

Theory 1: Anthropology of Affect**Prof. Margot Weiss****Email:** mdweiss@wesleyan.edu**Office:** Center for the Americas, Rm. 201**Office Hours:** Mon, Tues, Wed – make an appointment: <http://calendly.com/margot-weiss>

Theory 1 and 2 are core courses for the Anthropology major, designed to elucidate historical influences on contemporary anthropological theory. This semester, our topic is the anthropology of affect.

Affect – to affect and be affected. Anthropologists and other social theorists from Durkheim onward have considered questions of bodies, sensation, emotion, and social change. In recent years, the “affective turn” in the humanities and humanistic social sciences has brought renewed attention to these dynamics. For some, affect is contrasted with emotion: it is potential or capacity, not set cultural meaning. For others, affect is contrasted with structure or form: it is bodily sensation or intensity—dynamic, energetic, mobile. And for others still, affect might enable us to grasp how it feels to inhabit a life world, a particular atmosphere, texture, sensuality, the feel of things.

This course explores a range of theories of affect, foregrounding anthropology’s distinctive contributions to and critiques of the study of affect. Readings will tack between more theoretical essays and ethnographic representations of affect, sensuality, force/mobility, and emotion.

This course is part of the Social, Cultural, and Critical Theory Certificate.

Course Readings

We will choose 2 (or, perhaps, 3) books to read together in the last few weeks of the semester. All essays are available on the course Moodle & also as a course pack via your portfolio.

Course Assignments

- Attendance and Participation – 10%
- Weekly Reading Memos– 15%
- Discussion Leadering – 10%
- 3 Short Papers – 30%
- Final Paper/Project – 35%

Participation

This is an intensive, reading-heavy course designed for an active learner. You will get out of it what you put in to it – your active participation and enthusiasm is crucial to its success. Come to class on time and prepared, and contribute to our discussion in a relevant, present, and respectful way. We will be reading challenging theoretical essays, so participation in this course means coming to class ready to ask questions, to think about what is at stake in these debates, and to begin to forge your own analysis. Your participation should be grounded in the reading; pointing us to relevant sections of an article or to a particular quote is most productive. Remember, participation does not just mean talking, it means contributing to our collective learning – asking questions and expanding others’ insights is often as useful as (maybe even more useful than) making declarations.

Weekly Reading Memos

Each week, bring to class a ~1-page Reading Memo. Your Memo should contain 2 passages you wish to discuss in class (type them out: a passage can be anywhere from 1 sentence to 1 paragraph) and your notes, comments, or questions about each of the passages. Pick passages that you feel best encapsulate a point of view or issue that is central to that week's set of readings. The passages should be "meaty" enough to sustain class discussion; your notes on that passage should give us a starting place to dig in.

While you should take the time to read and think carefully, you are not expected to master the class material before our session. Instead, the Memo is a chance for you to collect your thoughts about each reading and the readings as a whole. Once you have completed a week's reading, ask yourself: *How do these authors (perhaps differently) understand affect? Which ideas are most important, controversial, enlightening, difficult to understand, provocative? What are the disagreements or debates in this set of readings? What do these authors argue is the function, point, or use of affect (or related) theory? How do these readings connect/disconnect to other texts we have read? How is affect theory mobilized, used, expanded, contradicted, or otherwise engaged in the ethnographic essays? And finally, what do you think about these arguments, concepts and analyses?* The passages and Memo should emerge from your careful reading practice, and allow you to direct our discussion in ways most conducive to your learning and interests. You will turn in these memos after our class, but they will not be graded (you will receive credit/no credit for satisfactory completion). You may skip 1 week (so, full credit is 11 Memos).

For the Memos for the 3 weeks that we explore book-length ethnographies, please be sure to think about how that ethnography connects to previous material we've read. Ask yourself: how do the concepts we've studied show up in this ethnography? Does the ethnography show us new concepts or ideas that are related to "affect"? Are there places where you think the author might have engaged with affect theory to the benefit of their ethnographic material? In other words, aim to explore the ethnography in relation to all the material we've read in the course.

