

Putting Cultural Theory to Use

Folklore F722 (24922) (Colloquium in Theoretical Folklore and Ethnomusicology)
Indiana University-Bloomington

Spring 2006
Wednesday 4:00-06:30 P.M.
Geology 407

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appointment

Overview

This course will compliment other theory-oriented courses in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology. Its focus will be on the ways that ethnomusicologists and folklorists can put general social and cultural theory to work in particular research projects. In exploring this question, we will survey a range of relevant approaches across the social sciences. We will also emphasize developing the theoretical grounding needed to pursue individual student research projects in folklore, ethnomusicology and neighboring disciplines. Over the course of the seminar, students will develop, assess and revise problem, method, and theory narratives to accompany a major research grant proposal or a thesis/dissertation prospectus. This core assignment is grounded in the course goal of helping students connect wider issues in social and cultural theory to their own particular research interests. Reading assignments will alternate between exemplary ethnographic studies and writings by the social/cultural theorists. The former will be drawn from work by folklorists, ethnomusicologists and anthropologists, while the later will include both canonical and current work by social theorists in these fields, as well as in sociology, history, literature, and other fields. Along the way, we will also consider the unique contributions folklorists and ethnomusicologists are prepared to make to broader efforts to understand the social world.

Requirements

The core requirement for the course is completing the assigned readings and participating vigorously in group discussions. In addition, students will complete several drafts of a proposal for research funding, and will work to offer constructive critique of the proposals developed by one or more peers. Each student will also be assigned two topics (typically a particular scholar or a theoretical concept) on which they will present briefly during a time set aside for this purpose within each seminar meeting. During week six, each student will make a slightly longer, more formal presentation on the particular book (from the tradition of classic European social theory) they were assigned during week one. In the final week, we will hold an advanced seminar in which the final research proposals will be presented and discussed. In addition to peer-review of these proposals during and at the conclusion of the course, I will read and comment upon each proposal at several points, including after the final version is turned in at

the final class meeting. Hopefully these proposals will offer a useful springboard to your own actual research projects.

Readings

Five books for this class have been ordered and are available in campus bookstores. These are the four ethnographic case studies noted below (Ortiz, Noyes, Keane, and Goodman), along with the Wallerstein book for week 11. Other works, as noted below, are articles or book excerpts. These will either be provided in class, are available online (via the library), or will be placed on e-reserve. Suggestions for supplemental reading will be offered throughout the course. An overview of weekly class sessions, and the readings assigned for each, are noted below.

1/11 Week 1: Varieties of Social and Cultural Theory and Their Uses

What role does theory play in the work of folklorists, ethnomusicologists and their friends in allied fields? What is theory, anyway? In week one I will set out the goals and format of the course and will also offer an introductory lecture in which I frame a series of questions to be pursued over the course of the seminar. I will also offer a personal take on the theoretical universe most relevant for the contemporary practice of ethnomusicological and folkloristic scholarship. This will involve identifying theoretical traditions that matter very much to me (more so than some we will explore in this course) and situating the mandate of the course relative to others offered in our department and elsewhere on campus. In preparation for week two, I will also offer some suggestions on how to “study” theory as a prerequisite for our goal of using (and possibly contributing to) it.

1/18 Week 2: Theorizing the Social and the Cultural

In week two we tackle the core (for us) concepts of *culture* and *society* in preparation for future discussions and readings. Rather than rely solely on perspectives most closely aligned with (or developed within) the traditions of folklore and ethnomusicology (and the closely allied field of cultural anthropology), we will include here what might be referred to, generally, as “cultural studies” readings of these concepts. For the later, we will consider treatments by Raymond Williams (in his *Keywords*) and then those inspired by him and gathered in the recent *New Keywords*. In class discussion we will connect (and contrast) these takes (on culture, society, and theory) with those used most often in folklore and ethnomusicology. We will also begin mapping out some key distinctive features characteristic of historic and contemporary social/cultural theory. Transitioning out of the realm of autonomous theory, we will conclude by preparing to tackle the ethnographic case studies central to our work in later weeks.

