

Department of Anthropology
College of Arts & Sciences
University of Pennsylvania

ANTH 347
Anthropology of Corporations
Spring 2018

Tuesdays 3 p.m. – 6 p.m. — Museum 345

Professor Derek Newberry
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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

Modern business corporations can be characterized as having their own internal cultures, more or less distinct from one another. They also exist within encompassing cultures and cultural flows. At the same time, corporations are producers and disseminators of culture, and thus have effects on their surrounding environments, effects that extend from the local to the global. This course examines modern corporations from these three perspectives through theoretical and ethnographic readings, guest speakers from the corporate world, and independent research conducted by the students. The objectives of this course are to have students: 1. Learn dominant frameworks for understanding and interpreting culture in a corporate context; 2. Learn and apply anthropological techniques for analyzing corporate culture; 3. Understand how corporations affect and are shaped by external consumer, national, and other cultures. Course requirements include primary research on a corporation and student presentations of their research.

Teaching Assistant: Eric Gruebel, egruebel@sas.upenn.edu
Office hours: By appointment

Books Required:

Chen, Katherine K. 2009. *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event*. Chicago ; London: University Of Chicago Press.

Ho, Karen. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Jackall, Robert. 2009. *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers*. Updated Edition. Oxford University Press, USA.

Krause-Jensen, Jakob. *Flexible Firm: The Design of Culture at Bang & Olufsen*. (New York: Berghan), 2010.

Timothy De Waal Malefyt and Robert J. Morais, *Advertising and Anthropology*. New York: Berg. 2012.

James L. Watson, editor. *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1997.

Structure

Week 1: January 16

What is the anthropology of corporations?

Reingold, Jennifer, Marty Jones, and Susan Kramer. 2014 How to Fail in Business While Really, Really Trying. *Fortune* 169(5): 80.

Kowitz, Beth 2015. It's Ikea's World. *Fortune* 171(4): 166–175.

Week 2: January 23

Culture in corporations

Hall, Edward T. 1960. The Silent Language in Overseas Business. *Harvard Business Review* 38(3): 87.

Chapter 1 in Tett, G. (2015). *The Silo Effect: The Peril of Expertise and the Promise of Breaking Down Barriers*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Wood, Graeme. 2013. Anthropology Inc. *The Atlantic*, March.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2013/03/anthropology-inc/309218/>

Ethnographic observation workshop

Research Projects: Getting Started

We will introduce the corporate research projects for the semester and form teams.

Week 3: January 30

Theory of the corporation

Guest Lecturer: Greg Urban, Chair of Department of Anthropology

Weber, Max. Selections from: *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, editors, Vol I. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 1978. Translation based on the 4th German edition 1956.

“The Definition of Sociology and Social Action,” pp. 4-7 only

“Sociological Categories of Economic Action,” pp. 63-100 only

“Household, Enterprise and Oikos,” pp. 370-384.

Bakan, Joel. "Business as Usual." In *The Corporation*, pp. 28-59. New York: Free Press.

Research Projects: Create a research plan

Guest Speaker from Lippincott Library on using resources effectively

Week 4: February 7

Ethics in corporations and the corporate self

Jackall, Robert. 2009. *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers*. Updated Edition. Oxford University Press, USA.

Research Projects: Managing ethical issues in research

Week 5: February 13

Research Project Development facilitated by TA Eric Gruebel

Research paper proposal due

Week 6: February 20

Maintaining culture: Practices and spaces

Krause-Jensen, Jakob. *Flexible Firm: The Design of Culture at Bang & Olufsen*. (New York: Berghan), 2010.

Guest Speaker: Rebecca Pardo, User Experience Researcher, Facebook

Week 7: February 27

Rituals, Myths and Heroes

Liminality and Communitas in: Turner, Victor. (2017). *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1 edition). Routledge.

Trice, Harrison M., and Janice M. Beyer. 1984. Studying Organizational Cultures Through Rites and Ceremonials. *Academy of Management Review* 9(4): 653–669.

Malinowski, Bronislaw “Myth in Primitive Psychology” in Lambek, M. (Ed.). (2001). *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion* (1 edition). Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell.

Story-telling workshop

SPRING BREAK

Week 8: March 13

Practical Tools for Anthropologists in Corporations: Design-Thinking Workshop

Guest Lecturer: Carolina Garzon Mrad, Design Strategist, Center for Healthcare Innovation at Penn Medicine

Week 9: March 20

Creating the corporate form

Chen, Katherine K. 2009. Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event. Chicago ; London: University Of Chicago Press.

Workshop on corporate rituals

Outline Due – Post to canvas

Week 10: March 27

Corporations in industry contexts

Ho, Karen. 2009. Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street. Durham: Duke University Press.

Guest Speaker: Alec Halaby, VP of Player Development, Philadelphia Eagles

Week 11: April 3

Branding and marketing as cultural diffusion

Guest Lecturer: Bob Morais, Adjunct Professor, Columbia Business School

Timothy De Waal Malefyt and Robert J. Morais, Advertising and Anthropology. New York: Berg. 2012.

Week 12: April 10

Globalization of the corporation as cultural diffusion

James L. Watson, editor. Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1997.

Project work

Week 13: April 17

Presentations

Week 14: April 24

Presentations

Requirements:

This class is run as a seminar. Students should come prepared to discuss readings and pose relevant questions in each class. To help you generate ideas, you will turn in a brief written reflection on the reading each week that will provide insights for our dialogue. Students will also take turns leading discussion on readings. The discussion leaders for a given week should come prepared with an analysis of key themes, a list of questions to spark discussion, and real world examples of concepts discussed in the week's readings.

Each student, as part of a team, will conduct research on a corporation, present their findings to the class, and submit a final research paper (as a team) based on their findings. The purpose of these projects will be to explore some aspect of the culture of a corporation, such as sources of internal conflict, its adaptation to the culture in which it is immersed, or its role in transforming its surrounding culture. This final paper should be 20 pages and show evidence of original and independent research, rather than simply reporting the findings of others. All projects must include a section containing concrete recommendations for the corporations studied.

Grading:**Individual Grades**

Reading reflections: 10%

Due: On canvas 8am the morning of every class (with one skip)

- You submit a 150-250 word paragraph that demonstrates an understanding of the reading while providing an evaluation of it
- The reflection also builds connections to other readings/concepts from the course, and/or real world examples

Participation: 40%

- You come to class having read the material and considered it carefully
- You proactively make insightful comments that explore important themes, connect readings to each other, and connect them to real world experiences and example
- You build constructively on the comments made by others, even when critiquing them

Group Grades

Leading a reading discussion: 20%

- You give a brief presentation that draws out key themes in the readings and
- You bring in real world examples and experiences to flesh out key concepts in the reading
- You come prepared with provocative discussion questions that help us analyze, interpret and evaluate the main arguments
- You proactively facilitate discussion to keep the conversation flowing and focused on relevant topics/experiences

Final research paper and presentation: 30%

Due: April 17th or 24th for presentations, May 4th for papers

- Your paper draws upon primary anthropological research that has a depth and breadth reflective of a semester-long effort

- You support your primary research with an extensive bibliography including secondary and scholarly sources
- You make a well-structured argument that includes a clear set of research questions an analysis that addresses each question, and a results section that draws out important insights
- You offer thoughtful recommendations that emerge from your findings

Academic honesty:

You are reminded of the university policy on academic honesty. Do not cheat. Do not plagiarize. Do not pass off others' work or ideas as your own. Do not make up facts when doing research. Always cite *all* reference materials and sources (including interviews) that you use.