About the course
Fieldwork-based cultural anthropology tended to be highly synchronic. It took as its subject
matter some kind of system. From the 1930s forward, this was a kinship, or a kinship and
marriage system, often tied to a political system. From the 1960s onward, the notion of an
ecosystem gained currency. The system was imagined as a coherent, functional whole, each part
participating in and contributing to an overarching totality. So defined, the anthropological
object was static. It was presumed to be unchanging, and what was important was the organic
logic of the whole, not its origin and the history of its coming into existence. Such systems were
historyless. Anthropology also tended to imagine the anthropological object as an isolate.
Anthropology studied tribes, or islands, or cultures: independent entities that had to be
understood as such, on their own terms and in light of their own logic. It was endogenous or
internal factors, not exogenous or external factors, that mattered.
In the 1950s, some anthropologists brought Marxist or political economy frameworks
into anthropology and began studying anthropological cultures in terms of their exposure to
colonial powers and the capitalism that seemed integral to colonialism. They insisted on the
need for diachronic rather than synchronic approaches in anthropology, approaches that would
acknowledge impinging exogenous or external forces and their impacts. They asked, for
example, what were the consequences of the presence of the Spanish in Mexico, or how did a
plantation-based sugar-centered economy affect the Caribbean?
In 1973, Clifford Geertz published his famous collection of essays, The Interpretation of
Cultures, a collection that called for an “interpretive” approach to culture and history and that
had a powerful impact on both anthropology and history, especially in Princeton’s History
Department. For those familiar with the “Annales School,” this impact simply broadened and
perpetuated the fertile ground between history and anthropology that had already existed in
continental Europe for decades.
In the 1980s, Sahlins’s Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities approached the
relationship between foreign and local forces in a different way: not through colonialism and
capitalism but through the relationship between “structure” and “agency.” This is a long story
that will be tackled early on in the course, but the point is that this kind of historical
anthropology—dubbed “structural history” by its critics—opened up a new branch of diachronic
or historical anthropology.
What structural history and political economic approaches to historical anthropology
had in common was that they were both interested in the impacts of outsiders upon local
cultures. Today the relationship between local cultures and outside forces continues to be
pursued in both political economic and structural historical ways, but the repertoire of topics and
frameworks of historical anthropology have expanded. In particular, historical anthropology
now focuses on historical narrative as a mode of representation (and on representation as a
historical event), posing new questions about the history of “women,” or of “race,” for example,
and about sometimes highly contested national histories, so important to the creation of a sense
of nationhood and belonging.
The course provides something of an overview of the history of anthropology and
examples of varying frameworks and topics, in the hope of encouraging the anthropologists
taking the course to learn more about historical anthropology and its sister sub-discipline, historical archaeology, and the non-anthropological students to find in historical anthropology something relevant to their own disciplines.

**Time spent on this course**
The University of Oregon expects you to study 2 hours outside the classroom for every hour you spend inside the classroom. This means that, for 4 credits, you will spend 4 hours (roughly) a week attending class and 8 hours a week doing the reading and studying for exams, for a total of 12 hours a week. The syllabus has been prepared with that in mind.

**Readings and films**
The readings for the course (mostly written by anthropologists but there are some writings by historians) will be posted on the course blackboard site. You would be advised to take notes when watching a film, as you will be asked about the films shown in the course on exams.

**Performance requirements**
1) Eight one-page double-spaced discussions of assigned readings in response to a question or questions posed by the instructor. These discussions should be typed using Times Roman (new or old) 12-point type. The type page should be standard (1 inch margins all around). Make sure you have at least three citations, referencing pages spread out in the reading. You should use these brief papers to show me that you have done the reading. The standard citation style is (Mintz 2010:26) (Author date: page reference). (30%)

2) Either a sit-down midterm or a paper of at least seven pages. (30%) If you choose to do a paper, you will need to submit a one-page double-spaced prospectus by 4 pm on 4/14. The prospectus should identify your topic and what you hope to learn about it. In addition to the one-page prospectus, you should turn in your paper’s bibliography. Read 200 pages beyond the syllabus or five substantial articles or book chapters relevant to your topic.

