

## **Anthropology 320: Public Spheres and Public Cultures**

Spring 2007

Instructor: Christopher Kelty  
Time: MW(F) 11:00 - 12:20  
Place: Wiess 146

**Introduction:** This class covers theories of the public and public sphere, democratic self-governance, public opinion, social imaginaries and the collective composition of a public world. Since 1989, with the publication in English of Habermas' The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, there has been an explosion of research organized around the concept of a public sphere, publics and social imaginaries. Historical, anthropological, sociological and philosophical work has used Habermas' work, and increasingly the work of Arendt and Dewey to re-imagine empirical studies of actually existing democracy. This class asks: has there been any progress since then? Are the debates around publics and the public sphere, ideology, diaspora replacements for the concepts of "culture" and "ideology"-- if so, what do we gain from these new concepts?

Although the core of this course consists of four key philosophical texts in the debate--Dewey, Arendt, Habermas and Taylor--the themes for the course are much broader: self-governance "of the people, by the people, for the people;" democracy in the US and around the world; public opinion polling; Propaganda and censorship, reality television, and mass media; the Internet and "virtual publics"; science and its publics; The Wisdom of Crowds and "You"; Nascar racing and "Joe Six-Pack"; Secrecy and torture; Hamas and Hezbollah; audit culture and neoliberalism and so on and so forth. Although the key texts will guide our thinking, our discussion should not be limited to them, but to testing out the relevance and usefulness of the concepts in cases that seem hard to understand or explain.

**Pre-requisites:** None. Although previous experience with philosophical and anthropological texts and seminar-style discussion is helpful.

**Requirements:**

Attendance and Participation are required (40%)  
6 (Bi-)Weekly response papers (c. 1000 words) (20%)  
1 research paper, including literature review and proposal (40%)

**Required Books (at the bookstore):**

Taylor, Charles. 2004. Modern Social Imaginaries Duke University Press ISBN: 0822332930

Habermas, Juergen. 1989 [1961]. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. MIT Press ISBN: 0262581086.

Dewey, John. 1927. The Public and its problems Swallow Press ISBN: 0804002541.

Arendt, Hannah. 1958. The Human Condition, 2nd ed. University of Chicago Press ISBN: 0226025985.

Pdfs and other readings on the course website

The ultimate and final source of info for the class is the website. <http://kelty.rice.edu/320> (also <http://smatter.rice.edu/320>)  
user: anth320  
pass: [in class]

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### **Assignments and Grading**

A. Attendance and participation is simply mandatory. (40%)

B. Research paper. (40%)

The research paper is the other core focus of your required work. You should start thinking about it on day one, and it will develop throughout the semester. It can be ethnographic (i.e. you want to actually hang out in a public), historical (you want to use historical sources to make an argument about a particular public), philosophical/critical (you want to closely read and develop an argument about a set of texts relating to concepts of the public/public sphere) or a combination.

The research paper should be conceived of as something incubated throughout the semester, and not something to be completed in the last two weeks of class. To help you along, there are four phases, all are required:

1. (Weeks 1-6) Topics and Literature review. Begin by choosing three or more possible topics. Bring them to class to discuss, and refine. Start searching for scholarly work and let your search help define your topic. Use the force. Let the concepts flow through you, Luke. As you read scholarship, newspaper articles, watch TV or surf the Internets, let your reading and viewing help refine your question. Be prepared to report regularly on your topic ideas and the material you find. A literature review will be due by the end of week 6.

2. (Weeks 7-9) Research proposal. Based on your literature review and the evolution of your thinking, craft a research

proposal. Be as specific as you can. Think of it as an outline of the work you can accomplish in weeks 9-16. Your research question should be as clear as you can make it, and you should have a clear sense of what you want to \*do\*.

3. (Weeks 9-16) conduct research. write. keep track of your progress, report periodically in class.
4. (Weeks 15-16) Compile your final research paper. present.

