

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Anthropology of Indigenous Amazonia - 53174

Last update 07-08-2021

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 1st degree (Bachelor)

Responsible Department: Sociology & Anthropology

Academic year: 0

Semester: 1st Semester

Teaching Languages: Hebrew

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Eliran Arazi

Coordinator Email: eliran.arazi@mail.huji.ac.il

Coordinator Office Hours: Mondays 15:00-16:00

Teaching Staff:

Mr. Eliran Arazi

Course/Module description:

Noble savages or ruthless cannibals, primitives forsaken by history or much needed stewards of the planet's disappearing jungles – Western imagination has described indigenous Amazonians both in the best and the worst of terms. Western anthropology has started only in recent decades to clear its path in the thicket of innumerable Amazonian ethnic and linguistic groups, and ethnographers frequently encounter among these groups phenomena and conceptions that challenge the very fundamental categories we live by. The course will present a broad perspective on indigenous Amazonian societies, focusing on some of the present-day issues that these peoples face, as well as on their thorny interactions with non-indigenous agents. The course will explore the anthropology of indigenous Amazonia in both of its senses: not only acquainting ourselves with these societies by engaging with the ethnographic literature, but also employing indigenous concepts and practices to interpret and rethink different aspects of Western societies.

Course/Module aims:

The course will explore common cultural, social, and cosmological traits of indigenous Amazonian societies, as well as some of their local variations. The course will provide students with a conceptual and ethnographic toolbox with which they can engage critically with media representations, professional reports, and cultural products related to indigenous people in Amazonia and beyond, as well as to conservation politics in the region. The acquaintance with these societies will allow students to develop their anthropological imagination, to critically examine common assumptions of universality, and to defamiliarize themselves from different phenomena in the society they live in.

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Discuss the main themes of Amazonian ethnography

Assess particular monographs in view of regional ethnographic debates

Engage critically with texts, media representations, and cultural products related to Amazonian societies as well as extractive and conservation politics in that region.

Identify links between anthropological theories and the ethnographic realities in which they are based

Defamiliarize common conceptions regarding nature and culture, human and nonhuman, body and identity, economy and kinship.

Attendance requirements(%):

90%

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: Lecture and discussion

Course/Module Content:

We will discuss social, cultural, and cosmological structures, as well as epistemological categories shared among indigenous Amazonian societies: the continuity between the human and nonhuman; shamanism and ritual; gender and kinship, and body and identity. We will examine various aspects of the region's colonization and the ways in which indigenous populations have resisted to and negotiated with it, such as the contact with Europeans, their goods and technology; missionization and Christianity; interactions with the State and market; struggles for environmental conservation and cultural preservation. The course emphasizes regional ethnography's contribution to anthropological theory – principally structuralism and the ontological turn.

Required Reading:

Partial list -

*Mann, Charles C. "1491." The Atlantic Monthly March 2002: 41-53.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/03/1491/302445/>*

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1973. "Structuralism and Ecology." Social Sciences Information 12 (1): 7-23.

Erickson, Clark. 2008. "Amazonia: The Historian Ecology of a Domesticated Landscape." In The Handbook of South American Archaeology, edited by Helaine Silverman and William Isbell, 157-83. New York: Springer.

Descola, Philippe. 2009. "Human Natures." Social Anthropology 17: 145-157.

Descola, Philippe. 2013. "Animism Restored". In Beyond Nature and Culture, 129-138. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Brightman, Marc. 2010. "Creativity and Control: Property in Guianese Amazonia." Journal de La Société Des Américanistes 96: 135-67.

Fausto, Carlos. 2007. "Feasting on People: Eating Animals and Humans in Amazonia." Current Anthropology 48 (4): 497-530

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4 (3): 469–88.

Ferguson, R. Brian. 2001. "Materialist, Cultural and Biological Theories on Why Yanomami Make War." *Anthropological Theory* 1 (1): 99–116.

Fausto, Carlos. 1999. "Of Enemies and Pets: Warfare and Shamanism in Amazonia." *American Ethnologist* 26: 933–56.

Vilaça, Aparecida. 2002. "Making Kin out of Others in Amazonia." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8 (2): 347–65

Viveiros De Castro, Eduardo. 2001. "GUT Feelings about Amazonia: Potential Affinity and the Construction of Sociality." In *Beyond the Visible and the Material: The Amerindization of Society in the Work of Peter Riviere*, edited by Laura Rival and Neil L. Whitehead, 21–43. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hugh-Jones, Stephen. 1994. "Shamans, Prophets, Priests, and Pastors." In *Shamanism, History, and the State*, Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey, 32–75. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Vilaça, Aparecida. 2009. "Conversion, Predation, and Perspective." In *Native Christians: Modes and Effects of Christianity among Indigenous Peoples of the Americas*, edited by Aparecida Vilaça and Robin Wright, 147–66. Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Kopenawa, Davi. 2013. "Cannibal Gold." in *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 282–296.

Walker, Harry. 2012. "Demonic Trade: Debt, Materiality, and Agency in Amazonia." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18 (1): 140–59.

Echeverri, Juan Alvaro. 2005. "Territory as Body and Territory as Nature: Intercultural Dialogue?" In *The Land within: Indigenous Territory and Perception of the Environment*, edited by Alexandre Surrallés and Pedro García Hierro, 230–46. Copenhagen: Centraltrykcreiet Skive.

Kelly, José Antonio. 2016. "Anti-Mestizaje: a Case of Non-Fusional Mixture." In *About Anti-Mestizaje*, 42–57. Curitiba: Cultura e Barbárie.

Additional Reading Material:

Partial list -

Hemming, John. 2008. *Tree of Rivers: The Story of the Amazon*. New York: Thames & Hudson.

Fausto, Carlos. 2008. "Too Many Owners: Mastery and Ownership in Amazonia." *Mana* 4: 329-66.

Kohn, Eduardo. 2007. "Animal Masters and the Ecological Embedding of History among the Avila Runa of Ecuador." In *Time and Memory: Indigenous Perspectives*, 106-29. Gainesville: University of Florida.

Conklin, Beth A., and Laura R. Graham. 1995. "The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics." *American Anthropologist* 97 (4): 695-710.

Course/Module evaluation:

End of year written/oral examination 0 %

Presentation 0 %

Participation in Tutorials 10 %

Project work 50 %

Assignments 30 %

Reports 10 %

Research project 0 %

Quizzes 0 %

Other 0 %

Additional information:

Bibliography to be updated toward the beginning of the semester.