Discussion Leadering

Once during the semester you will lead our class discussion, based on your Memo. Your goal is to lead about 15 minutes of our discussion on the readings for that day through a combination of presentation and discussion questions. Please draw upon your Memo: two passages from the readings that you think are especially interesting, important, provocative, challenging, or that will otherwise prompt meaningful discussion about the issues at hand. Along with the passages, you should also 1) connect the passages to other material from the course and 2) prepare 2 or 3 discussion questions for the class. You will likely need a few sentences to explicate your questions: make sure you give enough information for your question to be generative (aim for questions you think link to other important ideas or topics, get at the heart of some theoretical issue, or open up a new way of thinking). This assignment is peer-graded.

Three Short Papers

At the end of 3 of our 4 units, you will turn in a short (~3 page) paper reflecting on a key term or concept from that unit of readings (for instance, *communitas*, structure of feeling, affect as intensity, emotion vs affect, sensual ethnography, affective labor ...). The goal of the paper is to

enable you to clarify a key term by 1) unpacking how theorists understand and define the concept and 2) putting the concept into ethnographic context or motion to show what it does or how it works or what it helps illuminate, ethnographically. Aim to spend ~1 page on the definition—this requires you to review, reread, define, clarify, and summarize a core term or concept based on what our theorists have written about it (make sure you are carefully citing relevant authors). Next, aim for ~2 pages of explication; ask yourself: how can I mobilize, work with, put into practice, extend, or think with this concept in my own ethnographic work? “Your own” ethnographic material might come from your senior essay or thesis, from media of any kind, from your daily life, etc. – if you are ever stuck for material in any particular week, you can draw upon ethnographic material from elsewhere – an ethnography you are reading in another class, an ethnographic article, etc. The point of these papers is for you to produce your own working definition of a core concept and to start to use it in your own ethnographic theorizing.

Final Paper/Project

Your final assignment is a research paper (or other substantive project) on the aspect of affect and anthropology of your choice. The paper should be 8-10 typed, double-spaced pages. It can be more conceptual/theoretical, more ethnographic/descriptive, or a combination of both. Choose a topic in which you are particularly interested, and integrate the concepts and frameworks you have learned in the course with perspectives you have researched on your own (exploring the book-length ethnographies we read at the end of the semester is also an appropriate option—as is expanding one of your shorter papers). As part of this project, you’ll turn in a proposal for your final paper that outlines your research question / starting point in 300-500 words, and includes an annotated bibliography of at least three sources (one paragraph per source) that you have consulted. After you turn in your proposal, we will meet to discuss it so that I can give you additional recommendations and assistance.

Extra Credit

If you would like extra credit in this course, you can turn in the 4th Short Paper and/or lead our class discussion a second time.

Course Policies

Policy on Absences: You may miss 1 class without explanation or penalty: think of this as your sick (or health) day, and take it when you see fit. There is no need to email me unless you are dealing with something more serious, in which case we should have a more detailed conversation that will likely include your Class Dean. If you miss more than 2 classes, I may ask you to withdraw. Missing more than 3 classes is grounds to fail the course.

Policy on extensions and late papers: I do not grant extensions. You cannot turn in Reading Memos late, as they are to be referred to in class (you may turn in a Memo if you need to miss class—it is due by the end of our class session). I will accept the Short Papers late with a grade penalty of 3 points (1/3 a letter grade) each day. The Final Paper is due on the last day of exam week --- so – if you have valid reasons for needing more time on that, you will need to request an Incomplete for the course.

Policy on computers/cell phones in the classroom: If you take notes on your laptop or have another documented reason for having it in the class, please turn off the wireless. Do not text, shop online, look at pictures of cats, snapchat, etc. during our class. Your cell phone should be off or on silent and put away. Any use of your computer for non-class purposes will result in suspension of this privilege. Keep in mind that laptops can interfere with your ability to learn and focus on material, and can distract others. Let's aim to be present with each other and our ideas.

Office Hours: I have office hours Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays; schedule an appointment using my online calendar: <http://calendly.com/margot-weiss>. Please come and talk to me about course material, dynamics, or any concerns or ideas you might have. My office is located in the Center for the Americas, 255 High Street, on the second floor (room 201). If you need to phone, my office number is 685-5754. If you cannot make any of my available times, email me and we will work out an alternative time to meet.

Students with Disabilities

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact Accessibility Services in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/022, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-5581).

