/masculine/rational, instead focusing on the ways emotions and affects connect (and disconnects) individuals to larger social experiences, historical events, and forms of knowledge. In other words, we will ask what it means to think and approach ethnography affectively and to write “affective” ethnographies. Most weeks, we examine one affect/emotion/emotional landscape in depth.

READINGS

Deborah Gould (2009), *Moving Politics: Emotion And ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS*. University of Chicago Press.

All other readings are available on the course’s Tritoned site.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course requires you to present and lead discussion on one week's readings (30%), write two papers, and be an active and engaged participant in the course. One paper will be a reading response, synthesizing one week's readings (5 pages double spaced approx.). You might choose to write on the readings you will present, but you can also choose to write about another week's readings. This reading response will count as 20% of your grade. Your reading response should not merely be a summary of what you have read; rather, it should be a synthesis, contain an argument, and identify key tensions between the theoretical approaches on offer. **Reading responses are due on class days; however you have the option of revising your draft and submitting it the following Monday after our class discussion** (but you need to turn in a rough draft on Thursday).

The second major writing assignment, entitled "History of a Feeling" (8-10 pages double spaced approximately), asks you to write an autoethnography of an emotion/affect, beginning with a personal experience or account of an affect, which should then be tied into theoretical readings we have done on the history and place of affects/emotions in social life (40%). Using our affect-centric approach, you should foreground one particular affective or emotional experience (such as an interaction that opened out a feeling beyond yourself) and think about how this powerful experience might connect to social theory. Following Kirin Narayan, you might choose to write about an experience of revelation or humiliation, but you can choose *any* affect or emotion that has left a powerful imprint onto you. You should use your own personal account to reflect on affect theory, the cultural politics of emotions, and reflect on the social, historical, and political economic conditions that shaped your affective response/encounter. I'm flexible in terms of how you want to approach this essay; feel free to come and discuss it with me. We will collectively come up with criteria for evaluating this essay. Since I am encouraging experimental papers in this course, we will do some reading and reviewing of each other's writing during seminar. Thus it is important that we create an environment of mutual respect, collaboration, and kind and rigorous engagement.

Examples/models for "History of a Feeling" paper:

Bill Flanagan, "Pain Journal" in *When Pain Strikes Back*

Ann Cvetkovich, *The Depression Journals* (A Memoir)

Resources:

Kirin Narayan, "Self" (Chapter 5)

<p>Leading discussion - 30% Reading response - 20% History of a Feeling - 40% In class participation - 10%</p>
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COURSE SYLLABUS

Week 0 (January 10)

Introductions + course planning

Week 1 (January 17): Theoretical Apparatuses

Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies"

William Mazzarella, "Affect: What is it Good For?"

Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 128-136.

Yael Navaro, "Diversifying Affect"

Allison Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology"

Week 2 (January 24): How Capitalism Feels

Ann Cvetkovich, "Introduction," *Depression: A Public Feeling* + The Depression Journals (pp. 1-73) + Chapter 2

Optional: Reflections: Memoir as Public Feelings Research Method

Gilles Deleuze in conversation with Antonio Negri, "Control and Becoming"

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Culture, Scarcity, and Material Thinking"

Week 3 (January 31): Affects of Racism and Violence

David L. Eng and Shinhee Han, "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia"

Sara Ahmed, "Melancholic Migrants"

Frantz Fanon, "Introduction," *Black Skin, White Mask*

Jasbir Puar, "Prognosis Time: Towards a Geopolitics of Affect, Debility and Capacity"

Week 4 (Feb 7): Affects and Political Movements

Deborah Gould (2009), *Moving Politics: Emotion And ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS*. University of Chicago Press.

Watch: *Beats per minute*

Week 5 (February 14): The Body in Pain

Elaine Scarry, "Introduction," *The Body in Pain*

Amy Krauss, "Luisa's Ghosts: Haunted Legality and Collective Expressions of Pain"

Julie Livingston, "Disgust, Bodily Aesthetics and the Ethic of Being Human in Botswana"

Celeste Olalquiaga, "Pain Practices and the Reconfiguration of Physical Experience" in *When Pain Strikes*

Week 6 (February 21: Rage & Ambivalence)

Renato Rosaldo, "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage"

Nitzan Shoshan, "The Management of Hate" (Chapter One)

Ghassan Hage, "Hating Israel in the Field: On Ethnography and Political Emotions"

Lauren Berlant, "Cruel Optimism" in *The Affect Theory Reader*

Week 7 (February 28): Hope

Ben Anderson, "Becoming and Being Hopeful: Towards a Theory of Affect"

Vincent Crapanzano, "Reflections on Hope as a Category of Social and Psychological Analysis"

Hirokazu Miyazaki, "Economy of Dreams: Hope in Global Capitalism and Its Critiques"

Alice Street, "Affective Infrastructures: Hospital Landscapes of Hope and Failure"

Week 8 (March 7): Humanitarian Affects: Gratitude

*shortened class

Varma, "Gratitude" (Chapter Six of book manuscript)

Optional: Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture"

Week 9 (March 14): No class

Attend: Radhika Govindarajan's talk (required)

Read: *Animal Intimacies*, Introduction and Chapter Six

Week 10 (March 21): Conclusion [make up class]

Workshop "History of a Feeling" papers and course wrap up

Final papers due, Monday, March 25th