

# Foundations of Political Anthropology

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an exploration of major theoretical approaches to the study of political institutions, structures, and processes in different societies, with special reference to the nature of power, the role of symbolism and ideology in politics, and images of the state. We will explore the constitution of political authority in reference to both ethnographic and archaeological investigations that will take us from the problems of early state origins to the transformations of the post-colonial. Throughout, our discussions will attempt to bring forward problems of structure and process, history and practice, that animate anthropological approaches to political life.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to give an in-class presentation and complete a term-paper. Term paper topics should be discussed with the instructors well in advance of the due date (to be announced in class).

## COURSE TEXTS

Texts for the course are available on the CHALK website (<http://chalk.uchicago.edu>).

## OUTLINE OF TOPICS

### Sept. 29. Introduction: Origins, Genealogies, Archaeologies

#### a) (Pre)history

Aristotle

1988 *The Politics*. Penguin Books, London. [I.i-ii, III.i-xiv, IV.i-ii.]

Engels, F.

1990 The Origin of Family, Private Property, and the State. In *Karl Marx-Frederick Engels: Collected Works, vol. 26*, pp. 129-276. International Publishers, New York.

Hobbes, T.

1998 *Leviathan*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. [Chapters 10, 17-22].

#### b) Foundations

Fortes, M. and E. E. Evans-Pritchard

1940 *African Political Systems*. Oxford University Press, London. [Preface and Introduction].

## Part I: Traditions

### Oct. 6. The Classical Tradition: Structural Functionalism, Classical Marxism, and the Problem of Conflict

- a) Parallel Origins (i): Social Order and Segmentary Systems  
E. E. Evans-Pritchard  
1940 *The Nuer of the Sudan*. In *African Political Systems*. Oxford University Press, London.
- b) Parallel Origins (ii): A Classical Marxism  
Childe, V. G.  
1950 *The Urban Revolution*. *Town Planning Review* 21:3-17.
- c) Conflict, Rebellion, and *Homo politicus*.  
Gluckman, M.  
1963 *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa*. Free Press, Glencoe, New York. [Introduction].

### Oct. 13. The Classical Tradition and its Extensions: Process, History, and NeoMarxism

- a) The Processual Approach  
Adams, R. M.  
1966 *The Evolution of Urban Society*. Aldine Pub. Co., New York. Ch. 1.  
Comaroff, J. L.  
1978 *Rules and Rulers: Political Processes in a Tswana Chiefdom*. *Man* (NS), 13(1):1-20.
- b) Social Change  
Smith, M. G.  
1960 *Government in Zazzau, 1800-1950*. Oxford University Press, London. [Chapter 8].
- c) History, of a Sort  
Leach, E. R.  
1954 *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. [Chapter 1 and Selections].
- d) From Maxism to NeoMarxism  
Meillassoux, C.  
1972 *From Reproduction to Production*. *Economy and Society* 1(1):93-105.

## Part II. The Problem of the State

### Oct 20. The Problem of "The State" I: Origins and Foundations

- a) The "Origins" of the "State"  
Carneiro, R.  
1970 *A Theory of the Origin of the State*. *Science* 169:733-739.  
Service, E. R.  
1975 *Origins of the State and Civilization*. Norton, New York. Chapters 1-2.

Wright, H. T.

1978 Toward an Explanation of the Origin of the State. In *Origins of the State: The Anthropology of Political Evolution*, edited by R. Cohen and E. R. Service, pp. 49-68. Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia.

Yoffee, N.

In press *Myths of the Archaic State: The evolution of the earliest cities, states, and civilizations*. Ch. 2.

b) "Precolonial" and Early States

Southall, A. W.

1953 *Alur Society: A Study in Processes and Types of Domination*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. [Ch. 3 and 9].

c) Landscapes Against the State

Smith, A. T.

2003 *The Political Landscape: Constellations of Authority in Early Complex Polities*. University of California Press, Berkeley. [Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2].

Oct. 27. The Problem of "The State" II: The Colonial State

a) Colonial Configurations

Gluckman, M.

1958 *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.

Gluckman, M., J. C. Mitchell and J. Barnes

1949 The Village Headman in British Central Africa. *Africa* 19:89-106.

b) Other Colonialisms

Dietler, M.

