Carleton University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

ADVANCED STUDIES IN CULTURE AND SYMBOLS – ANTH 4500A

INTERPRETING SYMBOLS - ANTH 5403F

FALL TERM 2016/2017
Seminar: Fridays, Time: 2:35-5:25
Location: TB230
Instructor: Brian J. Given Ph.D.
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Office B745 Loeb
Office Hours: Tuesdays: 2:45-4:00 pm
Fridays 12:00-1:45pm (or by appointment)

Please check your Carleton email and cuLearn regularly for announcements, discussion and information - if we have to alter our arrangements for any reason I will email the class.

Seminar Description:

The Calendar says:
"Various theoretical and methodological approaches to the anthropology of signs and symbols, their internal workings, and their relationship to other aspects of social life."

We will approach the study of symbols with reference both to theories of symbolizing (e.g. de Saussure, Geertz, Levi-Strauss, Turner, and Laughlin etc.) and with reference to the various ethnographic contexts where we study symbolic processes (e.g. kinship, ritual, mythology, human evolution, popular culture). Our first class will be spent determining student interests and directions so that we may develop, from a list of scholars and topics I will provide (to which you are invited to contribute!), a series of seminars that will serve our purposes:

1. Provide participants in the seminar with a sophisticated sampling of major theoretical and methodological directions in the anthropology of symbols.
2. Serve, as far as possible, the individual interests and eventual thesis projects of seminar participants.

Reading:

The purpose of this seminar is to read and discuss symbolic anthropology together, so you will require a **substantial investment of time**, reading scholarly work to prepare for each seminar. **It is especially important that you provide useful readings for seminars that you present** and that you read the material suggested by other seminar participants in preparation for their presentations.

Communicating With Me: I am always glad to see you during my office hours but will also make appointments for other days and times as necessary. For minor questions you may find that it is more convenient to email me. I will assume that you will check your Carleton email for updates and announcements. I will answer general questions there as well. We will use cuLearn for posting course materials, including each weeks' articles. I am happy to read and discuss your work.

Structure and Basis for Evaluation: Your grade will be determined based on your performance as seminar leader and as a participant, including at least two specific tasks; a session as seminar leader, one term paper and reading preparation and participation in all seminars. Student presentations will begin at our fifth or sixth meeting.

Each student will be asked to lead one or two discussions, write one paper and participate in all seminars. We will discuss the format for our seminars during the first class and set up a presentation schedule by the end of the second class. I am open to suggestions regarding the structure and content of this seminar.

1. Seminar Leader	(30%)
3. Seminar Participation	(20%)
4. Term Paper	(50%)

Please see my remarks on:
1. The Seminar Leader, 2. The Role of seminar participants 3. Remarks On Graduate Scholarship 4. A Note about Conferences

Seminar Leader – Scholars, Ethnography and Theories

You are asked to read more deeply and broadly than the other seminar participants and lead our discussion of the work of a particular scholar (e.g. the work of de Saussure, Mary Douglas or Victor Turner) or group of scholars (e.g. early structural linguists, semiotic structuralists, symbolic interactionists, post-structuralists, trans-personalists etc.). Be sure to check for recent work that uses this (or these) scholar's(s') ideas. You will guide and inform us, providing a structure and themes for a group discussion regarding these scholar's(s') contributions to the anthropology of symbols. You should also discuss the ethnographic

basis of their work. That means that everyone has to be prepared. Please see my general remarks on graduate scholarship.

Please note that you must see that copies of readings are posted on cuLearn in our UPCOMING SEMINARS folder with the dates of your presentation and your name at the beginning of the title (e.g. "Oct 14 Brian Levi-Strauss.pdf"). It is important that we all have your articles in time to read them! (Two weeks would be the minimum – please take this seriously). Please mark the course number and seminar date clearly on your articles with your name and email them to me for posting, preferably in pdf (Adobe Acrobat) format. For your presentations you may use appropriate audiovisual aids, including PowerPoint if you feel that they will enhance the seminar (please consult with me in advance and arrange with IMS regarding compatibility). Do not feel pressured to use tools you don't feel you need. Please limit illustrative videos etc. to very short duration.

Graduate and advanced undergraduate seminars should be an exercise in mutual education. Please see my remarks on the roles of seminar leaders and seminar participation.

