



Image by Banksy

ANT 330C: Theories of Culture & Society

Jason Cons: SAC 5.138; jasoncons@utexas.edu; 512.232.3832

Tuesdays & Thursdays: 9:30-11:00 AM, SAC 4.118

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00pm or by appointment

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to a set of core ideas and propositions in social theory broadly and theories of culture and society specifically. The course aims to do this by teaching strategies for thinking with and against, writing about, using, and engaging theoretical texts. The course works forward from the mid-19th century, engaging a highly selective set of thinkers who provide core foundations in contemporary social and anthropological thought. It then moves into a series of explorations of the ways that anthropological theories of culture and society written in the early and mid-twentieth century continue to fuel debates in anthropology today. It closes with a brief introduction to a series of transformations in social and cultural theory from the 1970s forward, particularly postcolonial theory and post-structuralism. The course makes no claim to be comprehensive. Rather, it aims to teach students how to work with and through social theory and to prepare them for further encounters with social theory in academic work and in the “world beyond.”

The course is conceived primarily for majors but above all for students who are committed to working with difficult, influential, and fascinating texts. The course combines lecture and seminar discussion. The course integrates an intense and demanding regime of reading and discussion with an equally intense and demanding program of writing. The aim is to encourage students to develop the habit of writing clear and concise prose, especially when engaging with difficult and complex ideas.

Course Format, Policies and Procedures

Course Format

This course is a writing intensive and combines lectures, in-class presentations, and small group work. We will cover a range of different materials in a number of different ways. I expect your *full, active, and professional participation in class*. This means:

- . Attending all class meetings
- . Showing up on time (note—persistently showing up late will negatively affect your participation grade)
- . Respectfully engaging with the course instructor and your peers
- . Being responsible for all of the assigned reading and materials: *this means that if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to do the reading and get class notes from one of your peers*
- . Actively participating in peer review sessions

Assignments and Grades

The following is a breakdown of how I will evaluate your performance in the class. More in-depth descriptions, rubrics, and prompts will be provided with each assignment.

- . *Class Participation: 20%*—Active, informed, and respectful participation in class discussions and small group work. Course leadership on days you are a course leader is a significant factor in this grade.
- . *Reading Responses: 20%*—You are responsible for writing a summary of a reading, a discussion question based on that reading, and a justification of that question's purpose at least weekly. At the end of the semester, you will collect your best 10 of these and turn them in in portfolio form.
- . *Short Papers: 60%*—There will be 5 short papers (4-5 pages) that you will complete over the course of the semester. These will all take different forms. I will grade and count your best 4 towards your overall grade.

Grade Cutoffs

A	94%
A-	90%
B+	87%
B	84%
B-	80%
C+	77%
C	74%
C-	70%
D	65%
F	<65%

A note on class participation

The class participation is worth 20% of your overall grade. This is a famously fuzzy measure. Here is how I plan to assess it:

- 5% of total grade: Showing up on time
- 5% of total grade: Coming prepared to discuss the readings
- 5% of total grade: Making regular and productive contributions to class discussions
- 5% of total grade: Being an effective discussion leader during your designated course sessions

Learning Objectives/ Goals

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- . Understand core ideas in theories of culture and society

- . Communicate in both writing and speech about social theory
- . Apply perspectives in theories of culture and society to real world contexts.
- . Identify and analyze key challenges and complexities related to addressing specific problems in social theory
- . Explain, in broad strokes, the intellectual history of social theory from the 19th century to the present
- . Analyze and explain different approaches to the study of culture and society (materialist, structural, poststructural, etc.)
- . Write, speak, communicate, and think more critically and clearly about the world around you

Introduction to Social Theory

Week 1: Course Introduction

January 22: Course Introduction

January 24: Reading Theory

- Danilyn Rutherford. 2012. "Kinky Empiricism." *Cultural Anthropology*.
- Christian Lund. "Of What Is This a Case? Analytical Movements in Qualitative Social Science Research." *Human Organization*. 73(3).

Week 2: Theory: What is it Good For?

January 29—What is the scale of anthropological theory?

- Clifford Geertz. 1973. "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
- Healy, K. 2015. "F*ck Nuance."

January 31—Anthropological theory and/in the world?

- Michel-Rolph Trouillot. 2003. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." In *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. Palgrave.

Historical Materialism

Week 3: Marx—Classes and Histories

February 5: Why should the workers of the world unite?

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. "The Communist Manifesto." *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

February 7: What is a Commodity?

- Karl Marx. "Chapter 1" *Capital: Volume 1*. In *The Marx-Engels Reader*.
- David Harvey. Reading Marx's Capital Vol 1—Class 2, Chapters 1-2.
<http://davidharvey.org/2008/06/marxs-capital-class-02/>

Week 4: Marx—Value, Society, and the Commodity-Form

February 12: What is a commodity?

- Walter Benjamin. 2007. "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility." In *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. Harvard.

February 14: What is value?

