1. Course Description

In this seminar we examine anthropological contributions to public policy development and implementation. We also consider how public policies affect people’s lives. During the first weeks of the seminar participants will examine the nature of public policy and how anthropologists’ engagement with public policy has developed since the early 1970s to the present, and the anthropological study of public policy, including the socio-cultural understandings of risk, the role of values in policy and research, and the construction of authoritative knowledge. The subsequent section of the course examines anthropological studies of particular policy domains. Seminar participants will develop their own anthropological analysis of a policy area or approach. These analyses will be the focus of each participant’s seminar paper.

2. Readings

Required Readings:

Button, Gregory
2010 *Disaster Culture: Knowledge and Uncertainty in the Wake of Human and Environmental Catastrophe*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Douglas, Mary, and Aaron Wildavsky

Forman, Shepard, ed.

Lane, Sandra D.
Recommended Readings:

**Ginsburg Faye**

**Gomberg-Muñoz, Ruth**

**Moran, Michael, Martin Rein, and Robert E. Goodin, eds.**

**Shore, Cris, and Susan Wright, eds.**

**Shore, Cris, Susan Wright, and Davide Però, eds.**

**Simon, Herbert A.**

Expected Background:

This is an upper division undergraduate and a graduate level seminar. Participants are expected to have prior background in anthropology and anthropological methods. For those without previous anthropological study, I will be glad to suggest readings and other activities to help fill in the missing background. Please consult with me for suggestions as to what to do.

**3. Assignments and Evaluation**

- Class Participation: 30%
- Analytic Essay: 20%
- Ethnography Presentation: 20%
- Problem Based Case Study: 20%
- In-class paper précis: 10%
1.) Reading Responses and Class Participation (30%)

Preparation for and regular contribution to our class discussions are critical and the foundation for all of our work together in the seminar. High quality and regular class participation will be worth 30 percent of your semester grade.

Complete readings before class and be ready to engage in discussion about them. All students must participate in all class discussions. Your goal should be to try and understand the key claims of the reading; and to raise critical questions about those claims.

There are two roles in for our reading responses: Posters and Respondents

Posters:

The following are some suggestions for approaching the reading comments and discussion questions.

**Method:** What methods does the researcher use? Does the article provide useful methodological insights? If so, what?

**Data:** What are the data that the author presents? Can you see clearly how they were produced by the methods employed? Do they really support the author's claims?

**Argument:** What are the key things the article is claiming?

**Clarification?** What do you not understand or feel puzzled by in the article?

**Value?** What points in the article do you feel are especially valuable or noteworthy, and why?

**Relation to other scholarship/work/writing?** How does the article relate (or not relate) to other works in this or other classes?

**New questions/issues?** What, if any, new questions does the article raise in your mind? What does it lead you to think about in a new way? What questions does it suggest to you would be worthy or further study or investigation?

**Critique?** What points in the article do you feel were wrong, troubling, or problematic?

Responders:

Will review the readings and all of the comments made by Posters. They will prepare comments on the readings and in reaction to the Posters’ comments. Responders will send reading responses in advance of class meetings.

Everyone is responsible for reading all of the posted comments before coming to class. This system is intended to enhance class discussions by giving you time to think about what your fellow students have to say about the readings, and enhance our ability to keep focused on issues of interest.
Class Discussion Facilitators:

Beginning in the third week of class, one student will be designated as discussion facilitator for each class. Their role is to assist in leading the class discussions for that day. They may wish to bring to the class’s attention some material relevant to the day’s topic but not in the required reading.

The discussion facilitator should prepare some materials to use or distribute in class. This may be a brief set of questions and observations that can function to “prime” our class discussions of the class. The discussion facilitator should consult me about their approach to the material and planning for the class session.

2.) Analytic Essay Week 6 (20%)

Each seminar participant will prepare a brief analytic essay, in the style of a commentary found in Anthropology Today, in which they take a position regarding what public policy is from an anthropological point of view or how anthropology might best contribute to public policy discussions. This essay should be no longer than 1,200 words. It should link to relevant literature, which will be demonstrated by the (non-trivial) citation of no more than 10 and no fewer than 5 peer-reviewed sources.

3.) Case Study (20%)

During the second phase of the seminar we turn to considering extended anthropological texts considering public policy. For each of the cases that we will treat in this fashion a group of class members will be assigned present the book to the class.

The entire class will read some materials from or relating to the ethnography to be considered each week. The group of students responsible for the book will collectively present and discuss the book during the class meeting in which we consider the book.

4.) Problem-Based Case Study (10% + 20%)

Each seminar participant will prepare a seminar paper that develops his or her own anthropological analysis of a policy area or approach. The paper should call upon the theoretical approaches used in our class to understand the problem. The core aspects of the paper are about the problem, an analysis of its roots, its context, and, if possible, some practical strategies with which to address the issue under study. The white paper should be no more than 2,300 words long for undergraduates, and no longer than 3,500 words for graduate students.
5.) In-Class Paper Précis

During the last third of the class each seminar participant will have an opportunity to present a précis of their paper. The presentation will outline the problem being considered, discuss the conceptual approach being used, describe any empirical materials being considered and discuss how the paper links to the anthropological literature.

4. Readings and Seminars

1.1:

Introduction to the course, administrative business, self-introductions, course requirements, etc.

1.2:


2.1:


2.2:


3.1:

3.2:

4.1:

4.2:
5.1:


5.2:


6.1:

Carbaugh, D., 2009, "Putting policy in its place through cultural discourse analysis": 55-64. in E. Peterson (ed.), *Communication and Public Policy: Proceedings of the 2008 International Colloquium on Communication*. Orono, Me, University of Maine, Department of Communication and Journalism.


6.2:


7.1


7.2:


8.1:


8.2:


9.1:


9.2:

Button, G., 2010, *Disaster Culture: Knowledge and Uncertainty in the Wake of Human and Environmental Catastrophe*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press. Chapter 6 through Chapter 11, inclusive

10.1:

10.2:

11.1:

11.2:

12.1: