ANT 391 — The Anthropology of the State: State/Sovereignty/Territory

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Wednesdays 1:00-4:00pm, SAC 5.124
Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:00-3:00pm or by appointment

Course Description:
This course provides a rigorous introduction to the anthropology of the state. Focusing primarily on key theoretical interventions within anthropology and cognate disciplines, the course introduces a set different ways to understand the exercise and accomplishment of rule. Course readings are oriented around a series of key questions and debates in both historical and contemporary discussion of state power. Namely, the course asks:

• What is the state?
• What does it mean to examine “state formation” historically and ethnographically?
• What different forms (states?) might a state take?
• What is state power and how does it work?
• How might one understand and trace everyday experiences of and encounters with the state?
• What is the relationship between sovereignty, violence, and legitimacy?
• What is territory and how is it lived?

The course explores different ways that these questions have been engaged in Marxian thought, post-structural critique, and other schools of critical social theory. Though course readings are primarily theoretical in content, the course is targeted broadly at students interested in carrying out ethnographic and/or historical qualitative research on questions related to politics, power, and rule.
Course Goals
This course is designed as an introduction to the political anthropology of the state, but focuses specifically on three terms that have (again) come to dominate discussions of power in the contemporary moment: state, sovereignty, and territory. The relationship between and, indeed, the very meanings of these terms are hotly contested and by no means clear. Yet, they remain concepts that any student of power, politics, violence, development, environment and more must grapple with. The course, as such, aims to provide a solid foundation of understanding for students interested in pursuing ethnographic, historical, and qualitative research on politics and power in its many forms. Though by no means comprehensive, it should provide the tools for students to actively explore and engage a rich literature, set of methodological tools, and emerging areas of investigation. For the most part, it privileges theoretical readings over book length ethnographic and historical studies (with some exceptions). However, I have endeavored to provide a robust set of suggestions in each week for those wishing to dig further into any given topic. On completing this course, students should be prepared to:

• Explain (in both oral and written work) core theories and ideas about the anthropology of state, sovereignty, and territory.
• Understand different theoretical approaches to understanding state power (Marxian, Foucauldian, Feminist, etc.)
• Engage a series of key concepts and terms in discussions of state, sovereignty, and territory (hegemony, governmentality, exception, space, etc.)
• Articulate ways that theories of state, sovereignty, and territory might inform their own research designs, interpretations, and analyses.

Course Format, Expectations, and Procedures:
• This is a seminar course. The bulk of the class will be devoted to class discussion, not lectures. I expect everyone to be an active, regular, and respectful participant of course discussion.
• This is a reading intensive course. I expect students to arrive in class having done the readings and prepared to engage in active class discussion.
• I reserve the right to treat this syllabus as provisional. That is: if I or course participants identify other readings that will be helpful, I reserve the right to swap them in for readings listed here as needed. The amount of reading listed in this syllabus will remain approximately the same.
• I ask that everyone articulate (in advance of class) a discussion question related to the readings. I further ask that you write a brief accompanying paragraph that explains why you think that that question is important and relevant to ask. I ask that you do this for each class (you pass on writing discussion questions for up to two classes if you are overwhelmed with other work). The goal of these questions is to help initiate class discussion and provide course leaders with a way to think about the broader array of interests in the room. These questions and their justifications should be posted on the canvas Midnight on Tuesdays before class.
• Everyone will have an opportunity to lead class discussion twice. On the days when you are leading class discussion, you will write a short (1-2 pages) framing paper on the materials for that day and distribute it in advance (by 9am the morning of class). We will discuss the format for this in class.
• Your final project should be productive for you. While this project should draw on themes and readings from the course, the format is open ended. It should be the equivalent of an approximately 20-page paper.
• Each class has, in addition to required readings, suggested readings and/or framing pieces. The suggested readings are just that: suggested materials that you are more than welcome to pursue for further grounding in a given week’s materials.
Required Material
All course materials with the exception of books are available on the course’s Canvas site. This includes suggested readings (again, with the exception of books). The following books are required reading for the course and may be purchased at the campus store or from other venues.