3) A sit-down final. (40%)

**Grades**
Grades will be posted on blackboard’s Grade Center. The course will be curved and graded according to the overall distribution of scores at the end of the course. This means that you will not be able to convert your raw score on the midterm into a letter grade. The curve set in the course will be somewhat more generous than blackboard’s letter-grade system. Students may earn up to 8 percent of the total number of points assigned by frequently contributing to class discussion in such a way as to demonstrate knowledge of course materials.

**Key dates**
1. The one-page discussions of assigned readings are due on the following days by 4 pm: 4/7, 4/14, 4/21, 4/26, 5/5, 5/12, 5/19, and 5/26.
2. 4/14: a prospectus of your proposed paper is due by 4 pm. See instructions above.
3. 4/21: study guide for midterm will be posted on blackboard by the end of the day
4. 4/28: midterm
5. 5/19: paper is due by 4 pm.
6. 5/26: study guide for the final will be posted on blackboard by the end of the day
7. 6/6: 1-3 pm, sit-down final in 202 Condon Hall

**Academic honesty**
Note that plagiarism will not be tolerated. The key web site on plagiarism is http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/ You may also wish to look at the parallel web site for instructors: http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/faculty/ Students who are
shown to have plagiarized for any performance requirement will receive an “F” for the course, and the plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

COURSE OF STUDY

Week one

3/29/11 Introduction to the course: from synchronic to diachronic approaches and the shift from historical realism to a focus on representation

3/31/11 The historical anthropology of first contact


Film: First Contact (VT 01410)

Week two

4/5/11 The interface between history and anthropology


Robert Darnton’s “In Memoriam” for Clifford Geertz (2007)

4/7/11 Historical archaeology

Guest presenter: Dr. Stephen Dueppen, ACLU fellow, Dept. of Anthropology, UO


Week three

4/12/11 Giants in historical anthropology and the terrain they mapped out


Sahlins, Marshall. 1985. Chapter from Islands of History or ch. 2 from HMMR.
4/14/11 Historical anthropological approaches to colonialism


For those writing a paper instead of taking the midterm, a one-page prospectus of the paper is due by 4 pm. This prospectus should identify what your topic will be and what you hope to learn about it. In addition to the one-page prospectus, you should submit a list of your readings, making sure that you read about 200 pages beyond the syllabus, or that you read five substantial texts beyond the syllabus.

Week four

4/19/11 The history of “race” I


4/21/11 The history of “race” II


Film clip from film on Saartie Baartman in the Department of Anthropology’s video/DVD collection

Study guide for the midterm available by the end of 4/21, if not by class time.

Week five

4/26/11 The history of “race” III: world fairs and the construction of the “The West” and whiteness

Rydell chapter on portraying Africa

4/28/11 Sit-down midterm

Week six

5/3/11 National histories I: USA


5/5/11 National histories II: USA, cont.


Week seven

5/10/11 National histories III: South Africa


5/12/11 National histories III: South Africa, cont.; Germany’s national history


Week eight

5/17/11 Toward a critical history of anthropology I: the case of the “bushman”


Film: Last of the Bushmen (DVD 03304)

S11 Toward a critical history of anthropology II: the case of “Ishi, the last Yahi”


Film: Ishi the Last Yahi (DVD 03245)

For those writing a paper instead of taking the midterm, the paper is due on 5/19 by 4 pm.

Week nine

S112 The invention of tradition?


S1126 The decolonization of history: the historiography of 19th-century Hawaiian history


Three reviews of Aloha Betrayed. 2006. The Contemporary Pacific 18(1).

Film: Act of War: The Overthrow of the Hawaiian Nation (VT 02180)
Study guide available on BB by the end of the day or by class time.

Week ten

5/31/11 Studying first contact, and its pitfalls: Sahlins v. Obeyesekere


6/2/11 Review for the final

Exam week

6/6/11 1-3 pm Sit-down final in 202 Chapman