ANTHROPOLOGY OF NEOLIBERALISM
Graduate Seminar

SPRING 2009 Syllabus

Professor Donna Goldstein
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Department of Anthropology
University of Colorado Boulder

Syllabus for First Class Meeting

Class Meetings:
Hale Building 445
Wed. 12:00-2:30

Office and Contact:
Hale Building 455
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Email: donna.goldstein@colorado.edu

Office Hours
Tuesdays: 1:30-3:30 by sign-up sheet on door and by appointment

Course Description:
Recently, anthropologists and other scholars are asking the question, “what is neoliberalism?” and providing answers from a number of different theoretical, regional, and ethnographic perspectives. Some claim it to be an empty concept, while others see it as an opportunity to rethink free-market capitalism in the context of globalization. But before we can begin to think about what an anthropology of neoliberalism would look like, it would be prudent to familiarize ourselves with some of the standing positions from both within anthropology and its neighboring disciplines, particularly history, economics, and geography. This graduate-level seminar will assume no prior knowledge on this specific topic, but will require a willingness to explore neoliberalism from a number of diverse perspectives. According to Hoffman, DeHart and Collier (Anthropology News 2005), “the time is right to reflect on the meaning and function of neoliberalism” and its possibilities within anthropological inquiry. In this course, we will necessarily be ambitious and attempt to delve into both the theoretical and ethnographic renditions of the anthropology of neoliberalism. During the first meeting, we will come to agreement on which texts and articles to focus on during the course of the semester and attempt to tailor the syllabus to the interests of the members of the seminar.

Class Culture:
I hope the organization of this class will encourage it to be a safe atmosphere where ideas are exchanged and differing perspectives are respected. I am hoping that the combination of a highly motivated group of participants will help to make this class not only intellectually stimulating, but also a pleasant place to be. I ask that participants be courteous and respectful to others. In other
words, I would like to stimulate intellectual exchange and the ability to discuss and disagree with one another and to understand that we can do this in a friendly, civilized, and respectful manner.

**Readings, Class Participation, and Class Discussion:** We will meet as a class for one 2.5 hours of seminar per week. Therefore, all students are expected to have completed the assigned readings prior to each class and be prepared to engage in class discussion. This is extremely important for the success of the course. Be prepared with reactions, comments, critiques and/or questions in response to the readings for each class. Regular attendance is expected of all students. This class is strictly limited to **15 students**.

**Evaluation of Seminar Participants:**
There will be three forms of evaluation of your work for this seminar:

1) your critical reaction papers, 6 total for the semester (20%);
2) your leading of class discussion, 1-2 per semester is required (20%);
3) your attendance and class participation (10%);
4) final annotated bibliography (20 sources, including at least 5 from the course) and final paper on some aspect of neoliberalism (40%).

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

**1) Critical Reaction Papers**
Every other week a “one-to-two page” critical reaction paper discussing the week’s readings is required. These critical reaction papers can be anywhere from one double-spaced to two double-spaced pages. If you agree, the class will be divided into 2 groups—A and B—during the first week’s class, and the grouping you choose to belong to determines when you write your papers. **Six critical reaction papers** are due for each individual student over the course of the semester. (That means you can skip one week. Just make sure that you write four of them ON TIME during the course of the semester). Please hand me **2 copies** of your paper at the end of class. One copy will be returned to you and one will be kept on file.

These short papers should be interesting and engaging and should explore one idea (but possibly more) from the readings in detail. A good way to think about these assignments is to imagine yourself as a book or article review writer, addressing both a broad intellectual audience as well as an anthropological audience. If you disagree with an author’s methods or conclusions, then explain why and give an alternative argument (and source) that explains your point. Try to be as thorough, precise, and as specific as possible. (20%)

**2) Leading class discussion with brief presentation**
Students are expected to give 1-2 informal 10-15 minute long presentations on one or more of the week’s readings over the course of the semester. Participants should organize their presentations on the assumption that everyone has already done the readings in question, and therefore only a short amount of time is needed to summarize the readings.

The bulk of the presentation should focus on addressing the key issues raised in the readings, the apparent agendas (theoretical and otherwise of its author(s)), critiques of the reading (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, whether or not the argument, data, or analysis is convincing), and what significance the selection(s) has in the grand scheme of anthropological (or some other interesting disciplinary discourse) theory. Close your presentation by suggesting some aspects of the readings that you feel are interesting areas for further class discussion, particularly those aspects which you may not have had time to address during your presentation. Do a practice run
of your presentation beforehand in order to make sure that you do not exceed the time limit of **30 minutes.** (10%)

**3) Class Culture and Class Participation**
There are a number of interesting ways in which we can think about this particular experience together. First, I would suggest that we think of this class as not only a seminar on a set of themes, but also a kind of intellectual workshop. While I will certainly take responsibility as director of this endeavor, the quality of the discussion will depend on how deeply and seriously you take the readings.