The readings for this week are grouped in a particular order within particular clusters (hence the boxes). I urge you to read them in the order offered here.

Raymond Williams (1985) "Theory." In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised Edition. Pp. 316--318. New York: Oxford University Press.

John Frow (2005) "Theory." In *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, editors. Pp. 347-349. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Raymond Williams (1985). "Culture." In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised Edition. Pp. 87-93. New York: Oxford University Press.

Roy D'Andrade (1996) "Culture." In *The Social Science Encyclopedia*. Second Edition. Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, editors. Pp. 161-163. New York: Routledge.

Tony Bennett (2005) "Culture." In *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, editors. Pp. 63-69. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Raymond Williams (1985) "Society." In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised Edition. Pp. 291-295. New York: Oxford University Press.

Michael Dean (2005) "Society." In *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, and Meaghan Morris, editors. Pp. 326-329. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Raymond Williams (1985). "Folk." In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Revised Edition. Pp. 136-137. New York: Oxford University Press.

Dorothy Noyes (1995) "Group." *Journal of American Folklore*. 108(429):449-478. PDF

Dorothy Notes (2005) "On Sociocultural Categories." *Indian Folklife*. 19:3-8. PDF

Webb Keane (2005) "Estrangement, Intimacy, and the Problem of Objectification in Anthropology." In *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and Its Epistemological Others*. George Steinmetz, editor. Pp. 59-88. Duke University Press.

1/25 Week 3: Case #1: Putting Structural Anthropology to Use

In week three we will take up a classic ethnographic case study from Native North America, Alfonso Ortiz' dissertation-turned-book, *The Tewa World*. For folklorists and ethnomusicologists (and anthropologists) the book has, since its publication, been held to have a number of features that recommend it. It is an important work by a native scholar seeking to understand his own society through the lens of ethnography and controlled comparison. It is also regarded as a compelling study of worldview and an intervention into several heated mid-twentieth century debates in anthropological theory. For our purposes, it is also an useful

illustration of the application of several theoretical orientations, structural anthropology most centrally.

Alfonso Ortiz (1969) *The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being, and Becoming in a Pueblo Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

2/1 Week 4: Structural Anthropology, A Second Look

In week four we will initiate a procedure that, though different from the conventional ways that social theory is often taught, will hopefully serve our purposes in this course. Following on Ortiz' ethnographic case study, we will dip into the more general theoretical literature associated with structuralism as a perspective on culture and society. We will not have time (in reading or in class) to do justice to the vast literature associated with structuralism and structural anthropology, but I will introduce the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss and suggest some of the enduring questions it poses (and perhaps answers) for those pursuing new work in our fields. *Note: The reading load this week is relatively "light" to allow you an opportunity to begin reading Noyes (2003).*

P. E. de Josselin de Jong (1996) "Structuralism." In *The Social Science Encyclopedia*. Second Edition. Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, editors. Pp. 853-855. New York: Routledge. ER

James Boon (1997) "Claude Lévi-Strauss." [Essay from the digital version of:] *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. Michael Groden and Martha Kreiswirth, editors. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. PDF

Mary Douglas (1966) "The Abominations of Leviticus." In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge. ER

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955) "The Structural Study of Myth." *Journal of American Folklore*. 68(270):428-444. (Reprinted in *Structural Anthropology* and elsewhere.) PDF

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1963) "Do Dual Organizations Exist?" In *Structural Anthropology*. Volume I. Claire Jacobson, trans. New York: Basic Books. (Originally Published 1956.) ER

Anthony Seeger (1989) "Dualism: Fuzzy Thinking or Fuzzy Sets." In *The Attraction of Opposites: Thought and Society in a Dualistic Mode*. David Maybury-Lewis and Uri Almagor, editors. Pp. 191-208. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. ER

2/8 Week 5: Case #2: A Symposium with the Ghosts of Classic European Social Theory

Dorothy Noyes' [dissertation-turned-book](#) *Fire in the Praça* has recently won the 2005 Fellows of the American Folklore Society Book Prize. The Fellows characterize the book as:

...an exhilarating study of the Patum festival in Berga, Catalonia. ...Noyes traces the development of the Patum from Corpus Christi festivity, to political critique under Franco, through its silences and repressions in the transition to democracy, to the challenges of consumerism and the globalized economy of the present. The festival is both sensory experience and symbolic representation, and Noyes engages the festival both as observer and participant. She reads the festival over the shoulders of her informants who in turn reread the festival over hers. She deftly weaves the verbal arts – songs, taunts, weather rhymes -- into the overall “religion” of the Patum. Introspective, reflexive, historical, sociological, psychological, political, and ironic, *Fire in the Plaça* is a multi-layered text that sparkles with observations and commentaries on a rite central to Bergan and Catalanian community and identity. It is an important contribution to the ethnography of Europe and to the analysis of ritual and festival worldwide. (<http://www.afsnet.org/aboutAFS/AFSprizes.cfm#fellows> accessed 12/29/2005)

I agree and perhaps you will too. For our purpose, the book offers a wide range of useful experiences. We have a chance to take a careful look at a ethnography celebrated as the best folklore has to offer. I will hold that part of the book’s success is attributable to the fact that Noyes’ possesses both a rich understanding of folklore’s own distinctive legacy and a sophisticated knowledge of broader currents in social theory and its history. We will devote considerable effort to teasing out the theoretical work deployed and advanced in Noyes’ book. Of particular relevance is Noyes’ engagement with what has come to be known as “classic” social theory (notably figures such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx) and the unique ways she links their concerns with those of her Catalan collaborators.

Dorothy Noyes (2003) *Fire in the Plaça: Catalan Festival Politics After Franco*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.

2/15 Week 6: Classic Social Theory, A Second Look

Working far too quickly, in week 6 we will try to orient ourselves to the major figures and themes in classic European social theory. Unfortunately, this will be no more than an preliminary introduction to some of the more prominent scholars, questions, and works. My first goal for the week is to offer enough of an introduction for you to feel prepared to head out on your own to explore this work further. My second goal will be to argue that such further exploration is not only expected of folklorists- and ethnomusicologists-in-training, but is a productive investment. In our class meeting for this week, each student will present an overview of the key work they were assigned during the first class meeting. Guidelines for this task will be provided beforehand. For the bibliography of works we will discuss (i.e. Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud), see the associated handout. I will present on the work assigned to me, as well as offer an overview and linking comments.

2/22 Week 7: Case # 3: Integrating Semiotic Perspectives

In Week 7 we will tackle another ethnography, Webb Keane's highly regarded *Signs of Recognition* (another dissertation-turned book). Keane's work is particularly promising because it seeks to integrate verbal and material cultural forms into a unified semiotic analysis. Our colleague Richard Bauman writes of it, "In its transcendence of subdisciplinary divisions of intellectual labor between linguistic anthropology and material culture studies, *Signs of Recognition* represents that best standard of what an integrative ethnography of performance can achieve... (back cover). That sounds promising, doesn't it?"

Webb Keane (1997) *Signs of Recognition: Powers and Hazards of Representation in an Indonesian Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

3/1 Week 8: Semiotic Theories, A Second Look

In week 9, we will follow up our consideration of Keane's book with a more general consideration of semiotic perspectives, both classic foundational ones and more recent applications and extensions of the perspective.

Kirsten Malmkjær (1991) "Semiotics." In *The Linguistics Encyclopedia*. Kirsten Malmkjær, editor. Pp. 399-401. New York: Routledge. ER

Ferdinand de Saussure (2000) "The Nature of the Linguistic Sign." [Excerpts from the *Course in General Linguistics*, originally published in 1916.] In *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley and Alan Girvin, editors. Pp. 21-32. New York: Routledge. ER

Charles S. Peirce (1950) "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs." In *The Philosophical Writings of Peirce*. Justus Buchler, editor. Pp. 98-119. New York: Dover. ER