- In-Class Screening: *The Price of Everything*

Week 5: Marxian Echoes

February 19: Rethinking Historiography/Peer Review

- **Assignment 1 Draft: Due Tuesday at 9:30am. NOTE—Bring 2 hard copies**
- Ranajit Guha. 1982. "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India." In *Selected Subaltern Studies*. Oxford.

February 21: Split Discussion: Devils in Commodity Fetishism

- **Assignment 1 Final: Due Thursday at 11:59PM**
- Michael Taussig. 1980. "The Devil and Commodity Fetishism." In *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*.
- Gastón Gordillo. 2002. "The Breath of the Devils: Memories and Places of an Experience of Terror." *American Ethnologist*.

Functionalism vs. Psychoanalysis

Week 6: Freud—Uncanny States

February 26: What is the Uncanny?

- Sigmund Freud. 2003. "The Uncanny." In *The Uncanny*. Penguin Classics.

February 28: How do we encounter the Uncanny?

- Film Screening: *The Act of Killing*

Week 7: Durkheim—The Function of Religion

March 5: What is religion?

- **Assignment 2: Draft: Due Tuesday at 9:30am. NOTE—Bring 2 hard copies**
- Durkheim, E. "Book 1, Ch. 1; Book 2." In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

March 7: What is the relationship between religion and collectivity?

- **Assignment 2 Final Due Thursday at 11:59PM**
- Durkheim, E. "Conclusion." In *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.

The Structural and the Symbolic

Week 8: Levi-Straus—STRUCTURE & agency

March 12 What is the relationship between structures and individuals?

- Claude Lévi-Strauss. 1962. "Towards the Intellect." In *Totemism*.
- Claude Lévi-Strauss. 1966. "The Individual as Species." In *The Savage Mind*.

March 14: Split Discussion: What does it mean to be "good to think with"?

- Sarah Vaugh. 2017. "Disappearing Mangroves: The Epistemic Politics of Climate Adaptation in Guyana." *Cultural Anthropology*.
- Emily Chao. 1999. "The Maoist Shaman and the Madman: Ritual Bricolage, Failed Ritual, and Failed Ritual Theory." *Cultural Anthropology*.

Week 9: Dirty, Rooted, Betwixt, Between

March 26: What is dirt?

- Douglas, M. "Ritual Uncleanliness" and "Secular Defilement". *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge.

March 28: What is the liminal?

- Turner, V. 1967. "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*." In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Cornell University Press.

Poststructuralism

Week 10: Foucault—Thinking Past Structuralism

April 2: Peer Review

- **Assignment 3: Due Tuesday at 9:30am. NOTE—Bring 2 hard copies**
- For the assignment: Liisa Malkki. 1992. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees." *Cultural Anthropology*.

April 4: What is Discipline?

- Michel Foucault. 1977. "Panopticism." In *Discipline and Punish*." Vintage.
- **Assignment 3 Final: Due Thursday at 11:59PM**

Week 11: Foucault—Towards a Bio-Politics

April 9: What is Biopower?

- Michel Foucault. 1978. "The Right of Death and the Power Over Life. *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. Vintage.
- Anne Stoler. "6/13—Society Must Be Defended." *13 Years at the Collège*. [Through Minute 43]. <http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/foucault1313/613-2/>

April 11: Biopolitics in practice: Split Discussion

- Miriam Ticktin. 2006. "Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France." *American Ethnologist*.
- Adriana Petryna. 2004. "Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations." *Osiris*.

Week 12 Biopolitics of Gender

April 16: The Normalization of Gender

- Butler, J. "Subversive Bodily Acts." In *The Cultural Studies Reader*.

April 18: Beyond "Science"

- Emily Martin. 1991. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Signs*.
- Donna Haraway. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*

Week 13: A softer structuralism? Bourdieu

April 23: What is habitus?

- Bourdieu, P. 1992. "Structures, Habitus, Practices." In *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford.

April 25: Habitus and habits

- Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg. 2009. "A Theory of Abuse" and "Intimate Apartheid." In *Righteous Dopefiend*. University of California Press.

The Postcolonial Turn

Week 14: Colonialism, Anthropology, and Postcolonialism

April 30: Is Anthropology a colonial practice?

- **Assignment 4: Due Tuesday at 9:30am. NOTE—Bring 2 hard copies**
- Talal Asad. "Introduction." *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*

May 2: What is orientalism?

- Edward Said. 1979. "Knowing the Oriental." In *Orientalism*. Vintage
- **Assignment 4 Final: Due Thursday at 11:59PM**

Week 15: Provincializing Europe

May 7: What might it mean to provincialize Europe?

- Dipesh Chakrabarty. 1992. "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for 'Indian' Pasts?" *Representations*.

May 9: Course Conclusion

Course Policies and Procedures

Course readings and syllabus

I believe that a course and its instructor should be adaptable. This means that readings and course activities may change to suite course developments, forward fruitful discussions, or to address student interests. For this reason, the readings in this syllabus should be regarded as provisional. For any given week, the readings will be available on Canvas.

