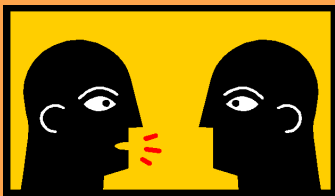


KEY DEBATES IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY

2019-20

Course overview



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Course overview

This module will introduce you to a wide and diverse range of theoretical discussions and debates that the discipline has deliberated over since the 1980s. It provides you with the necessary knowledge and skills to firstly, understand and secondly, critically evaluate the differing views expressed by anthropologists in relation to this series of significant debates.

By the end of the module you should be able to:

- Display a sophisticated understanding of the different perspectives that contribute to the debates.
- Critically evaluate divergent positions presented in debate.
- Demonstrate an advanced awareness of how the debates, and the contributors' engagement in dialogue, have prompted and advanced paradigm shifts within anthropology and cognate disciplines.

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COURSE STRUCTURE

The module is structured along the lines of the model established by the Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory (GDAT). The Group intended to act as a forum to confront disciplinary controversies using debating as the methodology. Active today it still focuses on what the contributors believe to be topical, significant and relevant issues. The forum has produced much thought-provoking work and has influenced the discipline in many ways. This module adopts the original intentions and format of the GDAT group.

The course follows a basic bi-weekly format after the first introductory week. In the first week you will simply be introduced to the course. During this time you should complete the readings indicated so as to establish a foundation of knowledge to build on in preparation for the following week's topics. After that you will be introduced to new debates every two weeks.



The course presents you with a selection of the ideas explored by past debates and ultimately aims to push (and support) you to propose a motion of your own in the style of the GDAT method. The rationale underpinning this is to enable you, through using the motions of previous debates, to arrive at a clearer understanding of what anthropology is – or could be.

The structure adopted by this module not only offers you a flavour of how debates in general are designed but also (and more importantly) illustrates some of the principal theoretical directions anthropology continues to be concerned with. This framing permits and encourages a sophisticated grasp of the complexities and tensions that emerge from and with the various contiguous perspectives that populate the discipline.

Each section adopts a new focus, direction and set of propositions, and each section builds on the next to form a trajectory of ideas and themes. Thus each section enables you to get a firmer grasp on how sets of ideas in anthropology have arisen, and how the ideas are interconnected both as emergent and rupturing notions that have directly influenced practice. This means that as the course unfolds you will be challenged not only to know these about new conflicting and supporting positions but also, in association, should find yourself further developing your own philosophies about how anthropology should be conceived of and what it aims to do.

COURSE FOCUS

Over the years since inception, the contributors to the GDAT debates have demonstrated that they are not interested in the promotion of any one school of thought or epistemological focus. In reflection of this framing, the content of the course too does not centre on any particular intellectual tradition. Instead it offers a variety of ideas and perspectives so as to invigorate consideration and promote deliberation of some issues concerning both the anthropology of the past and of today.

Additionally, and also in reflection of the original methodology and intentions of the GDAT forum, the content of *Key Debates in Anthropological Theory* embraces similar objectives, that is: to open discussion and stimulate consideration (even interrogation) of central, topical and contemporary theoretical themes that circulate and agitate the field we call anthropology. Thus, you are encouraged to engage in and be fuelled by these debates with a view to not only further your understanding of what it means to do or to 'make' anthropology (and also, be an anthropologist), but also hypothetically contribute to advancing the anthropological pursuit in ways you consider to be imperative.

The above intentions are achieved by introducing you to a selection of the debates covered by the original Group, along with an assortment of other sources that should build together to create a broad and varied view of the debate being explored from multiple perspectives. Thus, something approaching a holistic (if you like 3 dimensional) snapshot of issues and facets are presented to you, thereby enabling you to explore not only the relevant theoretical underpinnings but also some lived realities that are provoked by the ideas being circulated. At the end of each section you are asked to consider your own views and also defend your position too. This should support you to realize how you understand anthropology and also note its flaws, drawbacks and problems as a method that claims to work towards understanding what it means to be human.

