

Contemporary trends in social and cultural anthropology



Lecture for the course
Bi1221 History of Anthropology
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1989: the year of miracles*

Berlin wall fall: the end of West-East opposition (the end of history and the winning capitalism)

Conferences of Environmental state of the planet (Paris, London, Hague, etc.): the end of the unlimited nature

The “emancipation” of human and the “emancipation” of nature: against “modernism”!



*Latour, Bruno. 1993. *We have never been modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Image: The Berlin wall (source: <https://www.internazionale.it/>)

Defining “contemporaneity”



Image: Lara by Na Chainkua Reindorf, 2021 (source: <http://www.artcapitalghana.com/>)

From Cambridge University dictionary:
*“happening or existing at the same period of time”**

From bipolarism to multipolarism
From scientific authority to plurality

From natural resources to
environmental crisis

From anthropocentrism to
multinaturalism

... your descriptions?

*<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Post: based on the idea of a passage from previous states/concepts to following ones

Turn: based on the idea of an unexpected emergence of alternative states/concepts

Multi: based on the idea of a proliferation of states/concepts co-existing

Post? Turn? Multi?



Image: Anthropology Museum and Museum Anthropology, by Anita Erle, 2016 (source: <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/>)

Global dimension

*“thousands of anthropologists [...] over the course of more than a century, have woven global webs of influence”**



*“to go beyond the dichotomy between the West and non-West, center and periphery, and native and nonnative and go toward a global anthropology balanced on equal footing”***

Image source: <https://www.yoair.com/>

*Lins Ribeiro, Gustavo. 2014. Brazilian anthropology away from home. World Anthropology section. *American Anthropologist* 116(1): 165–169.

**Yamashita, Shinji. 2015. East Asian anthropology: A Japanese perspective. Comment, World Anthropology section. *American Anthropologist* 117(2): 376–377.

*“What we have are traditions born out of interactions and exchanges occurring at various levels between anthropologies and anthropologists, especially following such processes as imperialism and globalization”**

Diversity and power



Image: Digital anthropology by Daniel Miller, 2018 (Source: <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/>).

*Ntarangwi, Mwenda. 2010. *Reversed Gaze: An African Ethnography of American Anthropology*. Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

From the “field” to the “field”

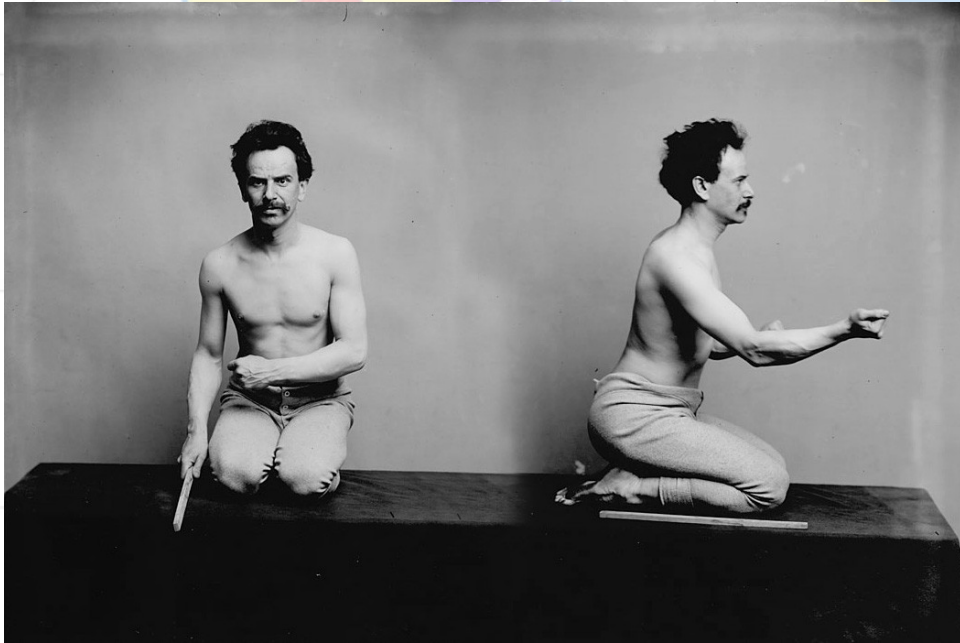


Image: Franz Boas (source:
<https://daily.jstor.org/the-life-and-times-of-franz-boas/>)

