

Anthropology of the Future

Why should we – in the present – study and engage with the future? And if we do study it, how should we go about it? These are the foundational questions of this course. Broadly, anthropologists study the future in three main modes: future as temporalities, future as possibilities, and future as ideological objects.

In thinking of the future as temporality, anthropologists wonder about the meaning of the future and its relationship to the past and the present. They also question how we think of time and how we inhabit it. For instance, some anthropologists challenge its linearity by proposing other alternative modes. In tackling the future as unrealized possibilities of the present, anthropologists study things like hope, alternatives, and dreams, and follow how the present's infinite possibilities have been appropriated by certain power structures. Anthropologists question the way we predict the future and how it relates to our reading of the past and our inhabitation of the present. They ask how certain institutions impose their logic, whether accumulative or algorithmic, to promote certain futures over others. This takes us to our last focus, which is of the future as an ideological object. Anthropologists here ask simple questions, such as: what happens when we name a city 'the city of the future', or 'the car of the future'? How does this affect the present and reinterpret the past? What kind of ideologies are imposed on the future and present by confining the future to certain objects or discourse? Here, objects such as sci-fi, future money, space entrepreneurship, or future cities are examined.

Besides these modes, anthropologists also ask: how can we think of collective communal methodologies for imagining, predicting, and dreaming about the future? How can we democratize the future-making process? What are possibilities of the present that we can work with and learn from? Why does the future always fail to fulfil our utopian or revolutionary visions? What are other imaginations, desires, and lives that could actualize? How do we understand and find hope in dark times? And how does one imagine otherwise radical futures and presents?

This class has three aims. The first is to go through the main methodological and theoretical questions of the anthropology of the future. The second is to learn together how to read the temporal politics of certain texts through unpacking the texts' audiences, political projects, and temporal hierarchies, and to answer the primary question: who exactly is this text written for whose future is it directed toward? Thirdly and lastly, to hope to build on our current moment's anxieties, conspiracies, and uncertainties about the future and to think of other futures that can materialize.

Potential reading list for ten weeks:

Don't panic, we will not read everything included here! We will make our own list from these readings depending on our common interests. Some will be required, and the rest will be recommended for your own reference. We will end the course by writing final reflections on the course or the questions that stimulated us most throughout the weeks.

Week 1: Future, Time, and Temporality

Bryant, Rebecca, and Daniel M. Knight. *The Anthropology of the Future*. Cambridge University Press, 2019. Introduction.

Hodges, Matt. "Rethinking Time's Arrow." *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2008, pp. 399–429., doi:10.1177/1463499608096646.

Bear, Laura. "Doubt, Conflict, Mediation: the Anthropology of Modern Time." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 20, 2014, pp. 3–30., doi:10.1111/1467-9655.12091

Recommended

Munn, Nancy D. "The Cultural Anthropology of Time: A Critical Essay." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 21, no. 1, 1992, pp. 93–123., doi:10.1146/annurev.an.21.100192.000521.

Gell, Alfred. *The Anthropology of Time: Cultural Constructions of Temporal Maps and Images*. Berg, 1996.

Clifford Geertz. "Person, Time, and Conduct in Bali: An Essay in Cultural Analysis." *Man*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1967, p. 153., doi:10.2307/2798709.

Week 2: Future, The other, and Temporal hierarchies

Fabian, Johannes. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*. Columbia University Press, 2002. Introduction and conclusion

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." *Global Transformations*, 2003, pp. 7–28., doi:10.1007/978-1-137-04144-9_2.

Week 3: Futures and the post-colonial politics

Scott, David. *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Post coloniality*. Princeton University Press, 1999. Introduction

Pursley, Sara. *Familiar Futures: Time, Selfhood, and Sovereignty in Iraq*. Stanford University Press, 2019. Introduction and chapter 4

ظل الكارثة الطويل: ثمان ملاحظات حول ضرورة تجاوز المستقبل لهيتم الورداني
/https://www.medinaportal.com/karetha

Recommended

Salem, Sara. *Anticolonial Afterlives in Egypt: The Politics of Hegemony*. Cambridge University Press, 2020.

Bou Baker, Heba. For the war yet to come.

Week 4: Future methodologies

Salazar, Juan Francisco. *Anthropologies and Futures: Researching Emerging and Uncertain Worlds*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. Introduction

Maruyama, Magoroh, and Arthur M. Harkins. *Cultures of the Future*. De Gruyter Mouton, 2011. Introduction

Sandison, Alan, and Robert Dingley. *Histories of the Future: Studies in Fact, Fantasy and Science Fiction*. St. Martin's Press, 2000. Introduction
Appadurai, Arjun. *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. New York, 2013. Introduction.

