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 selections from the original writings of each theorist; selections from the writings of major anthropologists (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; and finally examples of more recent hybrid work that in at least some ways transcends the (exaggerated) polarization between Marx and Weber.

But Marx and Weber were not simply abstract theorists. Both of them were deeply concerned to understand the nature of capitalism as it works in the real world. Thus in the third part of the course we will look at a range of recent work (whether specifically Marxist, or Weberian, or both, or neither – we will talk about that) directed to understanding the forms that capitalism takes today.

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 (Marx and Engels, Weber, Ortner, and Dudley) 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.

4/2. Intro: Capitalism and modern social theory.

Marx


Structures I: Reconstructing Historical Materialism;” Ch. 3, “Epochal Structures II: An Anatomy of Maale Production.”

*** 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. Write a 2 page summary of (not a “reaction” to) each week’s reading (total 6 pages).

Weber


*** Short paper 2: Again I am looking for good comprehension rather than creativity. Write a 2 page summary of each week’s reading (6 pages).

Some Anthropologies of Capitalism Today


5/28. NO CLASS. MEMORIAL DAY. DO THE READING ANYWAY.
K. Dudley, The End of the Line (*). Read Chs.


*** 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.