

History and/in Anthropology?

Saturday Or Tuesday 5:30-8:30

Why history and why anthropology? What could the historian be if not a scribe of the worlds that humans live in, and what is the anthropologist if not an archivist of social forms of life? This course asks these questions in order to figure out the ways in which the tradition of anthropological inquiry draws from and makes use of history as a portal into the social. In the course of 10-12 weeks we will try to understand this relationship as well as explore its relevance to matters of contemporary importance.

Since the end of World War II and the advancement of a new global order, built on the backbone of post-war American influence, the global landscape of social imagination has changed and shifted. With the advent and failure of the independence movements of the 1960s and 70s, this landscape became ever more important to the interpretation of these post-colonial social worlds. History and memory become crucial elements of understanding the post-WWII world. I propose in this course to use the emergence of “Trauma” from a sociological perspective, to investigate the intersections of anthropology and history.

Trauma is a historical and temporal concept. When we say that “someone” is traumatized, we identify this condition by a) locating some event in the past as “traumatic” and its continued existence in the present as a vital force as “traumatizing”. In order to think this through as anthropologists, we ask how collectivities, communities, societies, etc. remember and narrate, the conditions of production and the practices of remembrance and the ways in which people live with and make use of the past.

The course will be divided into three units that attempt to provide us with the answer to a couple of main questions that we will set together at the beginning of each unit.

Unit 1 - History and Anthropology: Contours of a Relationship

Geertz - “History and Anthropology”/Trouillot - Silencing the Past

Walter Benjamin - “The Storyteller”

Brian Keith Axel - “Introduction: Historical Anthropology and its Vicissitudes” Stephan Palmie and Stewart - “Introduction for an Anthropology of History”

Unit 2 - How Does Anthropology Know History? Archival Anthropology and its Double

Rosalind Morris - The Cash Book

Ann Stoler - "Archival Dis-Ease: Thinking through Colonial Ontologies" AND "The Pulse of the Archive" from Along the Archival Grain

Nicholas Dirks - "Annals of the Archive"

Unit 3 - Trauma and History

Fassin and Rechtman - Empire of Trauma (multiple chapters)

Veena Das - "Trauma and Testimony"

Das - "The Act of Witnessing" From Life and Words