

LAS 6938/4935 ANG 6930
Indigenous Ontologies
Fall 2021



Professor Carmen Martínez Novo
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This course addresses the systems of thought and conceptions of the self of Amazonian, Andean and other indigenous peoples, such as perspectivism and relational worldviews, as presented by prominent ethnographers of the ontological turn and by others outside of this current. The insights of the ontological turn are inspired/grounded on structuralist Amazonian and Andean ethnographies. The readings in the class consider issues of being and becoming, the relations between categories of being, and the modalities of existence. Ontology debates lie at the intersection between anthropology and philosophy as they question Western binaries, particularly the separation between nature and culture, and the divide between humans and non-humans/other than humans. While taking the ontological turn seriously and examining its philosophical and political contributions, the class also presents the relevant critiques as well as the insights of indigenous intellectuals on their own cultures/societies.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Learn about an intellectual turn that has become prominent in anthropology, other social sciences and Latin American Studies.
- Identify how the meaning of human (and other than human) is conceptualized in different cultures.

- Consider that the separation between culture and nature may be specific to western thought and explore other worldviews and perspectives on the relations between humans and their other than human interlocutors.
- Consider the possibility that the social sciences reach beyond the human.
- Explore the turn of the social sciences towards intimate topics centered on self, consciousness, perception and emotion. Evaluate the epistemological and political ramifications of this intellectual shift.
- Write two papers reflecting on these theories and ethnographies and identify how these ideas might contribute (or not) to your own research.
- Present your reflections and insights to the class orally.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Teach about a recent and prominent intellectual trend in the social sciences and Latin American studies.
- Teach about the systems of thought and conceptions of the self of other cultures with a particular focus on the Amazon and the Andes.
- Teach about the relation of humans to their other than human interlocutors
- Teach students how to write literature reviews and how to identify the main contributions and debates within a specific theme or intellectual current. This is a useful skill to write research and grant proposals.
- Teach students how to present their thoughts and ideas about complex issues effectively in public in a supportive environment.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Eduardo Kohn. 2011. *How Forests Think: Towards an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. University of California Press.

Andrew Canessa. 2012. *Intimate Indigeneities. Race, Sex and History in the Small Spaces of Andean Life*. Duke University Press.

Marisol de la Cadena. 2015. *Earth Beings. Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*. Duke University Press.

Waskar Ari. 2014. *Earth Politics: Religion, Decolonization and Bolivia's Indigenous Intellectuals*. Duke University Press.

COURSE ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance and Participation: 10 % (5% attendance 5% participation)

Mid-term review essay: 35 %

Final review essay: 35 %

In class presentation of readings: 20 %

Mid-term and final essays will consist in 8-10 pages typed and double-spaced. Specific instructions for mid-term and final essays will be distributed in separate handouts a week before the due date and the assignment will be based on class readings. Presentations

should take approximately 15 minutes and should move beyond a summary of the readings. They must be critical and analytical. Instructions for the presentation are enclosed below.

GRADING SCALE

A 93-100

A- 90-93

B+ 87-90

B 83-87

B- 80-83

C+ 77-80

C 73-77

C- 70-73

D+ 67-70 1.33

D 63-67

D- 60-63

E 0-60

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

8/24 Introduction to the class

Overview of the theory under discussion

8/31

-Eduardo Kohn. 2015. Anthropology of Ontologies. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44: 311-27.

-Desjarlais and Throop. 2011. Phenomenological approaches in anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40: 87-102.

Amazonian perspectives

9/7

-Philippe Descola. 1996. "Constructing Natures." In *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*. Edited by P. Descola and G. Palsson. Routledge.

-Philippe Descola. *The Spears of Twilight: Life and Death in the Amazon Jungle*. 1996. Selections from Section 1. Taming the forest. Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 8.

9/14

-Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4(3): 469-488.

-Alcida Rita Ramos. 2012. "The Politics of Perspectivism." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41: 481-94.

9/21

-Eduardo Kohn. 2011. *How Forests Think: Towards an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. University of California Press. Introduction, Chapter 2.

9/28

-Kohn. Chapters 4 and 6.

Questions for first essay distributed.

10/5

Questions for first essay due

Andean selves and worldviews

10/12

-Andrew Canessa. 2012. *Intimate Indigeneities*. Introduction, Ch. 2 "Intimate Histories," Ch. 3 "The Jankho Kjarka War."

10/19

Ch 4. "From Fetuses to Mountain Ancestors."

10/26

-Andrew Canessa. *Intimate Indigeneities*. Ch. 5 "Fantasies of Fear", 7 "Intimate Citizens"

11/2

-Marisol de la Cadena. 2015. *Earth Beings*. Story 1, Story 3

11/9

-de la Cadena, Story 4, Story 6

Ontologies of colonization

11/16

-Rudi Collaredo-Mansfeld. 1999. "Useless things: Subsistence Ethics and Native Identity." In *The Native Leisure Class*. University of Chicago Press.

-Pavel Shlossberg. 2015. "Indian Arts and Exile." In *Crafting Identity*. University of Arizona Press.

11/23

-Blanca Muratorio. 1998. "Indigenous Women Identities and the Politics of Cultural Reproduction in the Ecuadorian Amazon" *American Anthropologist* 100(2).

-Margarita Huayhua. 2017. "Home birth, home invasion: Encroaching on Household Sovereignty in the Andes." In *Heritage and Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, edited by Manuel Castillo and Amy Strecker. Leiden University Press.

Indigenous scholarship

11/30

-Waskar Ari. 2014. *Earth Politics: Religion, Decolonization and Bolivia's Indigenous Intellectuals*. Duke. Chapters 1 and 3.

12/7

-Ari. Chapters 4 and 6.

Questions for second essay distributed.

12/14 **Second essay due**

COURSE POLICIES

-Students should read the texts assigned for the day before coming to class. This is very important because we intend to have a participatory class with an inviting academic environment in which all feel free to express their **informed** opinions. Students should be ready to participate, ask questions, engage in group discussion, based on the assigned readings for that day and on readings from previous days.

-Students should be familiar with canvas and should check their UF e-mail for instructor's messages.

-Attendance is extremely important in this class. Students are allowed up to one unexcused absence without a repercussion in grades. Each additional absence will be reflected in a deduction of a letter grade from the class attendance and participation component of the final grade.

-Unexcused tardiness of 15 minutes or more or leaving class early will be counted as an unexcused absence unless the student has a documented reason for arriving late or leaving early.

Excused Absences:

Students need to notify the professor of absences prior to class when possible. The following are acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness, (b) illness or death of family member, (c) University-related trips, (d) major religious holidays, and (e) other circumstances found to fit "reasonable cause for nonattendance" by the professor.

Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays.

-Students should turn their assignments in canvas according to the instructions and by the deadline set in the handout. Students may be given extra time to complete assignments after they provide documentation of justified cause for the delay. If there is no justified cause for delay, 5 points will be deducted from the assignment per day of delay.

-While differences of opinion are valued and encouraged, discussion and debate must take place in a civil and respectful manner. Personal attacks or other acts of denigration will not be tolerated in this class.

UF POLICIES

- **[Students with Disabilities Act](#):** The Dean of Students Office coordinates needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes the registration of disabilities, academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services, and mediating faculty-student disability related issues. *Dean of Students Office, 202 Peabody Hall, 392-7066.*
- **Software Use:** All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator.
- **Academic Misconduct:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Work submitted for credit by UF students should not include any form of plagiarism, cheating or unauthorized aid. Unless an assignment is explicitly identified as collaborative, all work should be completed independently. Students should understand and follow the [Student Honor Code](#) that they signed upon enrollment at the University of Florida: *"I understand the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University."*

UF HELPING RESOURCES

- **Latin American and Caribbean Collection at UF Libraries:** Specialized staff support use and enjoyment of the 500,000 volumes, 50,000 microforms, thousands of current and historical serial titles and digital resources in [this world-class collection](#). LACC library staff provide expert help in online searches for research and study materials.

- **Academic Writing, Grammar and Style:** The [UF Writing Studio](#) is committed to helping University of Florida students and faculty meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. We support independent learning and scholarship by providing one-on-one consultations, workshops tailored to specific classes (graduate and undergraduate), and faculty retreats focusing on publishing original research. Students and faculty at all levels and in every discipline are welcome!
- **Technical difficulties with E-learning in CANVAS:** Contact the [UF Help Desk](#) at Learning-support@ufl.edu or (352) 392-HELP, then select option 2.
- **Personal Challenges:** Students experiencing crises or personal problems that interfere with general wellbeing are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. The Counseling Center and Student Mental Health both provide confidential counseling services at no cost for enrolled students. Resources are also available for students seeking to clarify career and academic goals and to deal with academic challenges.
 - [University Counseling Center](#), 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575; personal and career counseling.
 - Student Mental Health, [Student Health Care Center](#), 392-1171, personal counseling.
 - Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
 - Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

****THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITH NOTICE****

APENDIX

INSTRUCTIONS FOR IN CLASS PRESENTATION OF A CLASS READING

Each student will be responsible for **presenting and discussing the readings assigned for one day of their choice**. The presentation should be visual, written (in a power point or other presentation technology), and oral. The presentation must contain the following elements:

1. Context for the reading:
2. A) Information on the author
B) General information on the topic or geographical location of the reading
3. Brief summary of the main points of the reading
4. Discussion of concepts in the reading that need further explanation
5. What is significant or interesting from this reading? What have we learned from this reading that can be of value to us?
6. Criticisms of the reading: What is unclear in the reading? Point to inconsistencies and contradictions in the argument. What do you disagree with and why?
7. Connect the reading to the student's own background. How is what is described in the reading similar or different from students' experiences or perspective?
8. Questions for further class discussion.