

# Anthropology and Policy: From Colonialism to the Welfare State

ANTH 4768, Sections 415 & 474, Fall 2000

T, TH 1:30-2:45PM, LA 250 and Slidell

<http://www.uno.edu/~dberiss/policy/>

Office Hours: T,Th 11-12:00 or by appointment.

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From colonial governments to the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs and from the struggle against "scientific" racism to the survival strategies of poor families, anthropologists have long focused on issues central to policy formation. Yet policy makers have often dismissed ethnographic data as "merely anecdotal," choosing instead to rely on statistical analyses and polling data. It often seems that for government, "if you can't count it, it doesn't count." In this class, we will show how ethnographic research can improve social policy design by answering questions polls and other statistical measurements cannot.

How can international development programs lead to an increase in witchcraft and magic practices? What do welfare workers really do in their attempts to move welfare recipients into jobs? Do gender ideologies play a role in the failure of poor Latino men to succeed in unskilled office work? How do religion, gender, class and ethnicity combine in choices women make about abortions or in the effectiveness of programs to prevent the spread of HIV? Knowing the answers to these questions - knowing the right questions to ask - can prove essential in policy decisions, especially when combined with research from other, more statistically oriented, disciplines.

This course will examine some of the ways in which anthropological theory and methods can be useful in policy formation. At the same time, we will examine policy as an ethnographic object itself. What are the tools, measures and practices that make society legible to those who govern?

What are the cultural assumptions and processes behind welfare reform or public housing policies? How do debates around abortion, assisted conception and public health reflect cultural ideas about kinship, gender and the role of government in private life? How are international development programs designed and evaluated?

## Course Requirements

The course is organized in a seminar format with weekly discussions based on the readings. Thus, each reading assignment should be completed before the date it is to be discussed (see below).

You will be graded on:

- ☐ 4 reading critiques, worth 40% of your grade.
- ☐ Lead 1 class discussion, 20% of your grade each.
- ☐ 1 policy analysis (oral presentation and written/web follow-up), 20% of your grade.
- ☐ **Undergraduate students:** One take home final examination worth 20% of your grade.
- ☐ **Graduate students:** a final project, worth 20% of your grade. This may be a research paper, critical review essay or other research (15-20 pages). Please arrange to meet with me to discuss this project.

**NOTE:** Attendance is mandatory. Except for severe emergencies, more than 2 absences will reduce your grade significantly. Because this is a seminar, this class cannot succeed without the full participation of all students. If you cannot commit to regular attendance, please do not take the class.

## Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore. All other listed readings will be available on reserve in the library or on the course web site.

Bigler, Ellen. 1999. American Conversations: Puerto Ricans, White Ethnics, and Multicultural Education. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Durrenberger, E. Paul. 1996. Gulf Coast Soundings: People and Policy in the Mississippi Shrimp Industry. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Gupta, Akhil. 1998. Postcolonial Developments: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Kligman, Gail. 1998. The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu=s Romania. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Newman, Katherine S. 1999. No Shame In My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City. New York: Vintage Books.

Scott, James. 1998. Seeing Like a State. New Haven: Yale University Press.

## **The Program**

### **Introduction**

#### **Why Anthropology and Policy?**

8/22 - 8/24     *What is policy that anthropologists should be interested in it? What is cultural about policy making? How does policy fit within an anthropological view of politics? What is governmentality?*

Shore, Chris and Susan Wright. 1997. Policy: A New Field of Anthropology. Shore, Chris and Susan Wright, eds. Anthropology of Policy. New York: Routledge. pp.3-39.

Foucault, Michel. 1991. Governmentality. Burchell, Graham, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, eds. The Foucault Effect. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. pp. 87-104.

*Recommended:* Lewellen, Ted C. 1992. Political Anthropology: An Introduction. Bergin & Garvey: Westport, CT. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. chapters 1, 7, 9, 11.

### **Part I: Critical Anthropology of Policy.**

#### **The State Stops Making Sense.**

8/29 - 8/31     *What is the Astate@ and what should it do? How do governments understand society? How can government attempts to understand society work to change behavior? What is the ideology of high modernism?*

Scott, introduction, chapters 1-5, pp. 1-179.

***Suggested Policy Analysis:*** Racial Categories in the U.S. Census.

9/5 - 9/7      *Why have many high modern plans for social change failed? What elements of social life do statistical readings of society often miss? Can neo-liberal free market policies be criticized in the same manner as high modernist ones? Is there a way to avoid the dilemmas outlined here?*

Scott, chapters 6-10, pp. 183-357.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Success or failure of public housing.

### **Putting Kids and Families First.**

9/12 - 9/14      *Why are some of the most intimate private practices, such as reproduction, central objects of state policy? How can states draw on and transform the meaning of gender in society? What is meant by Aduplicity@ in Romanian public policy? How was social control exercised in Ceausescu=s Romania?*

Kligman, introduction, chapters 1-5, pp. 1-147.

