PRELIMINARY SYLLABUS
ANTHROPOLOGY 203c
Spring 2006

Instructor: Karen Brodkin
Class meeting: Thursday 1-3:50
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Office hours: T 12-1; Th 11-1 & by appt.

When it comes to new perspectives and issues, what is central to the field and what is marginal depends a great deal on who is making the determination. Likewise with regard to what's hot and what's not. Through it all ethnography endures. Ethnography has been the core of anthropology; as a genre of writing and analysis it almost defines sociocultural anthropology. In ethnography you can't just assert it; you have to show it. In the last few decades, critics inside and outside the discipline have challenged many of the assumptions that writing and reading ethnography rest upon. These include issues of representation, reflexivity, relativism as well as neocolonialism, authority and place. Ethnography has changed in response; and the "new" ethnographies don't look like the old ones. One might argue that ethnography is the anthropological acid test of an issue, topic or theory: if it can’t be handled ethnographically, it ain’t worth considering.

The interplay of human agency and social structures in the contemporary world is central to anthropology today. For some, interest in this nexus of structure and agency is part of an effort to develop non-deterministic theoretical perspectives; for others it relates to deeper analysis of emerging social identities and/or structures; and for still others, its promise lies in better understanding of social change processes and the forces that shape the world within which people make cultures. We will get at these issues mainly by reading ethnographies that grapple with some of these issues. We will also read efforts to theorize the issues that ethnographies deal with—representation, identity, and political economy, power, and do so mainly in a globalized framework.

And, through it all, we will also grapple with two questions: What is theory—what does it look like and what work does it do? And, what contributions does ethnography, or an anthropological sensibility make to understanding globalization?

There are three requirements for this course: (1) to attend every class and participate in the discussion. (2) to lead the discussion on one week's readings. This includes a brief presentation highlighting the major themes, issues in the works, a response and a set of discussion questions for the group. Summaries/responses should be written up and submitted to me within one week of presentation. (3) to write a longer paper (15-25 pages) on some combination of history, theory and practice that is germane to your research interests.

Readings: Assigned books are available in the ASUCLA bookstore, or may be ordered independently online as you wish. Articles are available either on the class website (list of links page), or as hard copies in the Anthropology Reading Room (Haines 252).
CLASS SCHEDULE

Apr. 6: Introductions, discussions of readings, establishing presentation schedules

Apr. 13: Michel Foucault: History of Sexuality (Vol. 2);

Apr. 20: [no class; SANA meeting]

Apr. 27: Pierre Bourdieu: Distinction (pp. xi-xiv; 1-18; 97-99; 114-175; 226-244; 372-484)

May 4: Dorinne Kondo: Crafting Selves

Sandra Morgen: Into Our Own Hands

Aihwa Ong: Buddha Is Hiding

May 25: Roger Sanjek: The Future of Us All

Catherine Lutz: Homefront

June 8: Anna Tsing: Friction