Roman Jakobson (1960) "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." In *Style in Language*. Thomas A. Sebeok, editor. Pp. 350-377. MIT Press. [We will actually use the shortened version published as (1990) "The Speech Event and the Functions of Language." In *On Language*. Linda R. Waugh and Monique Monville-Burston, editors. Pp. 69-79. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.] ER

Richard Bauman (1982) "Conceptions of Folklore in the Development of Literary Semiotics." *Semiotica*. 39(1/2):1-20. ER

Beverly J. Stoeltje and Richard Bauman (1988) "The Semiotics of Folkloric Performance." In *The Semiotic Web 1987*. Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok, editors. Pp. 585-599. Berlin: de Gruyter. ER

Note: The work of Mikhail Bahktin and V. N. Voloshinov, taken up in Week 9, belong logically in week 8. Week 9 is really a continuation of the concerns of this week.

3/8 Week 9: Theories of the Interaction Order and Discourse-Centered Approaches to Culture and Society (and Expressive Culture)

In week 9 we will consider three related streams of work that forms a backdrop to the dominant orientation found in contemporary folklore and ethnomusicology scholarship. These streams, interactional sociology, the work of Mikhail Bahktin and his collaborators, and discourse-centered approaches to culture, all combine in various ways with the Americanist tradition in anthropology and with the semiotic orientations discussed in week 8 as elements in contemporary performance-oriented research in our fields.

Charles Horton Cooley (2004) "The Looking-Glass Self." [Excerpt from *Human Nature and the Social Order*, originally published 1901.] In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Third Edition. Charles Lemert, editor. Pp. 184-185. Boulder, CO: Westview. ER

George Herbert Mead (2004) "The Self, the I, and the Me." [Excerpt from *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, originally published 1934.] In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Third Edition. Charles Lemert, editor. Pp. 220-225. Boulder, CO: Westview. ER

Erving Goffman (2002) "[Excerpts from] *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*." In *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, editors. Pp. 51-65. New York: Blackwell. ER

Erving Goffman (1983) "The Interaction Order." *American Sociological Review*. 48(1):1-17. PDF

Mikhail Bahktin (1986) "The Problem of Speech Genres." In *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Vern W. McGee, translator. Pp. 60-102. Austin: University of Texas Press. ER

V. N. Voloshinov (1986) "Exposition of the Problem of Reported Speech." In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Pp. 115-123. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. ER

Greg Urban (1997) "Culture: In and About the World." *Anthropology Newsletter*. 38(2):1, 7. ER

Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs (1990) "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives of Language and Social Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 19:59-88. PDF

Richard Bauman (2000) "Genre." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*. 9(1-2):84-87. PDF

3/22 Week 10: Theories of Practice and of Power

History, practice and power are frequently cited as the dominant concerns of recent social and cultural theory. We will come to history (at least certain aspects of it) in coming weeks, but here in week 10 we will give (too) brief consideration to questions of practice and power in (relatively) recent social and cultural theory.

Sherry B. Ortner (1984) "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 26(1):126-166. PDF

Pierre Bourdieu (2004) "Structures, Habitus, Practices." [Excerpts from *The Logic of Practice*, originally published in 1980.] In *Social Theory: The Multicultural and Classic Readings*. Third Edition. Charles Lemert, editor. Pp. 435-440. Boulder, CO: Westview. ER

Michel Foucault (1991) "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Pp. 87-104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ER

Michel Foucault (2002) "Discipline and Punish." [Excerpts from *Discipline and Punish*, originally published in 1975.] In *Contemporary Sociological Theory*. Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk, editors. Pp. 211-218. New York: Blackwell. ER

William Hanks (1987) "Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice." *American Ethnologist*. 14(4):668-692. PDF

See Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) Entries for: (1) Michel de Certeau, (2) The Practice of Everyday Life, (3) Bruno Latour, (4) Actor-Network Theory, (5) Pierre Bourdieu, (6) Michel Foucault,

3/29 Week 11: World Systems Theory

In week 11 we will consider an important macro-level perspective on human history and contemporary global society, Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory.

Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

4/5 Week 12: (Some) Alternatives to World Systems Theory in the Study of Global Social History

In week 12 we will consider a diverse body of work that, like that of Wallerstein, seeks to engage with the realities of an integrated world changing in history, but that offers several alternative takes on the role of the human or social sciences in tackling such work.

Alexander Lesser (1933) [Extract from] *The Pawnee Ghost Dance Handgame*. Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology 16. New York: Columbia University Press. [The reprint edition of this book is on sale for \$4.38 (new, paperback) from the University of Nebraska Press' website.] [We will read pages ix-xxvii, and 309-337 in the University of Wisconsin Reprint, 1977.] ER

Richard G. Fox (1991) "For a Nearly New Culture History." In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*. Richard G. Fox, editor. Pp. 93-113. Seattle: University of Washington Press. ER

Sidney W. Mintz (1991) "Pleasure, Profit, and Satiation." In *Seeds of Change*. Herman J. Viola and Carolyn Margolis, editors. Pp. 112-129. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press. ER

Marshall Sahlins (2000) "Cosmologies of Capitalism: The Trans-Pacific Sector of "The World System"." In *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays*. Pp. 415-469. New York: Zone Books. ER

Marshall Sahlins (2000) "Goodbye *Triste Tropes*: Ethnography in the Context of Modern World History." In *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays*. Pp. 471-500. New York: Zone Books. ER

Eric Wolf (1990) "Facing Power: Old Insights, New Questions." *American Anthropologist*. 92(3):586-596. PDF

4/12 Week 13: Case #4: Theorizing Global Performance

Nearing the end of our explorations, we will consider a final case study, hot off the press, our colleague Jane Goodman's dissertation-turned-book *Berber Culture on the World Stage*.

Jane Goodman (2005) *Berber Culture on the World Stage: From Village to Video*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

4/19 Week 14: Theories of/for a Global World

In the wake of Goodman's ethnography of Berber vernacular culture in global context, we will consider some (relatively) recent essays exploring theoretical aspects of the contemporary global cultural scene

James Clifford (1994) "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology*. 9(3):302-338. PDF

Steven Feld (2000) "A Sweet Lullaby for World Music." *Public Culture*. 12(1):145-171. PDF

Deborah Kapchan and Pauline Turner Strong (1999) "Theorizing the Hybrid." *Journal of American Folklore*. 112(445):239-253. PDF

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (Forthsoming) "World Heritage and Cultural Economics." In *Museum Frictions*. Ivan Karp and Corinne Kratz, editors. Durham: Duke University Press. PDF

Anna Tsing (2000) "The Global Situation." *Cultural Anthropology*. 15(3):327-360. PDF

4/26 Week 15: Advanced Seminar: Putting Cultural Theories to Use

In the final class meeting we will hold an "advanced seminar" in which students will discuss the work of their class colleagues and work as a group toward reframing the broader concerns taken up over the course of the class.

A Further Note on Omissions

The course précis suggests that this course is staking out compensatory territory, that is, it is seeking to advance the cause of folklore and ethnomusicology graduate students by tackling material that is not typically made central in other courses but that, none-the-less, scholars in these fields must engage with. Thus it is not a stand-alone map to all the theory that matters, but is instead a very partial (but hopefully useful) consideration of some relevant theoretical positions and traditions. As I will describe over the course of the semester, there is much of value that is missing from the reading list. I will, whenever possible, point out other crucial streams of work, will suggest how these connect to those that we will deal with in greater depth, and will suggest which courses in and beyond our department are most likely to take up this neglected but important work. The question of strategic omission is most visible when we consider that much of the theoretical cannon most central to my own work, and about which I care deeply, is not being overtly treated here—Americanist folklore and anthropology (from Boas and Thompson through Geertz and Glassie), comparative folkloristics (from Aarne through Dundes), British social anthropology (from Frazer through Malinowski to Turner and Goody), Anglo-American sociology (from Parsons and Merton through Shils and Giddens), and Americanist ethnohistory (from Wheeler-Voegelin through Wallace). We are also not dealing directly with other, domains as critical social studies of science (ex: Haraway, Latour) that are have a deep impact across the humanities and social sciences, including among folklorists.