“Field of” and “field in”
anthropology

Fieldwork as the core feature of
socio-cultural anthropology

“Field” as a place and as a
practice

Gathering and writing data

Rethinking paradigms



1969. Hymes, Dell (ed.). *Reinventing Anthropology*. New York: Vintage Books.

from studying the powerless to study the powerful

1973. Asad, Talal (ed.). *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. New York: Humanities Press.

critics to the colonial legacy of anthropological practice

1986. Clifford, James and Marcus, George (eds.). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

critical reflection on the anthropological representation of “others”

The anthropologist as a writer

“Poetics” and “politics”

Ethnographic authority

Ethnographer-informant

Ethnographer-reader

Attention to:

Partial truths

Literary devices

The “self”

Counter-hegemony



Image: Mead and Bateson at Bali (source: <http://unifiedtao-it.blogspot.com/>)

Postmodernism, literary turn, multivocality



*“who speaks? who writes? when and where? with or to whom? under what institutional and historical constraints?”**

Influence from Derrida, Wittgenstein, etc.

*“thick description”**

*Clifford, James. 1986. Introduction: partial truth. In Clifford, J. and Marcus, G.E. (eds.) *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Geertz, Clifford. 1975. *The interpretation of cultures*. London: Hutchinson.

Image: Balinese Cockfight 1949 by Alred Palmer
(source: <https://anthromamadotcom.wordpress.com>)

An example:

Co-producing
knowledge

Kamayura exhibition

Indigenous roundtable

Mebengokré paper

Multiplying knowledge

Indigenous women scholars

Favelas' scholars

MAE/UFBA APRESENTA A EXPOSIÇÃO VIRTUAL:

Objetos Kamayurá

Tempos, Memórias e Diálogos



Visite em <https://acervo.mae.ufba.br/kamayura/>

REALIZAÇÃO



Image: Kamayura exhibition at MAE (source:
<https://acervo.mae.ufba.br/kamayura/>)

About words and materialities

Objects as:
function (external purpose) and
functioning (internal operation)*

Objects produce the socialization
of humans**

“Objects” as processes



*Simondon, Gilbert. 1958. *Du Mode d'existence des objets techniques*. Paris: Aubier.

**Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977 *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Image: Brno airport (source: <https://www.airport-brno.com/>)

Material agency

“Agent” as the producer of an effect

Abduction: inferred intentionality (we attribute/recognise to objects the responsibility for an action)

Objects as embedding human agency*

Reality as composed by “hybrids”
(social and natural) agencies**



Image: MUNI Anthropology Lab (source:
<https://www.muni.cz/>)

*Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency: An anthropological theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Latour, Bruno. 1999 *Pandora's Hope, An essay on the reality of science studies*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Material engagement

“things mediate, actively shape, and constitute our ways of being in the world and of making sense of the world. Things also bring people together and provide channels of interaction. Things envelop our minds; they become us”



Image: Posthumanist Criticism by Nasrullah Mambrol, 2018
(source: <https://literariness.org>)

*Malafouris, Lambros. 2013. *How Things Shape the Mind. A Theory of Material Engagement*. Cambridge: MIT Press.



Image: Karaja doll 3D model (Source: Mikolas Jurda)

An example:

**Ethnographic Museum and
Department**

Digital 3D models

Indigenous perspectives

Expanding the experiences

Multiplying agents with various agencies

Variability of the reality

From multiple points of view on the reality to multiple realities

From “one nature and multiple culture” to “one culture and multiple natures”*

Multiplying realities



*Viveiros de Castro. Eduardo. 2004. Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies. *Common Knowledge* 10: 463-484.

Image: Art orienté objet, by Laval-Jeantet & Mangin, Félinanthropie, 2007 (source: <https://www.multispecies-salon.org/>)

Ontological turn?