I hope the organization of this class will encourage it to be more of a “salon” atmosphere where ideas are exchanged and differing perspectives are respected. I am hoping that the combination of good readings and a highly motivated group of participants (as presenters and as critical reaction paper writers) will help to make this seminar not only intellectually stimulating, but also a pleasant place to be. I ask that participants be courteous and respectful to others. In other words, I would like to stimulate intellectual exchange and the ability to discuss and disagree with one another and to understand that we can do this in a friendly, civilized, and respectful manner.

We will conduct the course as a weekly seminar. Therefore, all students are expected to have completed the assigned required readings prior to each class and be prepared to engage in class discussion. This is extremely important for the success of the course. Be prepared with reactions, comments, critiques and/or questions in response to the readings for each class. Regular attendance is expected of all students. This class is strictly limited to **15 students** and advanced graduate students in anthropology will be given preference of entry.

**4) Final Paper and Annotated Bibliography:** One 15-page final paper with bibliography and footnotes plus one annotated bibliography with 20 citations (including 5 from the class) having to do with some aspect of neoliberalism is due for the course. Your paper represents an opportunity for you to critically respond to course readings and discussions and to explore one topic/problem related to neoliberalism in depth. You may choose your own topic, but the paper should focus on either a section of readings, or include at least one or two of the semester’s main readings in the discussion. Usually, better papers take a smaller topic and focus on one theme or idea in-depth. You will be expected to make your annotated bibliography and final paper available to everyone in the class. **(40%) NOTE:** For those of you who already have a working paper that treats of neoliberalism, you have the option of handing me a copy of that at the beginning of the semester (by the third week of classes) and for your end of semester project, you can simply work to expand and revise that paper to a **20-25 page** (double-spaced) manuscript to get into shape for publication. The idea here is to get you to keep working on your own projects and ideas and to think them through in new and exciting directions.

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**Note 1:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices

Disability Services' letters for students with disabilities indicate legally mandated reasonable accommodations. The syllabus statements and answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices
Note 2: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, {{insert your procedures here}}
See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Note 3: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See polic at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

Note 4: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh

Note 5: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/

Entire books we will read together:


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Semester Schedule

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Week 1: January 14: SYLLABUS, INTRODUCTIONS, ORGANIZATION
Determine if you are in the right class for you.
A and B group: If you would like, we can institute a system of Wednesday lunch/snacks in order to make it a more pleasant environment. If the class agrees to this organization, I would like to insist that everyone sign up for A and B groupings. A and B groupings alternate writing/critical reaction papers with food delivery and clean-up responsibilities. These are loose groupings and anyone who feels inspired to write in a week they are not assigned to is fine with me. Please plan to have 4 excellent critical reaction papers by the end of the semester. You may want to write 5 of them and drop your lowest grade.

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Week 2: January 21: David Harvey’s A Brief History of Neoliberalism

(A Group Writes, B Group Brings Food)

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Week 3: January 28: Anthropology’s Recent Debates on Politics, Popular Culture, and Neoliberalism—Just For Fun and Motivation
Week 4: February 4: Culture, Power, and Governing Practices

Week 5: February 11: Neoliberalism’s Institution of Choice

Week 6: February 18: Resistance To Neoliberalism

Or

Week 7: February 25: Off the Charts: Victims of the Neoliberal Project?

Week 8: March 4: NO CLASS. PROFESSOR GOLDSTEIN IN HOLLAND

Week 9: March 11: Neoliberalism and the Disappearing State

Plus Selections from:
Week 10: March 18: Neoliberalism, Cosmopolitanism, and Sexuality

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Week 11: March 25: NO CLASSES. SPRING BREAK
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Week 12: April 1: Culture and Power

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Week 13: April 8: Biotechnology and Capitalism 1

Or

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Week 14: April 15: Biotechnology and Capitalism 2

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Week 15: April 22: CLASS PRESENTATIONS

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Week 16: April 29: CLASS PRESENTATIONS

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PAPERS AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ARE DUE MAY 1ST.
15 pages maximum, unless you are revising an approved work.