While readings may, from time to time change, the course policies and procedures listed in this syllabus will not. It is your responsibility to know them.

Reading Policy

All of the course readings for this class can be found on Canvas.

In some classes, we will spend significant time discussing particular readings. In others, we will treat them as background. In all cases, if there is something you don't understand in the material, it is your responsibility to make sure that you gain an understanding of it by asking questions and raising issues. You are expected to arrive at class ready to discuss any and all of the required course readings.

Policy on Plagiarism

I strongly believe that learning is a collaborative venture. I encourage you to study with your peers, meet to discuss readings with them, and, on particular assignments, to work together with them. That said, the work that you produce for this course must be your own. There are no exceptions to this rule and no legitimate excuses for violating it.

In event that you fail to acknowledge others' work or that you are caught overtly plagiarizing from online or written sources, you will receive a zero on the assignment and may be subject to disciplinary procedures. See below (following course readings) for links to the University Policy on Academic integrity

Email and Office Hours policy

Please, feel free to contact me via email. I prefer that you contact me directly rather than through Canvas. Please also keep in mind that we are as busy as you. Make sure you consult the course syllabus, other handouts, your peers and the course Canvas site before sending an e-mail. Note that e-mail should not be seen as an alternative to meeting with me or your TA during office hours. Nor should e-mail be used as a mechanism to receive private tutorials or to explain material that was covered in classes you missed (those are your responsibility to obtain from your peers). We will endeavor to respond within 24 hours, though we do not respond to email on the weekends or after 5pm, so plan ahead. Contacting us the night before an assignment is due is, by definition, too late.

My office hours are your time and you are welcome to drop by at any time during them. Because, at particular times in the semester, many of you will want to see me, I do recommend setting up an appointment ahead of time. Also, if you have a regular class conflict during my office hours, I am more than happy to set up an appointment with you at another time, however, I ask that you do not just drop by my or your TA's office outside of office hours without checking first. We may be there, but we will be working on other things with pressing deadlines.

Late Policy

I adhere to the following late policy on assignments:

- . Framing Papers are due by 6am the day of class. Late assignments will not be accepted.
- . Assignments turned in up to 12 hours late will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade.
- . Assignments turned in between 12 and 24 hours late will be penalized a full letter grade.
- . Assignments turned in between 24 and 48 hours late will be penalized two full letter grades.
- . Assignments more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.

Writing Policy

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to

come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

- I have extensively detailed my policy on citation and bibliography on my website: <http://www.jasoncons.net/formatting-and-referencing-papers.html>
- I have also provided advice for student writers that is applicable not just in my courses, but in any course you are likely to take as an undergraduate: <http://www.jasoncons.net/advice-on-writing.html>

Attendance Policy

Attendance at all course and section meetings is required. There will be an attendance sheet available when you come into class.

You are permitted two unexplained course absences per semester. After that, each absence will reduce your overall participation grade by 3.33% (i.e., by 1/3 of a letter grade). If you have a legitimate reason to miss class, it is your responsibility to let me and your TA know by email before class.

Statement on Learning Success

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. We will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT. Many are listed on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

Student Rights & Responsibilities

- You have a right to a learning environment that supports mental and physical wellness.
- You have a right to respect.
- You have a right to be assessed and graded fairly.
- You have a right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- You have a right to privacy and confidentiality.
- You have a right to meaningful and equal participation, to self-organize groups to improve your learning environment.
- You have a right to learn in an environment that is welcoming to all people. No student shall be isolated, excluded or diminished in any way.

With these rights come responsibilities:

- You are responsible for taking care of yourself, managing your time, and communicating with the teaching team and with others if things start to feel out of control or overwhelming.
- You are responsible for acting in a way that is worthy of respect and always respectful of others.
- Your experience with this course is directly related to the quality of the energy that you bring to it, and your energy shapes the quality of your peers' experiences.
- You are responsible for creating an inclusive environment and for speaking up when someone is excluded.
- You are responsible for holding yourself accountable to these standards, holding each other to these standards, and holding the teaching team accountable as well.

Personal Pronoun Preference

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name different than what appears on the roster, and by the gender pronouns you use. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES & RESOURCES

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see:

<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

Student Accommodations

Students with a documented disability may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

- Please request a meeting as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you

Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

"As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity."

This means that work you produce on assignments, tests and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. I will make it clear for each test, exam or assignment whether collaboration is encouraged or not.

Always cite your sources. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must make that clear otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

University Resources for Students

The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning, use these to help you succeed in your classes

The Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

The University Writing Center

The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students' resourcefulness and self-reliance. <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling and Mental Health Center

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Student Emergency Services

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

ITS

Need help with technology? <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

Libraries

Need help searching for information? <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

Canvas

Canvas help is available 24/7 at <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials>

Important Safety Information

BCAL

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Evacuation Information

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy.

Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency