This course aims to provide a grounding for students in the classic theories of Karl Marx and Max Weber, and in their later successors. In sections 1 and 2 I assign one overview of the theorist’s work, one selection from the original writings of the theorist, and one example of an anthropologist (Eric Wolf and Clifford Geertz respectively) who, in drawing on the original theorist’s work, transformed the field of anthropology in the second half of the 20th century. Marx and Weber differed over, among other things, the role of cultural forces in social life, and Wolf, Geertz, and others exaggerated those differences. Thus in the final section of the course we examine a variety of recent attempts to bring together Marxist/materialist and Weberian/culturalist approaches.

This is a heavily theoretical course for upper division anthropology majors. Other interested students may be admitted by permission of the instructor.

Format of the class: Seminar.
Expectations: Do all the reading, participate in all the classes, fulfill all writing requirements.
Grading: 25% first paper, 25% second paper, 30% final paper, 20% participation.

Books (Giddens, Marx and Engels, and Weber) are available for purchase at the UCLA bookstore. Books available for purchase are marked (*) below. Everything else is in the course pack, which is available from Print Run, 950 Gayley next to In N Out Burgers. Everything is also on reserve in Powell library.

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4/3, Intro.

Marx

4/10, A. Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory. Read: Introduction and Part I “Marx.”(*)


*** Short paper 1: What I am looking for in the assignments is good comprehension of the material. Don’t try to be too creative at this stage. a) Write a 2 page summary of (not a “reaction” to) each week’s reading (total 6 pages); OR b) Write a comparison of Giddens’ and Wolf’s interpretations of Marx, in relation to the sections of Marx which you read.

Weber

5/1 A. Giddens, Capitalism and Modern Social Theory, Part III, “Max Weber” (*)


*** Short paper 2: Again I am looking for good comprehension rather than creativity. Either a) Write a 2 page summary of each week’s reading (6 pages), or b) Drawing on both Giddens and Weber, discuss the ways in which Geertz brings Weber into anthropology, and/or manifests a Weberian perspective even when it is not explicit (6 pages).

Recent syntheses


*** Final paper. Write on any subject of your choice as it arises from the material in weeks 8-10. You must draw (though not necessarily equally) from all the sources. 8-10 pages.