

**Department of Sociology  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
South Asian University - New Delhi**

***Anthropology: Theory and Ethnographic Approaches***  
***(Compulsory Course for MA)***

**Total Credits: 4**

**Objectives of the Course**

The course is designed to present various theoretical developments or debates within anthropology. It aims to provide an intensive introduction to some of the most important theoretical perspectives and to show the ways in which they have been used in explaining social and cultural processes among particular peoples. Utilizing a number of ethnographic studies, both 'classic' and more recent, it focuses on the intimate link between theory and ethnography- and attempts to elucidate the distinctive character of anthropology. Theoretical approaches are seen in the context of anthropological field research and the various genres of ethnographic writing. The challenges of understanding some specific ethnographic cases have been influential both in and beyond the discipline.

The aim of this course is thus to enable students: (a) to understand, evaluate, and engage with contemporary debates in anthropological theory; and (b) to approach substantive questions of ethnographic interpretation in a theoretically informed manner. Above all, having explored a variety of ethnographies, students should have a clear understanding of the anthropological 'mode of thought' and its intrinsic connection with the methodological challenges embedded in ethnographic enquiry.

**Unit-1: Classical Approaches in Anthropology**

This unit mainly focuses on the development Anthropology from the British tradition locating its roots in functionalism and structural-functionalism. This unit will also introduce students to Ethnography as an integral part of the anthropological enterprise and a mode of looking at the world.

Malinowski, Bronislaw .1961. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: an account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* . New York: E. P Dutton.

Evans-Prichard, Edward .1967. *The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kuper, Adam .1973. *Anthropologists and Anthropology: the modern British School*. London: Allen Lane

Ingold, Tim. 2011 *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge

Nader, Laura. 2011. Ethnography as Theory. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1 (1): 211–219

## **Unit 2: Structuralist Approaches in Anthropology**

This unit highlights the development of Anthropology from the French Tradition particularly with the emphasis of structuralism, which in turn came as a response to Functionalist and Structural-Functionalist approaches.

Levi-Strauss, Claude .1963. *Structural Analysis in Anthropology* Cambridge: Cambridge University.

Levi-Strauss, Claude.1966. *The Savage Mind* London: George Widenfeld & Nicholson

Levi-Strauss, Claude .1973. *Tristes Tropiques*. New York: Athenuem Press

Levi-Strauss, Claude .1955. The structural study of Myth. *Journal of American Folklore* 68(270): 428-444

Dumont, Louis .1980. *Homo Hierarchicus: the caste system and its implications*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

### **Unit 3: Interpretive and Symbolic Approaches in Anthropology**

This unit concentrates on the development of Anthropology from the American tradition of Cultural Anthropology and the study of societies and cultures from the standpoint of symbols and questions of meaning.

Geertz, Clifford .1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books.

Singer, Milton .1980. Signs of the Self: An exploration in Semiotic Anthropology  
*American Anthropologist* 82(3): 485-507

Sahlins, Marshall .1976. *Culture and practical reason*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Schneider, David .1968. *American kinship: A cultural account*. Prentice-Hall, New Jersey

Turner, Victor .1975. *Revelation and Divination in Ndembu Ritual*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

### **Unit 4: Modern and Postmodern Approaches in Anthropology**

This unit mainly covers the modernist and post-modernist cultural and ethnographic critiques in Anthropology and offers students an exposure to new avenues of engagement in the discipline.

Clifford, James and George Marcus. 1986. *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marcus, George and Michael Fischer .1986. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Ortner, Sherry .1984. Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 26(1):126-66.

Appadurai, Arjun .1996. *Modernity at Large*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Abu-Lughod, Lila .1988. *Veiled sentiments: Honour and poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press