Seminar Participation

This is a difficult one! We all have different styles but it is important that each of us contribute to the seminar. Minimally, everyone should have read the material and be prepared to discuss it. I won't be counting utterances but I do expect that everyone participates actively in the seminar. You also need to be there!

Written Assignment (due November 18th): This will be a major paper in which you discuss the work of a key scholar or group of scholars and/or explore a theme or content area with particular attention to a range of scholarly explorations of that topic. For example, you might want to discuss the ritual control of experience, rites of passage, kinship systems, religious ritual, meditation studies, mythology, rites of passage, feminist approaches, political symbolism, or you might want to write about the work of Roland Barthes or perhaps the Biogenetic Structuralists or the work of Victor and/or Edith Turner. I hesitate to specify a length for the paper but expect that most will be around 25-30 (undergraduates 20-25) typed double-spaced pages. Please note that this is an opportunity for you to pursue your own interests in the context of the anthropology of symbols **… each student must submit a brief (about one page) proposal for their assignment and then meet with me to discuss the approaches they plan to explore.** I will be happy to meet with you as often as you like and I will read and give you feedback on anything you write … anything!

Expectations of the seminar leader: As the seminar leader you are expected to provide an informative introduction and overview and to guide our discussion. You should do a careful review of the literature in order to discuss the development of scholarship in the area and describe contributions or debates which occupy scholarly interest. We will expect that you have consulted a number of sources and that you give us a general overview of the development of this scholar's work or of a range of scholarship on the topic in question, including recent applications of these ideas.

As a professional anthropologist, most of the oral presentations you do will conform to conference or classroom format, and we will quite loosely follow conference format in ANTH5403/4500. You should begin your session as seminar leader by offering an overview of the material for around 40 minutes (undergraduates 30 minutes). After that we will all discuss the material, based on н own reading and you, as the better-informed participant, will play an important leadership role during that discussion.

Expectations of the other seminar participants

The person who is leading the seminar has done a lot of work to further our education. Minimally we will expect that the seminar participants will have read the relevant materials in the Upcoming Seminars folder on cuLearn. You should be prepared discuss the work in some depth. All seminar participants are expected to participate in all seminars.

General Remarks on Graduate and Advanced Undergraduate Scholarship

A senior undergraduate or graduate student is expected to demonstrate competent scholarship in a number of ways.

1. You are expected to read assigned material and you are also expected to be actively exploring the literature in anthropology well beyond that material. The articles assigned by the seminar presenters are the minimum that you should read to prepare for a seminar. The enthusiastic student will also find other material (for example, in the reference lists of those articles!) to inform themselves before the seminar.

2. Your own presentations should reflect competent usage of academic journals and books. This will require skilled reading and analysis.

3. Your demonstrated research skills should include the competent use of periodical indexes, machine-readable databases like AnthroSource and AnthroPlus and the many other resources available at the Library Website. We will do a workshop.

Handing in Assignments

Please note: written assignments should be handed to me in class or placed in the "essay drop box" outside the Department of Sociology and Anthropology main office, 7th floor Loeb bldg. Please do not shove them under my door. **No written assignment will be accepted unless the student retains a copy of that assignment.**

A Note About Plagiarism and Duplicate Assignments

I shouldn't have to include the following passage. I do know that most of my students have far too much self-respect to cheat, but it is possible to plagiarize without intending to cheat - please read the following official statement carefully:

Plagiarism and cheating at the graduate level are viewed as being particularly serious and the sanctions imposed are accordingly severe. Students are expected to familiarize

themselves with and follow the Carleton University Student Academic Integrity Policy (See http://www2.carleton.ca/graduate-studies/policies-and-guidelines). The Policy is strictly enforced and is binding on all students. Plagiarism and cheating – presenting another's ideas, arguments, words or images as your own, using unauthorized material, misrepresentation, fabricating or misrepresenting research data, unauthorized co-operation or collaboration or completing work for another student – weaken the quality of the graduate degree. Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. Students who infringe the Policy may be subject to one of several penalties including: expulsion; suspension from all studies at Carleton; suspension from full-time studies; a refusal of permission to continue or to register in a specific degree program; academic probation; or a grade of "F" in the course.

GRADES

In accordance with the Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar Regulations, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100	B+ = 77-79	C+ = 67-69	D+ = 57-59
A = 85-89	B = 73-76	C = 63-66	D = 53-56
A - = 80-84	B - = 70-72	C - = 60-62	D - = 50-52

F = Below 50

WDN = Withdrawn from the course

ABS = Student absent from final exam

DEF = Deferred (See above)

FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam

Academic Regulations, Accommodations, Plagiarism, Etc.

University rules regarding registration, withdrawal, appealing marks, and most anything else you might need to know can be found on the university's website, here: http://www.carleton.ca/calendars/ugrad/current/regulations/acadregsuniv.html

Requests for Academic Accommodations

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website (www.carleton.ca/pmc) for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable). *The deadlines for contacting the Paul Menton Centre regarding accommodation for final exams for the Fall exam period is November 11, 2016 and for the Winter exam period is March 10, 2017

For Religious Observance: Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious observance should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance.

For Pregnancy: Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

Final Grades

Please note that grades are not final until the Dean approves them. The Dean has the power to change grades.

Review Week Schedule

I will be available in my office at the regular time during review week. Students with questions should see me then. I will be available to you during review week.

HANDOUT 001 2016/17

ANTH5403/4500 INTERPRETING SYMBOLS – Brian Given – 2016

Symbolic anthropology is ill-defined and non-paradigmic (as is anthropology). Our task in this seminar is to develop a grasp of the range of work that defines symbolic anthropology. We can discuss theories, invariably associated with particular authors or we can look at the topics. In other words we can look at the semiotic structuralism of Claude Levi-Strauss or the psychological functionalism of Bronislaw Malinowski. Alternatively we can focus on the topics of anthropological research, initiation rites, representations of gender in culture, myths, totems, sacrifice, taboo, sexuality, kinship, ritual control of experience etc. etc.

The label "symbolic" is problematic because, if culture consists in a symbol system, then when are anthropologists not studying symbol use? That was the basic premise, developed by Dilthey and Weber, on which the social sciences are predicated. In practice the label "symbolic" is often used to describe those social phenomena that do not lend themselves to study using (apparently) more "objective" or "scientific" methods – those aspects of cultural performance where the meanings of acts are not clear to the anthropologist or sometimes, to the informant.

Secondly, if, as Anthony Wallace suggests, ritual is where the work of religion is done and ritual consists in sets of actions that are primarily symbolic, then much our study will focus on ritual/religion. As Barthes and others so clearly illustrate, we are not limited to religion, but much of the work has been done in this area.

Thirdly, the study of symbols has, historically, been multidisciplinary and cross-cultural. Our central constructs of culture and society don't provide a universally accepted explanatory framework for symbolic acts. We are also increasingly inclined to acknowledge that the cultural other is the authority with regard to their symbolic behavior and often claims a symbolic operating range that is well outside of the conceptual strategies that the anthropologist is trained to use. Our informants have been telling us for centuries that we need to have the experience before we can do the analysis!

The Following books might be useful – they are in Carleton's Library.

Levi-Strauss, Claude	Structural Anthropology V.1
Lakoff, George	Metaphors We Live By
Haraway, Donna	Primate Visions
Root Deborah	Cannibal Culture …
Rosenau, Pauline	Post Modernism and the Social Sciences: …
Laughlin, Charles	Brain, Symbol and Experience
Barkow, Jerome	Darwin, Sex and Status
	Missing the Revolution: Darwinism for Soc. Sci.
Tedlock, Dennis	The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation

Schechner, Richard et al	By Means of Performance
Atkinson, Paul	The Ethnographic Imagination: Textual …
Hill, Jane et al	Responsibility and Evidence in Oral Discourse
Laughlin, Charles	Brain, Symbol and Experience

Examples of the theories and theoreticians we might study include but are not limited to:

The Big Four: Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, David Schneider and Clifford Geertz.

Seeing culture as a symbolic system – e.g. Wilhelm Dilthey or Max Weber

Functionalism and structural functionalism – the psychological and social functions of symbolic systems – e.g. Malinowski, Van Gennep, Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe-Brown, Levy-Bruhl, Durkheim, Turner.

Semiotic Structuralism – factoring out the logic of Tylor's "psychic unity of mankind." – e.g. de Saussure, Levi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, Marcel Mauss, Pascal Boyer.

Biological Structuralism – Jean Piaget, Eugene d'Aquilly, Earl Count, Charles Laughlin

Psychoanalytic – e.g. Freud, James, Glock & Stark, Jung.

