Anthropology and the Intimate: Studies in Affect and Action
Anthropology 462H
University of Toronto
Fall 2011
T 10-12 Sidney Smith 1078

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Course Description

This course examines how anthropologists have studied the way that people hope, imagine, love, and despise. One of the central questions we will explore is what work affect does in anthropology – why it emerges at certain disciplinary junctures, and around which nodes of human experience that then become privileged sites for the ethnographic study of the senses. Among our premises is that ethnography of the “intimate” raises important questions about knowledge production and methodology as well as offering insight into how people come to act upon the world and what the human consequences of such action are. Regarding the latter, we will focus throughout the term on affect as it relates to social action: how have anthropologists focused on emotion, affect, and the intimate as a way to understand processes of social transformation? The course is organized around certain dense sites for the anthropological study of affect such as ritual, colonization, suffering, violence, faith, and fear. Our studies will throw light on how “the intimate” is socially produced and harnessed in the service of politics, culture, and knowledge as well as how it both exceeds and shapes our modes of inquiry. The course will be run as a seminar with evaluation based on participation, weekly discussion questions, a novel or film review, a research paper, and a take-home term test.

Required Texts

Available at University of Toronto Bookstore:


Important Dates

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>Select novel or film for review (Blackboard, 5:00 pm)</td>
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<td>October 16</td>
<td>Novel/ film review due (Discussion Board, day’s end)</td>
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<td>October 28</td>
<td>Research paper proposal due (Blackboard, day’s end)</td>
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<td>December 2</td>
<td>Research paper due (Blackboard, day’s end)</td>
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<td>December 7</td>
<td>Take-home term test due (Blackboard, 1:00 pm)</td>
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Course Requirements

Participation and Attendance (10%): The success of this seminar will be built on your active, weekly participation. Please be on time to class and prepared to discuss each week’s readings in a
lively and critical manner. One way to demonstrate your participation is to read the weekly discussion questions (see below) and post comments on the course site.

**Weekly Reflection (10%):** Each week, except the week that you are facilitating class discussion + two other “bye” week of your choosing, you will upload one short reflection piece plus discussion question to the course’s Blackboard site. Your weekly reflection should incorporate at least two of the session’s assigned readings and be designed to provoke critical conversation on important themes and problems raised in the readings. Discussion questions will be evaluated on quality and not simply on completion. Discussion questions **must be uploaded by 12:00 pm** every Monday. Please note: late reflection papers will not be accepted.

**Presentation and Facilitation (10%):** Each of you will team up with a classmate (we will do sign-ups in the first week) to give a brief (10 minute) presentation on one session’s readings. Presentations should **not summarize**, but should pull out selected themes and problematics raised by the readings. Excellent presentations will tie the week’s readings in with previous material, including films and discussion. The presenters will also facilitate class discussion, so presenters should come prepared with provocative questions including (but certainly not limited to) discussion questions posted to Blackboard by classmates.

**Book / Film Review (20%):** Select a literary novel or a critically acclaimed film (English or foreign with subtitles) to review. Your review should focus on the use of affect in the production of artistic media. Pay attention to the role of affect in plot development, characterization, mood, and the execution of climax and denouement. (If you choose a film to review, you’ll need to watch it several times with different foci.) Simply, what work does affect do in this cultural artifact? What sorts of affect are produced or called forth? What messages are being conveyed – about “culture,” society, history – through affect? Your review should provide a synopsis of the novel or film, but the focus must be critical analysis and not summary. For examples of book and film reviews, see the *New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *The New York Times Book Review*. *American Ethnologist* and *American Anthropologist* also have exemplary film reviews that you should peruse. You will post the name of the film or novel you’ve selected to the appropriate discussion thread on the course Blackboard site by Friday, September 30th. Please start thinking about your choice.

**Research Paper (30%):** Your 12-14 page research papers will address, from an anthropological perspective, themes of affect, intimacy, and social action. In the first weeks of the course, browse through the readings for the entire term to get a sense of what sorts of issues you might want to pursue. At this stage in your career, you probably have a geographical or topical interest that is of particular importance to you, and you should feel free to take that as your starting point. This paper has crucial theoretical component: you must grapple with affect as a concept, asking what work it does in anthropological scholarship (including through its absence), why it emerges or falls out of focus. You will submit a 1-page proposal for your research paper by October 28th, worth 5% of your total research paper grade.

**Term Test (20%):** The 24-hour take-home test will cover all material, including films and discussions, from the term. Tests will be posted online by 1pm on December 6.

**Other Policies**

**Late Penalties:** Weekly reflection papers will not be accepted after the deadline. Other late papers, however, will be penalized 3% /day including weekends and holidays. Penalties come into effect immediately after the deadline has passed.
Writing Assignments: All writing assignments must adhere to the following standards: double-spacing; Times New Roman, 12-point font; standard margins; and headers with student name and page numbers. Exceeding the given page limits will result in a deduction of points.

Submitting on Blackboard: You must submit a readable and markable .doc copy of your paper (no PDFs) by the stated deadline. If I cannot open your paper, your paper will accrue late penalties until a readable copy is submitted. Further, please submit your paper to the appropriate place on Blackboard (either under Assignments or Discussion Board, as instructed). Please do not e-mail your papers to me, do not submit them to random locations on Blackboard, and do not submit paper copies in lieu of electronic ones. Only papers submitted to the proper location will be graded. E-mailing papers, drafts, or excuses will not stop the accumulation of late points.

E-mail: I will do my best to respond to e-mails within 72 hours. If your query is such that I can more efficiently answer it in person, I will ask you to make an appointment to see me.

Accessibility: You are entitled to disability-related accommodations. Please let me know of your needs, and as early as possible.

Course Schedule

September 13: Why Affect?
Introduction to the course

September 20: Orientations

Readings:


**September 27: Embodiment / Ritual**

**Readings:**


**In-class film: Les Maitres Fous**, directed by Jean Rouch (1955)

**Reminder:** The deadline to post the name of the film or book you are reviewing to Blackboard is 5:00 pm on Friday, September 30th.

**October 4: Love / Pleasure / Sex**

**Readings:**


**Optional:**

**Reminder:** Book / film reviews are due on Blackboard by the end of the day on Friday, October 16th.
October 11: Piety / God

Readings:


In-class film: Jesus Camp, directed by Heidi Ewing (2006)

October 18: Labour

Readings:


Reminder: Research paper proposals are due on Blackboard by the end of the day on Friday, October 28th.
October 25: Fear / Paranoia

Readings:


November 1: Grief / Pain / Violence

Readings:


November 8: FALL BREAK

NO CLASS

November 15: Mania

Readings:
Emily Martin, Bipolar Expeditions, all front matter, “Introduction” and “Part 1.”
**November 22: Calculus**

**Readings:**
Emily Martin, *Bipolar Expeditions*, “Part 2.”

**Reminder:** Research papers are due on Blackboard by the end of the day on December 2nd.

**November 29: The Mob**

**Readings:**


**December 6: Hope / Dreams**

**Readings:**
[http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/53460](http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/53460)


[http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/53459](http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/53459)

**Term Take-Home Test, due by 1 pm on December 7th on Blackboard.**

*Happy holidays!*