The Anthropology of Violence and Law

Spring 2011

ANTH UA-320-004 /LWSOC UA-951-001

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This course explores the nature of law and of violence from an anthropological perspective. It sees law as a system of ordering relations and controlling conflict in contexts as diverse as small bands and global institutions. Law is fundamental to maintaining state power and to colonial expansion yet also provides a way of dealing with conflict that does not require parties to use violence. Violence is a complicated concept, including both physical harm and cultural meanings. The course examines law and violence in the context of non-state societies, colonialism and postcolonialism, international law and human rights, alternative dispute resolution techniques, and practices of governmentality and audit.

This is an advanced seminar, and students are expected to do the readings and come to class prepared to discuss the material. There will be three short papers based on the course readings. Each is 30% of the grade and class participation is 10%. In each class, three students will be assigned to raise critical points and questions from the readings.

Required Books:

E.E. Evans-Pritchard. 1940. The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People. Oxford Univ. Press. Also available on kindle.


Chinua Achebe. *Things Fall Apart.*


**January 24-26: Law and Violence: What is Law?**


**January 31 – February 2: Law in Stateless Societies I: Reciprocity**


  Jan 31 – first part
  Feb 2 – second part

**February 7 – 9: Law in Stateless Societies II: Negotiating Violence**


Recommended: rest of the book.

**February 14 – 16: Theorizing Violence and the Law**


**February 21- March 1: Violence and Imperialism**


Feb. 23: No class

Feb 28: The Space of Death


March 1: Colonial Violence


**March 6-8: Law, Oracles, and Witchcraft**


**March 20-22: The Disputing Process and ADR**


**March 27: Gossip and Scandal**


**March 29- April 3: Marxism and Law**


**April 5- 10: Discipline and Governmentality**

April 5:


Foucault, Michel. “Governmentality.” On Blackboard
April 10:


April 12-19: Law and Colonialism


April 24: Legal Pluralism and International Human Rights


April 26-May 1: Law and Disorder in the Postcolony


May 3: Review