

ANTH 353: Economic Anthropology
Spring 2012 • Oxford College
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Class room: East Village Alpha 257
Meeting times: Mo & We 3:30 – 4:45 pm
Office Hours: Tu & Th by appointment

Economic (adj):

1. *Of or relating to economics or the economy*
2. *Justified in terms of profitability*
3. *Requiring fewer resources or costing less money*
4. *(Of a subject) considered in relation to trade, industry, and the creation of wealth*

Anthropology (noun)

1. *The study of humankind, in particular the comparative study of human societies and cultures and their development*
2. *Seeks to produce reliable knowledge about things that make people different from one another and the things they share in common*

OVERVIEW: Economic anthropology, in the sense that we will study it in this class, is the study of how humans impact – and are impacted by – material culture. People are central to our discipline, because anthropologists' central concern is the study—or knowledge of (*logie*)—humankind (*anthropos*). This differs somewhat from traditional studies of economics or “the economy.” In this class we will begin with the basic assumption that both individuals and groups play a role in the way the economy (writ large) works. We will be concerned, not only with larger structural forces, histories, and general trends, but also with the ways that people negotiate—at the individual, or cultural level—with those larger structures. It is important to understand and respect both the similarities and differences between economic anthropology and economics even though both deal centrally with the “economy.” While the perspectives can be complimentary, the two disciplines may approach the material world in very different, sometimes contradictory, ways.

Anthropology, at its heart, is a questioning discipline. Because we study people in all of their complexity, often there are no hard and fast “right” answers to the questions we ask. Nevertheless, we are an empirical discipline, which means that we collect data that is concerned with, or verifiable by observation or experience rather than theory or pure (philosophical) logic. The tradition and history of the discipline have led us to appreciate and focus on the individual and collective voices of people in different communities and cultures and we are often less concerned with what is “True” in an objective sense, then in understanding what people say about themselves and their surroundings (and how, in context, what they say makes sense).

In this class, then, we will be concerned with understanding and *analyzing* the way people use and interact with material culture and the structures and contexts associated with material culture. In anthropology, “economics” has a much broader definition than in other disciplines. We deal with any material culture that humans utilize or interact with that allows them to subsist as well as to amass wealth and power. We also deal with affects such as desire and shame and the cultural values, rules, rewards and sanctions associated with collecting and disseminating wealth.

Throughout the semester we will be asking ourselves large social questions, such as: Do all people everywhere seek to accumulate property, and to maximize profits? Is “rationality” the same in every culture? Do all people think the same way about debt, bribery, gambling or marriage payments? Do human economies *evolve* inexorably—for example, from public to private property, from cowrie shells to electronic money, or from gifts and barter to sale and credit? Or is the picture more complex and the direction inconsistent? Is there really any such thing as a free gift? Who wins and loses in the process of “globalization”? And finally, why do

people value the things that they do?

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- to analyze economic factors in the context of human culture
- to explore the ways that social values are written in, on and through material culture
- to gain a rudimentary familiarity with anthropological methods of studying the economy
- to practice “critical” (meaning analytical, not negative) readings of social texts and material culture relating to subsistence and the production and distribution of wealth
- to practice scholarly written analysis as a way to enter and add to an existing academic “conversation”
- to explore, with respect, other cultures’ practices—both for their own value, and also as a way of asking questions about the “naturalness” or “obviousness” of your own cultural practices

WAYS OF INQUIRY: This is a Ways of Inquiry (INQ) course. Inquiry courses are designed to provide an active learning model for students that allows them to understand and question the way knowledge is produced, created and maintained. Because different disciplines (and different cultures!) may have different ways of knowing, this INQ course provides the steppingstones for critical analysis and the independent pursuit of knowledge through curiosity combined with educated inquiry. Our explorations will often engage ethical issues and social responsibility, make connections across disciplines, and create contexts for experimental learning.

REQUIRED READINGS: Books are available at the Oxford College Bookstore. Additional articles are available on blackboard. You are required to bring your readings (books and articles) to class. I expect you to have read, taken notes on, and marked up your text. If I notice that you did not bring your book or article into class on a particular day your participation grade (and quiz grade – this is a hint) may suffer. Please complete the readings on or before the date listed in the syllabus.

BOOKS:

- Acheson, James M. 1988. *The Lobster Gangs of Maine*. University Press of New England. ISBN: 0-87451-451-7
- Hertz, Ellen 1998. *The Trading Crowd: An Ethnography of the Shanghai Stock Market*. Cambridge University Press ISBN: 0-521-56497-2
- Mauss, M. 2000. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN: 039332043X, 9780393320435
- Parry, J. and Block M. (eds). 1989. *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0-521-36774-3
- Wilk, Richard *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology: Second Edition* Westview Press. ISBN: 978-0-8133-4365-5.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Essay #1 (3 pages)	.....	05%
Midterm Exam	.....	10%
Essay #2 (3 pages)	.....	10%
Essay #3 (4-5 pages)	.....	15/%
Final Essay (6 pages)	.....	20%
Reading Responses	.....	10%
Quizzes	.....	10%
In-class assignments	.....	05%

Class participation 15%

All writing assignments are subject to the following reading/writing criteria which can be found online on blackboard:

- 1) How to Read by Paul N. Edward
- 2) The AAA Citation Guide (examples begin on page 7)
- 3) Dr. DeNicola's writing Rubric "How I Grade"
- 4) "Chapter 1: Seeing" FROM *Writing Analytically* by Rosenwasser and Stephen

WRITTEN WORK AND ASSIGNMENTS: All papers must be turned in on time. Turning in a paper late causes significant problems both for me (in trying to keep track of individual papers and juggling assignments) and also for you, because you will then continue to be behind throughout the class. Perhaps most importantly, turning in late papers is unfair to those who completed their papers on time. It is up to my discretion whether I will accept a late paper. Generally, I will not. However, on those rare occasions when I do, the paper's grade will fall by 1/3 grade for each day it is late (i.e. a B will become a B- on the first day, a C+ on the second, etc.). Any paper turned in more than 15 minutes after the start of class will be considered a day late. I never accept late *final* papers. Plan for this.

Essays will need to be turned into me electronically, via email (adenico@emory.edu) as an attached .pdf file and the subject line must contain the word ECONAN. It is your responsibility to make sure I receive your paper. The chances that I will not receive it increase if you do not include the heading ECONAN. ALL essays brought to class for peer review must be STAPLED neatly. ALL written material MUST include a full bibliography and in-text citations that include the author's last name, date of publication and page number. For instance: (Durkheim 1984: 35). Papers turned in unstapled or without citations and a bibliography will not be graded (and will be graded down for every additional day they are late). Carry one of those small staplers you can buy for \$1, but staple your papers!

Essay papers are double-spaced, in 12 pt. times or times roman type with one-inch margins. One double spaced page equals approximately 300 words. Topics will be handed out at least 1 week before the essays are due (due dates are specified in the syllabus). Written work submitted after the due date and time will be lowered by one third of a grade for each day (or fraction of a day) late, except in cases of *documented* illness or emergency. Work submitted 15 minutes beyond the start of class will be considered one day late. There will be no unexcused incompletes.

READING RESPONSES: Careful and analytic reading in this class is critical. To help you to think substantially through your readings before class, and to help you to be prepared to discuss the readings beyond the superficial, you will be required to turn in one-page (300 word) responses for each class reading. You may miss two responses without recourse. However, you will lose corresponding points for each response you miss after two. Grades for responses will work as follows: I will count responses to make sure you have done the prerequisite number of responses (worth two points each). I will also choose 8 of the responses randomly and grade them individually (worth 5 points each). You may choose up to two of your best responses, if you like, and ask me to grade those as two of my random selection.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Includes timely completion of reading assignments (by the class in which the material is to be discussed), and regular and thoughtful contribution to class and group discussions. Not having your assignment in class (in hard copy) will significantly affect your class participation grade.

One of the critical aims of this class is to learn about culture – both your own and others'. I consider the classroom to be an important field site and source of data. Thus learning from and LISTENING RESPECTFULLY to your classmates provides both valuable information and an

exercise in listening (a very important skill for an anthropologist to master). Not coming to class is disrespectful to your classmates, and it **WILL** hurt your grade. Other students' ideas are just as much part of your learning experience as are the ideas of the instructor and the experts in the field. Learn to listen and use your classmates' ideas as data. *In addition, each of you will be responsible several class presentations on the readings.*

POP QUIZES: I give occasional "pop" quizzes. Quizzes are designed to encourage timely reading. They will be short, generally one-word answers about the reading due for that day. You are responsible for knowing the author and date of the reading, having read the epigrams, titles and subtitles, and for having made any connections between authors and other readings. As part of your "participation" grade these assignments cannot be made up. If you are late to class and miss the quiz, they cannot be made up.

ATTENDANCE & BEING ON TIME: One of the major premises of this class is that we are here to help one another learn. If you're not in class you can't participate in this critical experience. You get two free absences, no questions asked. But, if you miss more than two classes, you should be aware that your **FINAL** grade will suffer **BY 1/3 OF A GRADE FOR EACH CLASS THAT YOU MISS AFTER YOUR SECOND ABSENCE**. Absences are only excused if **ALL** absences (including the first two) are excused. If you are late to class more than three times it will be counted as an absence. Much of this class is focused on in-class discussion and activities that you will not be able to make up. This will affect your grade. If *you* miss class, *everyone* suffers.

COMPUTERS, CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Note taking in this class is critical, but you should not need to rely on a computer. My experience with computers in the classroom is that they provide more of a distraction than assistance, and I ask that they remain put away during class time unless they are being used for presentation or group work purposes. Cell phones should be turned OFF (not on vibrate or silent) in the classroom and kept in your backpack (NOT on the top of your desk). Leaving in the middle of class to have a phone conversation is not only obvious, but I (and the majority of your classmates) also consider it rude and unacceptable. The same goes for texting underneath the table during class. Other electronic devices should be turned off and put away unless they are being shared with the class in a presentation/demonstration context.

THE SMALL PRINT:

Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

One of the key benefits of a liberal arts education is the instructor's ability to react to students' needs, interests and abilities. In the spirit of providing you with an education that remains responsive to particular contexts, this syllabus and schedule are subject to change.

Disabilities: *If you are a student with a documented disability on record and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class please make an appointment to see me in my office. If you need a note taker please see me immediately after class.*

Religious Holidays: *If you must miss class for a religious holiday, please notify me, in writing, one week before class in order to be excused (assignments due on a particular day must still be turned in on or before the day specified).*