#### C. Bi-weekly response papers (~5) (20%)

The last component of the class are Bi-weekly response papers. The class will be divided into two groups that will alternate writing and reading. Bi-Weekly papers are due no later than Tuesday at 5pm, each week. These response papers serve two functions: first, they are meant to ensure that you do at least some of the reading. second, they should be a platform for you to try out your research paper topic, ideas and questions. to the extent possible, try to relate your research project to the assigned reading.

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#### **Schedule:**

- \* = Response paper (Group 1)
- # = Response paper (Group 2)

#### **week 1.** Introduction (readings are due on the day they are listed)

Mon. Jan. 8th: Introduction, What is a public and is it in crisis?  
Wed. Jan. 10th: Introduction: Habermas p. 1-26. Alastair Hannay, "The Public" p. 1-25.

#### **week 2.** Diagnosis and Basic Structure

Mon. Jan. 15th: No Class, MLK day.  
\*Wed. Jan. 17th: Habermas 27-88. Selections from Addison and Steele.  
Find examples of the contemporary public.

#### **week 3.** Idea and Ideology, Argument and Opinion

Mon. Jan. 22nd: Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"; Habermas, 89-117.  
#Wed. Jan. 24th: Habermas, 117-140.

#### **week 4.** Publics in America

Mon. Jan. 29th: Lippmann, Selections from Public Opinion and Phantom Public.

\*Wed. Jan. 31st: Dewey-Lippmann debates. Dewey, Chapter 1,2

**week 5.** Phantom Publics and Great Communities

Visit from Bruno Latour

Mon. Feb. 5th: Dewey, Chapters 3,4. Intro to Making Things Public,

#Wed. Feb. 7th: Dewey, Chapters 5,6.

**week 6.** Disintegration.

Mon. Feb. 12th: Habermas 141-180.

\*Wed. Feb. 14th: Habermas, 182-235.

**week 7.** Disintegration Cont'd

Mon. Feb. 19th: Discuss Lit Reviews and Proposals

#Wed. Feb. 21st: TBD

**week 8.** The/A public, publics, counterpublics and so forth

Mon. Feb. 26th: Discuss Lit Reviews and Proposals

\*Wed. Feb. 28th: Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere"; Michael Warner, "Publics and Counter Publics"

**week 9.** Mid-term Break

Mon. Mar. 5th: No Class (midterm break)

Wed. Mar. 7th: No Class (midterm break)

**week 10.** Public and Private

Mon. Mar. 12th: Arendt, p. 1-78.

#Wed. Mar. 14th: Warren and Brandeis, The Right to Privacy; Susan Gal,

A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction; Facebook.

**week 11.** Print, Film, Television

Mon. Mar. 19th: Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, Intro and Chapter 3.

\*Wed. Mar. 21st: TBD

**week 12.** Modernities and publics

Mon. Mar. 26th: Taylor, Chapters 1-5

#Wed. Mar. 28th: Taylor, Chapters 6-10 muslim/Asia modernities

**week 13.** Composing the Public Sphere

Mon. Apr. 2nd: Arendt, Labor and Work 79-175

\*Wed. Apr. 4th: Isabelle Stengers, Cosmopolitics

(6th): Spring recess

**week 14.** Action

Mon. Apr. 9th: Arendt, 248-

#Wed. Apr. 11th: Review.

**week 15.**

Mon. Apr. 16th: Presentations

Mon. Apr. 18th: Presentations

**week 16.**

Mon. Apr. 23rd: Presentations

Wed. Apr. 25th: Presentations

Fri. Apr 27th: Final Papers due, 5pm

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**Honor code statement:** All written work is expected to be individually pursued and completed, unless prior arrangements are made with the professor. The weekly response papers will be graded based on how well they help facilitate discussion in class; the final research paper will be graded on its originality, thoroughness, timeliness, and attention to detail among other criteria.

**ADA statement:** Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students will need to contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center.

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**Bibliography**

Materials for the class.

<http://www.citeulike.org/user/ckelty/tag/anth320>