Phenomenology – focusing on experience – e.g. Wilhelm Dilthey, Frederick Spiegelberg, Edmund Husserl, Clifford Geertz, Alfred Schutz, Peter Berger & Thomas Luckman, Mircea Eliade, Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenonomenology (see Rasmussen's Mythic Symbolic Language and Philosophical Anthropology).

Feminist – e.g. Donna Harraway, Sandra Harding etc.

Integrative Approaches – e.g. Biogenetic Structuralism – Charles Laughlin, Eugene d'Aquilly, John McManus, Mathew Brady, Robert Rubinstein - Evolutionary Anthropology – Jerome Barkow and Barkow, Cosmides & Tooby, Richard Dawkins. Neurolinguistic Programming – John Grinder and Richard Bandler etc.

Post Modernism, Post Structuralism – Roland Barthes, Pierre Bordieu, Jean Beudrillard, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean Francois Lyotard etc.

Visual anthropology, Sol Worth, Karl Heider, Jay Ruby, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag

Non-western theories of symbolism – e.g. ritual-based epistemologies and pedagogies such as shamanic hermeneutics or Buddhist Tantric theory (from Kant's "causes of causes" to Buddhist "Interdependent Origination") etc.

Examples of the topics we might investigate include, but are not limited to ritual, magic, myth, totem, taboo, kinship, shamanism, revitalization, symbolic healing, cults and state cults, mystical experience, state-specific knowledge, biology and consciousness, the ritual control of experience, consciousness and power, propaganda, consciousness, gender, symbolism etc.

<u>One Initial fuzzy question:</u>

The general public, but also anthropologists, use the concept of "culture" as the central organizing construct in our discussions of the ways in which various groups of people are different from each other or similar to each other. Many of us speak little about "human nature" though, presumably, a model of human nature would be the explanatory vehicle for discussing the ways in which all human beings are alike (and, by extension, the ways in which they are different). Recognizing the difficulty of defining the latter we tend, as cultural anthropologists to focus on the former concept but "culture" has always been problematic for us. We are heavily influenced by the thinking of Dilthey and Weber in seeing cultures as systems of symbols and interpretations. Would not a science of culture, sooner or later, have to get down to building a model of human nature? What is the source of the symbolizing process and of symbols? By what yardsticks do we determine the operating range(s) and meaning(s) of symbols? Could symbol systems be the code we might unravel to reveal the stuff out of which cultures and mind itself are constructed? What is the agency of that construction?

HANDOUT 002, 2016/17
ANTH5403/4500 INTERPRETING SYMBOLS – Brian Given

SCHEDULE OF PRESENTATIONS

Sept. 16 Setup and Schedule Brian
Sept. 23 Semiotics – overview Brian
Sept. 30 Structuralism and Jean Piaget Brian
Oct. 7 History Symbols and Issues: An Interpretive
Analysis of Symbolic Processes in Tibetan
Cultural Survival Brian
Library Q&A with Janet Hempstead

PLEASE NOTE: THE TOPICS BELOW ARE **JUST EXAMPLES** … WE WILL NEGOTIATE THE TOPICS OF YOUR PRESENTATIONS.

Oct. 14 Culture as Symbolic System. Wilhelm Dilthey / Max Weber –student presentation

Erving Goffman student presentation

Clifford Geertz student presentation

Oct. 21 Van Gennep, Rites de Passage & Turner student presentation

Victor Turner Overview of theory student presentation

David Schneider student presentation

OCT 24-28
FALL BREAK

Nov. 4 Symbolism and Pierre Bordieu student presentation

Mary Douglas, Natural Symbols and Food, student presentation

Nov. 11	Levi-Strauss, Structuralism	student presentation
	Charles Laughlin and Biogenetic Structuralism	student presentation
	Shamanism (e.g. Mircea Eliade, Wm. Harner, John Cove, Charles Laughlin	student presentation
Nov. 18	Symbolism and Product Design	student presentation
	Symbols and Colonial Histories	student presentation
Nov. 25	Cyborgs and Superheroes: Mythic Tropes	student presentation
	Jerome Barkow – Darwin, Sex and Status	student presentation
Dec. 2	Edith Turner, Charles Tart - Transpersonalists	student presentation
	Summing Up	Everybody / coffee etc.