Harjo, Laura. *Spiral to the Stars Mvskoke Tools of Futurity*. UA press, 2019. Introduction.
Guerriero, Silas. *Divination Practices*. Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions, 2015

Week five: Future, Governance, and Finance capital

Mitchell, Timothy. "Economentality: How the Future Entered Government." *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2014, pp. 479–507., doi:10.1086/676417.

Maurer, Bill. "Repressed Futures: Financial Derivatives' Theological Unconscious." *Money and Calculation*, 2010, pp. 148–173., doi:10.1057/9780230298019_8.

Bahng, Aimee, *Migrant Futures: Decolonizing speculation in financial times*. Duke University Press, 2018.

Week six: Future and reasoning

Asad, Talal. *Secular Translations: Nation State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason*. Columbia University Press, 2018. Introduction, conclusion.

Mbembe, Achille. *Critique of Black Reason*. Duke University Press, 2017. Introduction

Halpern, Orit. *Beautiful Data: a History of Vision and Reason since 1945*. Duke University Press, 2015. Introduction

Amoore, Louise. *Cloud Ethics: Algorithms and the Attributes of Ourselves and Others*. Duke University Press, 2020. Introduction

Week seven: We will choose from this list

A- Future cities, sci-fi and space entrepreneurship

Günel, Gökçe. *Spaceship in the Desert: Energy, Climate Change, and Urban Design in Abu Dhabi*. Duke University Press, 2019. Introduction

Valentine, David. "Exit Strategy: Profit, Cosmology, and the Future of Humans in Space." *Anthropological Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 4, 2012, pp. 1045–1067., doi:10.1353/anq.2012.0073.

Liu, Xiao. *Information Fantasies: Precarious Mediation in Post socialist China*. University of Minnesota Press, 2019. Introduction

Bernstein, Anya. *The Future of Immortality: Remaking Life and Death in Contemporary Russia*. Princeton University Press, 2019. Introduction

B- Utopia and apocalypse

Graeber, David. *Revolutions in Reverse: Essays on Politics, Violence, Art, and Imagination*. Autonomedia, 2012

Larrinaga, Carlos. "The Utopia of Rules. On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy." *Social and Environmental Accountability Journal*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2016, pp. 209–210., doi:10.1080/0969160x.2016.1235401.

Latour, Tsing & Strengers et al. "Anthropologists Are Talking – About Capitalism, Ecology, and Apocalypse." *Ethnos*, vol. 83, no. 3, 2018, pp. 587–606., doi:10.1080/00141844.2018.1457703.

Noble, Richard. *Utopia: Documents of Contemporary Art*. MIT Press, 2009.

C- Black futures, revolutions, and otherwise horizons.

Crapanzano, Vincent. *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology*. University of Chicago Press, 2004. Introduction

Gordillo, Gastón. "World Revolution Z." *Libcom.org*, 2012, libcom.org/library/world-revolution-z-gast%C3%B3n-gordillo.

Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS, 2018. Introduction

Le Guin, Ursula, the ones who walk away from Omelas.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Dream worlds and catastrophe*. MIT Press, 2000. Introduction

Recommended:

Mittermaier, Amira. *Dreams That Matter: Egyptian Landscapes of the Imagination*. University of California Press, 2011.

Shore, Chris, and Marilyn Strathearn. "Reproducing the Future: Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies." *Man*, vol. 28, no. 2, 1993, p. 401., doi:10.2307/2803459.

Wilder, Gary. *Freedom Time: Negritude, Decolonization, and the Future of the World*. Duke press, 2015.

Between Black Scifi and Afrofuturism

Week eight: What otherwise futures could be?

Harvey, David. *Spaces of Hope*. Univ. of California Press, 2008. Conclusion.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. "After the Last Man: Images and Ethics of Becoming Otherwise." *e-Flux*, 2012, www.e-flux.com/journal/after-the-last-man-images-and-ethics-of-becoming-otherwise/.

Barad, K. "On Touching--The Inhuman That Therefore I Am." *Differences* 23, no. 3 (2012): 206-23. doi:10.1215/10407391-1892943.

Adnan, Etel. *The Cost for Love We Are Not Willing to Pay = Der Preis Der Liebe, Den Wir Nicht Zahlen Wollen*. Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2011.

Roy, Arundhati. *The end of imagination*. 2016. Selections.