Anthropology 163B – Production, Consumption, Exchange
Summer 2016
Course Session and Dates: Session II – July 11-August 12, 2016.
Class Time: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-4:00pm

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Office Hours: undecided, by appointment
Draft syllabus, subject to change and approval.

Course Description¹:

Ever wondered about questions like these?

What is the nature of value? Why is some product more expensive (or cheaper) than others? What do people mean by “the national economy” and “globalization”?

This course has the answers!

We read in the newspapers, books, and hear in everyday discussion about “the economy,” an identifiably separate sphere of human life with its own rules and principles and its own scholarly discipline (economics). This class starts with the premise that this “common sense” idea of the economy is only one among a number of possible perspectives on the ways people use resources to produce, exchange and consume in ways that meet their basic and not-so-basic human needs. We’ll take a comparative look at modes of production, consumption and exchange that challenges Euro-American assumptions about value, economic decision-making and economic systems.

The course is divided into two parts: first we will look at some foundational texts and concepts for the field of economic anthropology and some of the debates and schools of thought that have defined the field, including the formalism-substantivism debate, political economy, and ecological anthropology. We will then approach a number of questions central not only to economic anthropology, but to anthropology in general and to any comprehensive study of the nature of economic activity. Courses readings will touch on a number of case studies of contemporary production, consumption and exchange in the global economy.

Requirements
Class attendance and participation – 20 %
Attendance will be recorded. You are allowed two unexcused absences; after that absences will be deducted from your total attendance score. In addition, this portion of

¹ This course was lightly adapted from Elizabeth Ferry’s version of this class. Much of the descriptive language is hers.
your grade will include recognition of class participation. You are responsible for getting
the notes from another student for any class you may have missed.

LATTE postings—reading responses – 20%
Students are required to post one reading response based on the incoming week’s reading
on LATTE forum every week. The first two postings are due July 17th at the end of the
first week. By July 17th, you shall post one comment on the first week’s readings and
another on the second week’s readings. For the other postings, you may post at any time
during the prior week up to 12 mid-night on Sunday; late postings will not be credited.
Posts should be a paragraph length and should make explicit mention of two or more
readings. Posts that do not meet these criteria will receive only partial credit. Posts will
also be discussed in class, and will help the instructor in shaping lectures and discussion.
You will have to post 5 reading responses in total throughout the course.

Commodity biography – 20 %
Students will write a 10-page research paper describing the life history of a commodity.
The paper should talk about the origin, the circulation, and the consumptive end of this
commodity. Students should also interpret the commodity’s life history using theories
covered in the class. The paper requires at least three citations of outside sources and two
citations of class sources. (Due date 8/01/2016)

Research paper with annotated bibliography – 40 %
At the end of the class, you are required to submit a 15-page research paper on a topic of
your choosing and of relevance to this class (due date TBD). You also have the option to
hand in a paper draft with or without an annotated bibliography (a list of 5-10 sources,
each accompanied by one or two sentences explaining the role the source is expected to
have in the paper) by August 1st. The annotated bibliography and the short description
will not be graded, but based on them students will receive comments and guidance to
help with the final project. I also encourage you to come to talk with me about your plans
for the final research paper.

Grading
It is important that you understand the meaning of the grades in this class. A grade in the
“A” range means that you have done outstanding work of originality, sophistication, and
high analytic acuity relative to other undergraduate work. A grade in the “B” range
means that you have aimed high and performed well. Work in the “B” range is solid but
not as deeply insightful, as skillfully argued, or as consistently attentive to the texts as
work in the “A” range. A grade in the “C” range means that your work is fair but lacking
in some key area, such as originality or analysis.

Final Grade = (20% attendance and participation) + (20% Reading Response) + (20%
Commodity Biography) + (40% Research Paper)

Rewrite and make-up policy
The rewrite and make-up policy only applies to reading responses and the commodity biography. Students dissatisfied with a grade of the reading response have the option to post one more reading response on the original theme by August 8th. For example, a rewrite posting for Week 2’s reading response should review and readdress readings of week 2. Students also have the option to rewrite the commodity biography assignment by August 11th. In addition, in order to rewrite you will need to:

- Talk to me about your rewrite, either over email, over the phone, or in person in office hours.
- Submit your original draft with comments, your revised draft, and a rewrite cover sheet (available on Latte).

No rewrites are accepted after the last day of class. No rewrites for the final research paper (though you could choose to write a paper description prior to the final submission).

* If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me.

*The use of laptops and other electronic devices (including phones) is not allowed in class except with special permission of the instructor.

Books

Ferry, Elizabeth 2005 *Not Ours Alone: Patrimony, Value, and Collectivity in Contemporary Mexico* New York: Columbia

Paxton, Heather 2012 *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America* Berkeley: California

Course Schedule

**Introduction/Forerunners**

**Week 1**

**July 11:** [no reading, introduction] Film, “Mardi Gras: Made in China”


**What is Economic Anthropology for anyways?**

**Week 2**


**Formalism vs. Substantivism**

Cancian, Frank, “Maximization as Norm, Strategy and Theory” in *Economic Anthropology: Readings in Theory and Analysis.*
in-class debate

**Political Economy (Production and Consumption)**

**Week 3**

Norris, Lucy, “Creating Fame and Fortune from the Ruins of Handloom in Kerala, South Indi” in Textile Economies: Power and Value from the Local to the Transnational, edited by Walter E. Little and Patricia A. McAnany, AltaMira Press;

Walsh, Andrew 2004 In the Wake of Things: Speculation in and about Sapphires in Northern Madagascar American Anthropologist 106(2) pp. 225-237

July 28: The Life of Cheese

Ecological Anthropology

Week 4
(Commodity Biography due)

August 2: Film, “Drowned Out”
Arundhati Roy, “The Greater Common Good”
Terence Turner and Vanessa Fajans-Turner, “Political Innovation and Interethnic Alliance: Kayapo Resistance to the Developmentalist State”

Money, Finance, and Globalization
August 4: Mette High, “Wealth and Envy in the Mongolian Gold Mines”
Susan Falls, “Picturing Blood Diamonds”
Purnima Mankekar, “India Shopping” Indian Grocery Stores and Transnational Configurations of Belonging;
Pauline Garvey, “Ikea sofas are like H&M trousers’: the potential of sensuous signs” (optional)
Sarah Lyon, “Evaluating fair trade consumption: politics, defetishization and producer participation” International Journal of Consumer Studies

Week 5


August 11: Review, Presentation, and Discussion.