

# THE PROBLEM OF TIME IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

ANTH 515A—FALL 1995

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WEDNESDAY, 2:00-4:30 PM  
ANTHROPOLOGY CONFERENCE ROOM—FANER 3531

DR. JOHN C. MCCALL  
OFFICE HOURS: M-W-F, 10:00-11:00 AM  
FANER 3538—TEL: 453-5324

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*What then, is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is.  
If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know.*  
— St. Augustine

*The present contains nothing more than the past, and  
what is found in the effect was already in the cause.*  
— Henri Bergson

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In this seminar we will explore a broad range of readings centering on two key issues regarding time in anthropological analysis. The first is the problem of the temporal dimension in theoretical modeling. We will include but go considerably beyond familiar concerns regarding synchronic and diachronic analyses and the relative value of evolutionary and historical models of change. The second issue involves the cultural construction of time perception, cross-cultural variation in temporal cognition and the epistemological problems which arise when studying time perception in other cultures. These two faces of time in anthropology, one abstract and theoretical, the other empirical and ethnographic, are inextricably linked in the project, identified by Johannes Fabian, of attaining an anthropology which accounts for the coeval existence of the researcher and the people researched.

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# Readings

The books listed below are available at Rosetta News and Books.

Alfred Gell  
*The Anthropology of Time*  
Berg Publishers Limited, 1992

Paul Connerton  
*How Societies Remember*  
Cambridge University Press, 1989

The first four weeks will be devoted to discussion of chapters from Alfred Gell's book and readings on file in the reading room. Each seminar participant will be asked to take responsibility for leading the discussion of some of these. Discussion leaders will write brief critical reviews (2 pages) based on the readings they select and make a copy of the review for each seminar participant. All seminar participants should read each article and be prepared to participate actively in all seminar discussions. We will be discussing Paul Connerton's book near the end of the semester.

## Readings related to your chosen reading focus

You will need to select a reading focus from the list below. The idea is for individual students to investigate different paradigms for theorizing about time and social change. If you think that a theoretical approach has been left off the list let me know and (if you can convince me) I'll add it. At some point in the semester we will discuss your chosen focal area in class. You will assign readings, present a preliminary report to the class, and submit a ten page literature review which identifies and discusses key issues and exemplars. These reviews should be completed by the time we discuss the topic in class and copies should be made for each seminar participant. The literature review is a first step toward your final project which will consist of a critical analysis of the paradigm including different schools of thought within the approach, critical comparison to other approaches and conclusions regarding the scope, strengths, limitations and implications of the approach. The final project is due on November 15. Copies should be made for all seminar members. The final projects will be discussed during the last two meetings. Any revisions of the final project must be submitted no later than December 11, 3:00 pm.

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## Reading Foci

(Note: the names cited after each foci are to help get you started and do not represent a "reading list")

### **Evolution**

(Aristotle, Vico, Darwin, Frazer, L. White, Steward, Gould, Prigogine, Rappaport, Friedman, Stocking)

### **Marxian Evolution/Historical Materialism**

(Marx, Adorno, Benjamin, Levine, Wolf, Wallerstein, Friedman, Godelier, Giddens)

### **Historical Theories**

(Boas, R. Rosaldo, J. Hill, M. Taussig, Sahlins, Obesekere, H. White, Gadamer, Said)

### **Phenomenological Theories**

(Husserl, Heidegger, Schutz, Ricoeur, Geertz, Jackson, Merleau-Ponty, Connerton)

### **Structuralism, Structuration and Post-Structuralism**

(Lévi-Strauss, Piaget, Leach, Fabian, Giddens, Bourdieu, de Certeau )

### **Foucauldian Epistemes**

(Foucault, N. Fraser, Giddens, Mudimbe, de Certeau, Baudrillard)

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## A Night of Serious Thinking

In keeping with the tradition which began last year, we will meet during the week of Halloween (currently referred to euphemistically as 'fall recess') at my house for a symposium devoted to a 'night of possession and necromancy.' Participants will choose a particular theorist to represent/impersonate and participate in a 'meeting of minds' in which we will debate issues regarding the problem of time in social analysis. The symposium will be casual and (if last year is any indication) should be a lot of fun...however, attendance and participation is to be taken as seriously as any other class meeting. READ UP FOR YOUR PART! Appropriate costuming is encouraged. The date for the symposium will be determined in class.

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## Summary of Seminarian Responsibilities

Seminar participants will

- attend each class meeting including the symposium.
- actively participate in class discussion
- write two page reviews for some of the readings and lead discussion of those readings
- present an in class review and lead discussion on your focus topic
- submit a 10 page written review on the day of your presentation
- submit a 20 page critical essay on Nov. 15.
- NOTE: the last date for submitting final essay revisions is Monday, Dec 11, 3:00 pm

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## Grading Criteria

The course grade will be based on the following criteria

Participation in Discussion	15%
Discussion Leadership	15%
Article Reviews	20%
Midterm Review Paper	20%
Final Critical Review	30%

Since the seminar meets only once a week, regular attendance is essential. Please inform me in advance if illness or other personal emergency will prevent you from attending class.

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## Seminar Readings

### 1) August 23

Introduction

### 2-4) August 30, September 6, 13

Gell— Chapters 1-5

Fortes, Meyer

“Time and Social Structure” In: *Time and Social Structure and other essays*. London: University of London, Athlone Press. 1970

— — “The First Born” In: *Religion, Morality and the Person*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987

Evans-Pritchard, E. E.

“Time and Space” In: *The Nuer*. Oxford: Clarendon. 1940

Leach, Edmund

“The Structure of Myth” In: *Lévi-Strauss*. Fontana/Collins. 1970

— — “Two Essays Concerning the Symbolic Representation of Time” In: *Rethinking Anthropology*. London: Athlone press.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude

“Time Regained” and History and Dialectic” In: *The Savage Mind*. University of Chicago Press, 1966.

Eliade, Mircea

“Survival of the Myth of Eternal Return” In *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History*. Princeton University Press. 1971 (Check under *Cosmos and History* in the library)

Turner, Victor

“Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage. In: *The Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1967

Rigby, Peter

“Some Gogo Rituals of Purification: An Essay on Social and Moral Categories” In: *Dialectic in Practical Religion* (E. Leach ed.) Cambridge. 1968

Zahan, Dominique

“Life, Death and Time” In: *The Religion, Spirituality, and Thought of Traditional Africa*. University of Chicago. 1979

Gell— Chapters 6-10

Geertz, Clifford

“Person, Time and Conduct in Bali” In: *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. 1973

### 5-10) September 20, 27, October 4, 11, 18, 25

Discussion of reading focus areas. Schedule to be determined in class. Readings to be announced.

### 11) Halloween Symposium

Meeting time to be determined in class

### 12-13) November 8, 15

Discussion of the Connerton book

General discussion and conclusions

**\*Final Projects due on November 15**

### 14) Thanksgiving Recess

### 15-16) November 29, December 8

Discussion of Final Projects