1998 Consumption, Agency, and Cultural Entanglement: Theoretical Implications of a Mediterranean Colonial Encounter. In *Studies in Culture Contact: Interaction, Culture Change, and Archaeology*, edited by J. G. Cusick, pp. 288-315. Southern Illinois University.

c) Historical Anthropologies

Comaroff, J. L.

1998 Reflections on the Colonial State in South Africa and Elsewhere: Factions, Fragments, Facts and Fictions. *Social Identities* 4(3):321-361.

Mitchell, T.

1988 *Colonising Egypt*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. [Chapters 2 and 3].

Nov. 3. The Problem of "The State" III: The Postcolony

a) "The" Postcolonial State

Mbembé, J. A.

1992 The Banality of Power and the Aesthetics of Vulgarities in the Postcolony. *Public Culture* 4(2):1-30.

- b) The Politics of the Belly
  - Bayart, J.-F.
    - 1993 *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. Longman, London. [Introduction, Chapter 9 and Conclusion].
- c) Socialism/Post-Socialism
  - Grant, B.
    - 1995 *In the Soviet House of Culture: A Century of Perestroikas*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. [Chapters 1 and 7]
- d) Archaeology after Colonialism
  - Gosden, C.
    - 2001 Postcolonial Archaeology. In *Archaeological Theory Today*, edited by I. Hodder, pp. 241-261. Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge.

Nov. 10. The Problem of the State IV: Marxist Revisions

- a) State Illusions?
  - Abrams, P.
    - 1988 Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977). *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1(1):58-89.
- b) State Formation/Cultural Revolution
  - Corrigan, P. and D. Sayer
    - 1985 *The Great Arch*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford. [Introduction, Ch. 1, 2, 7].

**Part III. Beyond the State: Symbol, Spectacle, Meaning**

Nov. 17. Spectacle, Oration, and Authority

- a) Oratory and Speech
  - Bloch, M.
    - 1975 *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society*. [Introduction and either Chapter 5 or 6]
  - Lincoln, B.
    - 1994 *Authority: Construction and Corrosion*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago. [Chapters 1 and 2].
- b) Political Theater
  - Geertz, C.
    - 1980 *Negara: The Theater-State in Nineteenth Century Bali*, Princeton University Press, Princeton. [Chapters 1 and 4].
  - Schele, L. and D. Freidel
    - 1990 *A Forest of Kings*. Quill William Morrow, New York. [Chapter 3].
  - von Hesberg, H.
    - 1999 The Cultural Politics of Public Spectacle in Rome and the Greek East, 167-166 BCE. In *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*, edited by B. Bergmann and C. Kondoleon, pp. 9-35. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Nov. 24: Post-Marxist Politics: World Systems, Power, and the State of Exception

b) World Systems

Kohl, P. L.

- 1989 The Use and Abuse of World Systems Theory: The Case of the "Pristine" West Asian State. In *Archaeological Thought in America*, edited by C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, pp. 218-240. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Wallerstein, I.

- 1974 *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. Academic Press, San Diego. [Chapter 7].

b) Power

Mann, M.

- 1986 *The Sources of Social Power, vol. 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. [Chapters 1, 3, and 4].

c) Governmentality

Foucault, M.

- 1979 On Governmentality. *Ideology and Consciousness* 6:5-21.

d) Homo Sacer

Agamben, G.

- 1998 *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press, Stanford. [Selections TBA]

Dec. 1. Theorizing the Present: Globalization and the Nation-State

a) Archaeologies

Johnson, M.

- 1996 *An Archaeology of Capitalism*. Blackwell Publishers, Oxford. Ch. 1, 5, 8.

Leone, M.

- 1995 A Historical Archaeology of Capitalism. *American Anthropologist* 97(2):251-268.

b) Global Economies

Appadurai, A.

- 1990 Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Public Culture* 2(2):1-24.

Sassen, S.

- 1996 *Losing Control?: Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*. Columbia University Press, New York. [Chapter 10].

c) Millennial Capitalism

Comaroff, J. and J. L. Comaroff

- 2000 Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming. *Public Culture* 12(2):291-343.