

CUNY GRADUATE CENTER

ANTH 71100: READING GRAMSCI

Fall 2011
Monday: 2:00-4:00pm (Room: 6421)

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Ever since his writings started to become available in English, Anglophone anthropologists have drawn on the work of Antonio Gramsci. Two factors that make Gramsci attractive to anthropologists are his concern with culture and with power. *How* do dominant groups maintain their dominance? *Why* is this dominance accepted by the subordinate? *How* can existing power relations be transformed? These are all key questions for Gramsci, and all for him involve issues of culture.

The course will focus on a careful and close reading of Gramsci's own texts, primarily the notebooks he wrote during his long imprisonment under Mussolini from 1927 until shortly before his death in 1937. It will include two presentations by leading Gramsci scholars. The stress in this course is on depth rather than breadth, giving students the opportunity to explore how Gramsci's approach is, or is not, relevant to their own particular research interests. The final paper will take the form of a discussion of one of more Gramscian concepts together with a research proposal grounded in these concepts.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Provide students with an in-depth understanding of the thought of Antonio Gramsci and its potential relevance for contemporary anthropologists.
2. Develop students' ability to think critically about theory and the relationship between theory and empirical fieldwork.

We will be using Blackboard. **All students must make sure to activate and check their CUNY GC email address and know how to access the Blackboard system.**

REQUIRED AND RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND ARTICLES

REQUIRED READINGS

All students will be expected to buy a copy of *Antonio Gramsci Selections From the Prison Notebooks* (eds) Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, International Publishing Co.

The following books are also required. I hope you will buy them but I have put copies of each on reserve in the library

Antonio Gramsci 1994 *Letters from Prison* (2 Volumes) edited by Frank Rosengarten and translated by Ray Rosenthal, New York: Columbia University Press (a crucial source for Gramsci's thought)

Giuseppe Fiori 1996 *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary*, Verso (First published in Italian in 1965, a straightforward life that draws heavily on the reminiscences of those who knew Gramsci). Abebooks.com seems to a lot of second-hand copies.

I shall be providing pdfs of the following articles:

Eric Hobsbawm 2011 'Gramsci' in *How to Change the World: Tales of Marx and Marxism* by

Eric Hobsbawm, London: Little, Brown
Stuart Hall 1988 'Gramsci and Us' in Hall's *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, London and New York: Verso
Anne Showstack Sassoon 2000 'Gramsci's Subversion of the Language of Politics', in *Gramsci and Contemporary Politics* by Anne Showstack Sassoon, London and New York: Routledge
Joseph Buttigieg 1992 'Introduction' to *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*, Vol. I edited and translated by Joseph Buttigieg, New York: Columbia University Press

GRAMSCI'S OWN WRITINGS

The first five of these are available on a CD-ROM (*Essential Classics in Politics: Antonio Gramsci*, Elecbook Classics, www.elecbook.com)

Antonio Gramsci 1971 *Selections From the Prison Notebooks* (eds) Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, International Publishing Co
Antonio Gramsci 1977 *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From Political Writings 1910-1920*, edited by Quintin Hoare, London: Lawrence and Wishart
Antonio Gramsci 1978 *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From Political Writings 1921-1926*, edited by Quintin Hoare, London: Lawrence and Wishart
Antonio Gramsci 1985 *Antonio Gramsci: Selections From Cultural Writings*, edited by David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart
Antonio Gramsci 1995) *Antonio Gramsci: Further Selections From the Prison Notebooks*, edited by Derek Boothman, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
Antonio Gramsci 1992, 1996, 2007 *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*, vols I, II and III edited and translated by Joseph Buttigieg, Columbia University Press (These are the first three volumes of what will be the first complete edition in English of the *Prison Notebooks*. There is also a good Gramsci website: <http://www.internationalgramscisociety.org>)
David Forgacs (ed) 2000 *An Antonio Gramsci Reader*, New York University Press (a useful reader which includes some selections from the *Prison Notebooks* together with selections from Gramsci's pre-prison and cultural writings)

CLASS TOPICS AND READINGS

WEEK 1 (AUGUST 29): INTRODUCTION CANCELLED

WEEK 2 (SEPT 5): NO CLASS

WEEK 3 (SEPT 12): GRAMSCI AND MARX

Selections from the Prison Notebooks 'Introduction' pp.xvii-xcvi

Eric Hobsbawm 2011 'Gramsci' in Hobsbawm's *How to Change the World*

Stuart Hall 1988 'Gramsci and Us' in Hall's *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*

Anne Showstack Sassoon 2000 'Gramsci's Subversion of the Language of Politics', in *Gramsci and Contemporary Politics* by Anne Showstack Sassoon

Joseph Buttigieg 1992 'Introduction' to *Antonio Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*, Vol. I

WEEK 4 (SEPT 19): GRAMSCI: THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

Frank Rosengarten (Professor Emeritus of Italian at the Graduate Center, editor of *Gramsci's Letters*) will talk about Gramsci's life and its relationship to his thought (By

this week you should have read the Fiori biography)

WEEK 5 (SEPT 26): THE NATURE AND ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS

Selections from the Prison Notebooks pp.3-43, and 102-4 ('The Moderates and the Intellectuals'), 348-51 ("Language", Languages and Common Sense), 418-9 ('Passage from Knowing...'), 452-7 ('Questions of Nomenclature and Content')

WEEK 6 (OCT 3): NOTES ON ITALIAN HISTORY

Selections from the Prison Notebooks pp.44-120, and 'Aspects of the Southern Question'

WEEK 7 (OCT 10): **NO CLASS**

WEEK 8 (OCT 17): THE MODERN PRINCE

Selections from the Prison Notebooks pp.123-205

WEEK 9 (OCT 24): STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Selections from the Prison Notebooks pp.206-276

WEEK 10 (OCT 31): AMERICANISM AND FORDISM

Selections from the Prison Notebooks pp.277-318

WEEK 11 (NOV 7): THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRAXIS (The Study of Philosophy)

Selections from the Prison Notebooks pp.321-377

WEEK 12 (NOV 14): THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRAXIS (Problems of Marxism)

Selections from the Prison Notebooks pp.378-472

WEEK 13 (NOV 21): GRAMSCI AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Benedetto Fontana (Professor of Political Science at Baruch College, CUNY, author of *Hegemony and Power: on the Relation between Gramsci and Machiavelli*, 1993, University of Minnesota Press) will talk about Gramsci and the Catholic Church.

WEEK 14 (NOV 28): STUDENT PRESENTATIONS I

WEEK 14 (DEC 5): STUDENT PRESENTATIONS II

WEEK 15 (DEC 12): STUDENT PRESENTATIONS III

REQUIREMENTS

1. All students will be expected to do the required reading before each class and to participate in class discussions of the material.

2. Each week, by Sunday mid-day, every student will be required to log on to Blackboard and post a brief (approx. 200 word) comment on the week's reading. I shall be providing discussion questions each week but students are free to go beyond these if they want.
3. Each week two or three students will act as discussants, basing their presentations on both my questions and the Blackboard posts of the other students. How often each student takes this role will depend on the number taking the course, but all students will take the role of discussant at least once.

3. Students will be expected to produce two pieces of written work:

- i. A short paper (5 pages) critically evaluating one of the following authors' use of Gramsci:
Feierman, Steven 1990 *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*,
Madison: University of Wisconsin Press
Guha, Ranajit 1997 *Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India*,
Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press
Scott, James 1985 *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New
Haven and London: Yale University Press
Connell, R.W. 1995: *Masculinities: Knowledge, Power and Social Change*, Berkeley:
University of California Press
Willis, Paul 1981 *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids get Working Class Jobs*,
New York: Columbia University Press

Students can choose another text in consultation with me but the text chosen should be some kind of empirical study that makes use of, or engages with a specific Gramscian concept or concepts in a substantive way.

The paper is due **October 31**

- ii. A 15-20 page paper in two parts: the first should be an in-depth discussion of one or more of Gramsci's central concepts; the second a research proposal that uses this concept. This can be based on your actual research questions or an imagined proposal that demonstrates the potential usefulness of the concept(s) you have discussed in the first part of the paper.

The paper is due the last day of class **December 12**.

WHERE TO FIND ME

My office hours are Monday, 1:00-2:00pm (room no.6405) or by appointment

My office phone no. is 817 8029. Email (Kate.Crehan@csi.cuny.edu) is always a good way of reaching me.