Remember: the main purpose of being introduced to these debates is to provoke you to *think critically* about the validity and efficacy of the propositions being explored so that you can then either apply (or reject) these ideas to your own. But, while the ideas are key, you should not only be thinking about what is being proposed but also how the proposer is choosing to present their ideas - what notions they are relying on, what assumptions are being made and what line of reasoning is being employed. Noting how one debates, then, and being critically awake to rhetorical devices, is also a part of this module. Any good debate forms a clear, coherent, reasoned argument – this is something you should be aiming for in your studies.

In addition to the above, you are presented with a series of new topics of contemporary relevance. These topics are offered to inspire you and thus launch you into conceiving of your own motion to debate. However, you are also free to consider and propose a motion for a debate from any topic you feel to be pertinent after discussion with either your personal tutor or the course lecturer.

(Indicative list of subjects that may be covered: gender, agency, ontologies/epistemologies, neoliberalism, post-humanism, new animism, transhumanism, cosmopolitanism, morethanhuman move, multispecies ethnography, materialities, hyperobjects, rights and ethics.)

Towards the end of the course you should start to be aware of how the various debates explored (as both theoretical discussion points and as ideas for practice) exemplify a number of shifting but major concerns in academia, and also how they affect (or contribute to) wider important social and epistemological arguments. Tying together the discursive threads that weave through the course should help you both prepare for the presentation and the final assessment.

ASSESSMENT OUTLINE - deadlines for these assignments, along with more detail information about the assignments, are posted on Moodle. Please make a note of the dates in your diary.

- 1 x 20 minute presentation including PowerPoint slides and notes (equivalent of 2000 words) **proposing a motion for a debate** of the student's choosing following the GDAT method (40%)
- 1 x 3,000 word paper (60%) – **Using key themes from at least 3 GDAT debates critically consider the value of Anthropological knowledge in today's rapidly changing world.**
- In association with the above you will also be expected to regularly complete a selection of monitored but *not marked* online activities in which you will comment on your own progress with regards this course. See each section for the activity link.



MARKING CRITERIA

Please note the marking criteria used for this module.

Careful attention to what the marker is looking for will help you to be an effective student.

The marking criteria for doing a presentation and writing an essay will be available for you on Moodle.



READING and OTHER SOURCES



Core text:

Ingold, T. (ed.) 1996 *Key Debates in Anthropology* London: Routledge

Further essential reading:

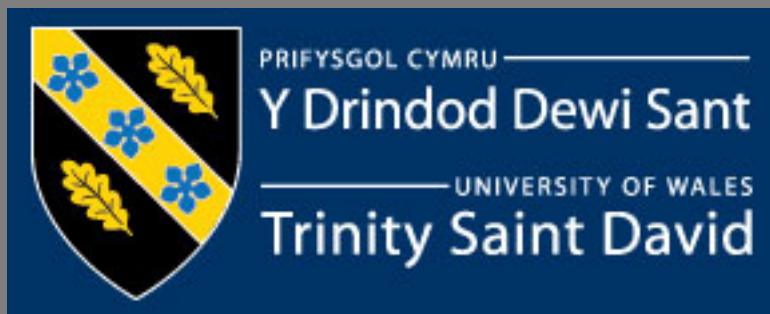
In addition to the core text, you are expected to read all of the relevant GDAT debates (from 1995-2011, 8 in total, available from *Critique of Anthropology* [online]

<http://coa.sagepub.com/content/current>).

Each section of the course has a particular debate associated with it – you will need to ensure that you have read and considered the relevant debate for the section prior to starting that segment. While the other debates are not strictly essential, reading them will undoubtedly support your study, and is advised.

The first few debates are available in Tim Ingold's book cited above. Please read this in the first week. A pdf of the book is posted on Moodle for you in Week 1's section. The rest of the debates are available as a series of articles in a folder posted on the first section of the course page.

Further essential readings, lectures and films are posted within each relevant section. You will find extra reading lists posted within each section too.



Key Debates in Anthropological Theory
2018
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