Grading
- Course participation: 10% (based on regular and active participation in class)
- Reading Questions: 20% (based on completing and submitting weekly discussion questions)
- Course leadership: 20% (based on your two opportunities to lead a course)
- Framing Papers: 20% (based on the two briefing papers you write for class)
- Final Paper: 30%

Classroom Policies
*Policy on late work:* Unexcused late papers will receive 1/3 of a letter grade deduction if less than 12 hours, a full letter grade deduction if between 12 and 24 hours late, two full letter grade deductions between 24 and 48 hours late, and will not be accepted if more than 48 hours late. *Discussion questions must be posted by midnight the night before class, framing papers must be posted by 9am the morning of class.*

*Policy on absences:* I expect you to attend each class. I also recognize that things happen. Please contact me in advance if you will be missing class. Missing more than 2 classes will be grounds for failing the course.
August 30—Week 1: Introduction

Core Readings:

September 6—Week 2: Unsettling the State

Core Readings:

Recommended Readings:

September 13—Week 3: Marxian Foundations

Core Readings:

Recommended Readings:
September 20—Week 4: Marx and Cultural Studies
Core Readings:
- NOTE—Skim Chapters 1 and 5

Recommended Readings:

September 27—Week 5: Foucauldian Framings: Governmentality
NOTE—Dr. Townsend Middleton (UNC Chapel Hill) will be joining us during the second half of class for a discussion of his article “Across the Interface of State Ethnography.”
Core Readings:

Recommended Readings:

October 4—Week 6: Foucauldian Framings: Biopolitics
Core Readings:

Recommended Readings:

**October 11—Week 7: Race, Sex, and the Colonial Order of Things**

Core Readings:

Recommended Readings:

**October 18—Week 8: Governance, Secrecies and Transparencies**

Core Readings:
Recommended Readings:


October 25—Week 9: Sovereign Power and State Violence 1

Core Readings:


Recommended Readings:


November 1—Week 10: Sovereign Power and State Violence 2

Core Readings:
• Veena Das and Deborah Poole. 2004. “State and Its Margins: Comparative Ethnographies.” In Anthropology in the Margins of the State. SAR Press.
• Elizabeth Dunn and Jason Cons. 2013. “Aleatory Sovereignty and the Rule of Sensitive Space.” Antipode. 46(1).

Recommended Readings:

November 8—Week 11: Sovereignty and Anxiety

Core Readings:

Recommended Readings:

November 15—Week 12: State/Space/Territory
Core Readings:
- Stuart Elden. 2013. “How Should We Do the History of Territory?” Territory, Politics, Governance. 1(1).

Recommended Readings:

November 22: No Class, Thanksgiving
Recommended Readings:

November 29—Week 13: State/Space/Territory 2: Other Spaces
Core Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


**December 6, Week 14: Spatial Affects**

**Core Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**

POLICIES & RESOURCES
University Policies

Religious Holy Days
By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Q Drop Policy
If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you’ll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop

Student Accommodations
Students with a documented disability may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/
- Please request a meeting as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you

Academic Integrity
Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

This means that work you produce on assignments, tests and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. I will make it clear for each test, exam or assignment whether collaboration is encouraged or not.
Always cite your sources. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must make that clear otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.
You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

University Resources for Students
The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning, use these to help you succeed in your classes

The Sanger Learning Center
Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

The University Writing Center
The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students’ resourcefulness and self-reliance. http://uwc.utexas.edu/

Counseling and Mental Health Center
The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students’ academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

Student Emergency Services
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

ITS
Need help with technology? http://www.utexas.edu/its/

Libraries
Need help searching for information? http://www.lib.utexas.edu/

Canvas
Canvas help is available 24/7 at https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials

Important Safety Information

BCAL
If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right – it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Evacuation Information
The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, http://www.utexas.edu/safety/

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

• Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
• Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
• In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
• Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency