

Anthropology 161 Final Study Guide

Week One:

What Is Anthropology?

Anthropology: The study of human beings and their ancestors through time/space; in relation to physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture.

Anthropos: man

Logos: account of

Four Fields of Anthropology: Archaeology, Biological, Cultural, and Linguistic

Cultural Anthropology: The study of human cultures and society and the study of human behavior/norms/values/cognition that is learned rather than genetically transmitted.

19th Century Evolutionists:

Herbert Spencer: compared societies to biological organisms

Edward Tylor: One universal culture shared more or less by all

Henry Morgan: Primitive to modern

Savagery → Barbarism → Civilization

Ethnocentrism: Judging other cultures from the perspective of one's own. Notion that one's culture is more beautiful, rational, and closer to perfection than others.

Positives: Lends morality to a people: the sense that your group lives the right way. Binds people together into a moral/ethical community.

Negatives: Narrows vision, proclaims your group better than other groups.

19th century evolutionists and race:

Different rates of "progress" explained by race. Racial hierarchy based on race and religion.

Racism: Belief that some populations are superior to others because of inherited genetically transmitted characteristics.

'Culture Replaces Race':

Franz Boas: Father of American Anthropology. German trained Jew, opposed to 19th century evolutionism. Opposed to using race as an explanation for human behavior, humans are biological equals. Differences among human societies result from different cultures.

Historical Particularism as a method:

1. Culture is primarily based on the society's particular history
2. Cultures cannot be evaluated using a universal yardstick
3. Method: field research, rather than "arm chair" anthropology

Cultural Relativism:

Cultures should not be evaluated according to the values of another culture. Cultures should be looked at with reference to their own histories and culture traits understood in terms of cultural whole.

Focus of Studies has Changed:

Changing communities, anthropology has historically focused on community studies. Many cultural anthropologists have carried out ethnographic fieldwork within a community and then written ethnographies of those communities. Traditional ethnography involved long and arduous trips to these remote communities. Studies focused on the unique characteristics of the community. Now that communities are increasingly taking part in global interactions, these changes must be reflected in our work. We can not afford to approach any community as isolated from the world.

Globalization: Refers to the ongoing phenomenon where interactions between people all across the world are becoming more frequent and easier. Globalization has numerous facets and consequences, but in brief, the people living across the globe today are in better contact with one another than ever before. The contact is becoming easier at a rapidly increasing pace.

How has globalization transformed anthropology?

Anthropology is intrinsically interested in globalization. Anthropologists study people, their communities and their culture. As all of these are being profoundly impacted by globalization, we must understand how they are being affected if we want to understand them.

The use of racial categories

Elaborated during 18th century. It is a way to classify people in a hierarchy during colonialism and slavery. It was a way to rationalize and justify European attitudes toward conquered and enslaved peoples. Hitler: the extermination of inferior peoples. 6 mil Jews and also Africans, Gypsies, dwarfs and other mistakes of nature.

The problem with race

1. Nobody agreed upon racial classification systems.
2. Not isolated enough
3. Arbitrary: Select a very small number of characteristics: skin color, hair type and thus identification of race is based on the particular traits the researchers have chosen. If different traits were chosen, different races would result. Lactose tolerance: Norwegians, arabs, north Indians, and some Africans would be one race.

4. Greater average variation within racial groups than between them
5. Physical variations have no meaning except the social ones humans give them

Sati

=Virtuous woman, supposedly voluntary decision by a widow to be burned along with her husband. Practiced among the Rajput caste in Northern India. Limited to a very small part of the Indian people.

Is sati virtuous? Or atleast a decision that women should be able to make or should it be outlawed (which it is)?

Gender roles in India and notion of woman's total commitment to her husband. Sati becomes the ultimate act of a virtuous woman. Indian feminists argue against it and the roles of women in the family generally.

Critique of cultural relativism

Culture relativism and power. Inequalities within societies: who has the power to determine cultural values and standards? Who has the power to determine issues related to economics and politics? Issues of race, class, and gender.

Examples of inequalities:

Chile and Argentina: adultery is a crime for women, but not for men.

Afghanistan: Taliban movement: women banned from schools and employment

Turkey: until recently, it was illegal to identify oneself as a Kurd or speak Kurdish in public.

Pakistan: some Christian sects deprived of right to congregate and worship

Amnesty International Reports

People in many parts of the world deprived of political/ civil rights on the basis of language, religion, ethnicity, and gender

Cultures/Nations/States are internally differentiated

Powerful and less powerful/factions

1. What is the status of the person/group who asserts that human rights are relative?
2. In whose interests are these principles being advanced? Who benefits?
3. To what degree do women, minorities, indigenous peoples have a voice in these decisions?

Hegemony: The (usually elite) construction of ideologies, beliefs, and values that attempt to justify the stratification system in a state society. The relationship between hegemony and cultural relativism.

Anthropology and Counterinsurgency:

Deep cultural knowledge of the adversary necessary but there are a few anthropologists available or willing to provide information of this sort to the military. History of Anthropology's involvement in government projects.

Malinowski: should be able to use anthropology to solve problems faced by colonial governments.