Picture: Archambault 2016 (source: <https://www.semanticscholar.org/>)

From ontological variety to ontological inquiry*

Reflexivity: questioning anthropologist ontology

Conceptualization: analysing anthropologist concepts via the ethnography

Experimenting: shifting concepts among ontologies

*Holbraad, Martin and Pedersen, Morten Axel. 2017. *The Ontological Turn: An Anthropological Exposition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Anthropology as “taking seriously” ...

... is not to believe

... is not to take literally

... is to be able to *about*
them *to* them*

Ethnography as “caricature”



Image: Aldeia Maracanã, by Elisa Mendes (source:
<https://amazonialatitude.com/>)

*Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2013. The Relative Native. 3(3): 473–502.

An example:



Image: the Mebengokré on the Bacaja river (Source, Paride Bollettin, 2011)

Toward a science of
intrinsic purposiveness

What about academic
science?

What about Mebengokré
science?

Rethinking culture,
epistemology, ecology, etc.

Anthropology beyond the human

From seeing things differently to seeing different things

Other-than-humans in ethnography

Isomorphism between the analysis and its object

Cyborg: unifies animal with humans and humans with machines toward new revolutionary narratives*

Redefining the “human” (*antropos*) as relational and not as being

*Haraway, Donna Jeanne. 1991. A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century. In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Routledge



Image: A cuttlefish swims past a school of small fish by Whitcomberd (source: <https://www.biologicalpurpose.org/>)

An example:



Conde project

Interdisciplinarity

Local engagement

Knowledge dialogues

Environment conservation

Beyond the human

Anthropology of science

Sciences as knowledge practices

Working with science as with other knowledge practices

Analysis of controversies

Sciences as relations of power

Remember the claim for self reflexivity!

Sciences as epistemic, social, political and ontological experiences

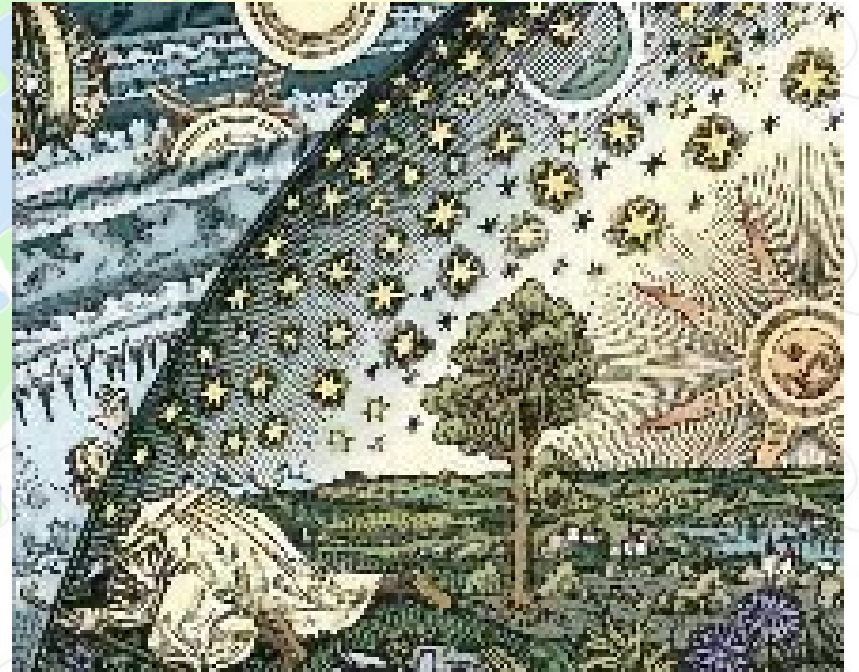


Image source:

<http://www.dipafilo.unimi.it/ecm/home/ricerca/centri-di-ricerca/laboratorio-di-sociologia-e-antropologia-della-scienza-lasas>

An example:



Image from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2017.07.030>

IsoArch Project*

Crating a database of
Isotopes

Some participate other not

Survey of who they are, what
they do, and how the
network affect them

*<https://isoarch.eu>



Anthropology of the future

Please try to figure out what anthropology can do
in the next 10 years...

...you are going to produce it!