*Recommended:* Herzfeld, Michael. 1992. The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction and Chapter 1, pp.1-47.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Single parenthood and family values.

9/19 - 9/21      *Why do state interests in reproduction often conflict with the interests of women and families? Whose interests does the state represent? How do well-intentioned interventions lead to unintended and negative consequences? How can ethnographies about other societies contribute to policy debates in our own?*

Kligman, chapters 6-8, pp. 148-251.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Child support payments and poverty.

### **Postcolonial Indigenusness and the End of Development.**

9/26 - 9/28      *Why does Gupta refer to the Apostcolonial condition@ in terms of hybridity and impurity? What is the meaning and impact of dividing the world into Adeveloped@ and Aunderdeveloped@ countries? What is the role of development discourse in the making of modern Indian identity? Why has agriculture been central to this process?*

Gupta, introduction, chapters 1-2, pp. 1-153.

*Recommended:* Escobar, Arturo. 1991. Anthropology and the Development Encounter: The Making and Marketing of Development Anthropology. American Ethnologist. 18:658-682.

*Recommended:* Cernea, Michael M. 1995. Malinowski Award Lecture: Social Organization and Development Anthropology. Human Organization. 54(3):340-352.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Indian Tribal Sovereignty.

10/3, 10/10, 10/12 *What does it mean to be indigenous and why is Aindigenous knowledge@ a problematic concept? How do the farmers studied by Gupta draw on both Ascientific@ and Aindigenous@ knowledge when evaluating their own practices? How does global environmentalism raise questions about the relationship between nations and states? How have questions about global economic and political development become significant issues in both India and the U.S.?*

Gupta, chapters 3-5, epilogue, pp. 154-339.

*Recommended:* Fortun, Kim. 1999. Locating Corporate Environmentalism: Synthetics, Implosions, and the Bhopal Disaster. Marcus, George, ed. Critical Anthropology Now. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press. pp.203-244.

***Suggested Policy Analysis:*** Free trade/Fair Trade and Globalization.

## **Part II: Engaging with Policy.**

### **History, Ethics and Methods.**

10/17 - 10/19 *How can anthropologists study their own society=s problems? What are social problems and how are they different from other research problems? Why is anthropology not often thought of as a Apolicy science@? What is an anthropological approach to policy?*

Rappaport, Roy. 1994. Disorders of Our Own: A Conclusion. Forman, Shepard, ed. Diagnosing America: Anthropology and Public Engagement. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. pp.235-294.

Weaver, Thomas. 1985. Anthropology as a Policy Science: Part I, A Critique. Human Organization. 44(2):97-105.

Weaver, Thomas. 1985. Anthropology as a Policy Science: Part II, Development and Training. Human Organization. 44(3):197-205.

*Recommended:* Wolf, Eric and Joseph Jorgensen. 1970. Anthropology on the Warpath in Thailand. New York Review of Books. 25(9):26-35.

***Suggested Policy Analysis:*** Drug use/abuse, treatment and needle exchange programs.

### **Shrimping is not like a box of chocolates.**

10/24 - 10/26 *How do government research agendas shape knowledge even before research begins? What methods can anthropologists use to escape the boundaries of policy research? How do shrimpers on the Gulf Coast make sense of state, national and international regulations and economic forces? What is the role of ethnicity in the shrimp industry? Of families and households? What are the implications of this research for other policy questions?*

Durrenberger, preface, chapters 1-8, pp. xi-148.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Environmentalism, racism and jobs.

**Flipping burgers and the American Dream.**

10/31 - 11/2 *What is particular about American thinking on poverty and work? How do public debates shape research on these issues? Who are the working poor? What are the cultural and structural challenges they face? How do factors such as gender and ethnicity shape opportunities? How should researchers approach the study of poverty and work?*

Newman, preface, chapters 1-5, pp. ix-149.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Living wages and free markets.

11/7 - 11/9 *Who is socially mobile in American society? Why are some people stuck in low-wage jobs? How does local culture shape opportunities and attitudes in poor neighborhoods? What about national culture? How can anthropological research on the working poor be translated into policy? What happens to such research in the policy arena?*

Newman, chapters 6-9, epilogue, pp. 150-304.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Gaming and fair taxes.  
**Talking Americans.**

11/14 - 11/16 *What is racialization and why are some immigrants subject to it? Why are schools central to debates about what it means to be American? What is Amulticulturalism@ and what can anthropologists contribute to discussions about it? Why do certain incidents trigger larger debates? What are the central terms and concepts that operate in upstate New York?*

Bigler, introduction, chapters 1-4, pp. 1-118.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Standardized testing in public schools.

11/21, 11/28, *Has affirmative action succeeded in creating equal opportunity in American society?*  
11/30 *Can multicultural education contribute to more equality? What concepts are central to promotion and resistance to multicultural education? Why is it important to focus on what actually happens in the classroom?*

Bigler, chapters 5-7, pp. 119-241.

**Suggested Policy Analysis:** Preserving cultural heritage.

12/7 **Final examination/project due in my office (LA 281) before noon.**