Honor Code

All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code. If you need help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, let me know or contact the **Writing Workshop**: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/writingworkshop/index.html>

Course Schedule

Tuesday, Sept. 4: Course Introduction: The Affective Turn

- Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010), “An Inventory of Shimmers” *The Affect Theory Reader*
- Ian Skoggard and Alisse Waterston (2015), “Introduction: Toward an Anthropology of Affect and Evocative Ethnography” *Anthropology of Consciousness*

(rec) online Anthropology & Affect (online)

(rec): Bonnie McElhinny, “The Audacity of Affect: Gender, Race, and History in Linguistic Accounts of Legitimacy and Belonging” *Annual Review of Anthropology* (on moodle only)

(Re)theorizing Affect I: Communitas and Collectivity

Tuesday, Sept. 11: “Collective effervescence” & Communitas

- Émile Durkheim (1915), excerpts from *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*
- Victor Turner (1969), “Liminality and Communitas,” in *The Ritual Process*
- Edith Turner (2012), “Introduction” to *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*
- Edith Turner (2015), “The Spirituality of Africa: The First Encounter,” *Anthropology of Consciousness*

Tuesday, Sept. 18: Collectivity, Diffusion, Movement

- Teresa Brennan (2004), “Introduction” to *The Transmission of Affect*
- Sara Ahmed (2004), “Collective Feelings, or, the Impressions Left by Others” *Theory, Culture & Society*
- Lucinda Carspecken (2015), “The Unbounded Self: Peak Experiences and Border Crossings in Southern Indiana” *Anthropology of Consciousness*
- Deborah Gould (2009), “The Pleasures and Intensities of Activism; or, Making a Place for Yourself in the Universe” *Moving Politics*

due: Friday, Sept. 21 by 9am: Short Paper 1

(Re)theorizing Affect II: Emotions vs. Affect
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Tuesday, Sept. 25: Affect vs. Emotion?

- Brian Massumi (2002), “The Autonomy of Affect” in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (read the “Introduction” too if you have time)
- Emily Martin (2013), “The Potentiality of Ethnography and the Limits of Affect Theory” *Current Anthropology*
- Analiese Richard and Daromir Rudnyckij (2009), “Economies of Affect” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*
- John Leavitt (1996), “Meaning and Feeling in the Anthropology of Emotions,” *American Ethnologist*

Tuesday, Oct 2: Language, Culture, Emotion: Cross-Cultural Affect

- Michelle Rosaldo, (1984) “Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling” in *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*
 - Catherine Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod (1990), “Introduction” to *Language and the Politics of Emotion*
 - Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1985), “Culture, Scarcity, and Material Thinking” *Ethos*
 - Renato Rosaldo (1989), “Grief and a Headhunter's Rage” in *Culture and Truth*
 - Bianca Williams (2018), “More Than a Groove: Pursuing Happiness as a Political Project” in *The Pursuit of Happiness*
- (rec) Catherine Lutz and Geoffrey White (1986), “The Anthropology of Emotions” *Annual Reviews Anthropology* (on moodle only)

due: Friday, Oct. 5 by 9am: Short Paper 2

(Re)theorizing Affect III: Structures of Feeling / Affect and Capitalism

Tuesday, Oct 9: Structures of Feeling / The Feeling of Capitalism

- Raymond Williams (1977), “Structures of Feeling,” in *Marxism and Literature*
 - Walter Benjamin (1927-40), selection from *The Arcades Project*
 - Michael Taussig (1991), “Tactility and Distraction” *Cultural Anthropology*
 - Kathleen Stewart (1988), “Nostalgia—A Polemic” *Cultural Anthropology*
- (rec) Lauren Berlant (2007), “Nearly Utopian, Nearly Normal: Post-Fordist Affect in La Promesse and Rosetta” *Public Culture* (on moodle only)
- (rec) Sianne Ngai (2004), “Introduction” to *Ugly Feelings* (on moodle only)

Tuesday, Oct 16: Affective Labor

- Arlie Hochschild (2003), “Feeling Management: From Private to Commercial Uses,” in *The Managed Heart*
 - Andrea Muehlebach (2011) “On Affective Labor in Post-Fordist Italy,” *Cultural Anthropology*
 - Anne Allison (2012), “Ordinary Refugees: Social Precarity and Soul in 21st Century Japan” *Anthropological Quarterly*
 - Purnima Mankekar and Akhil Gupta (2016), “Intimate Encounters: Affective Labor in Call Centers”
- (rec) Kalindi Vora (2012), “Limits of 'Labor': Accounting for Affect and the Biological in Transnational Surrogacy and Service Work,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* (on moodle only)
- (rec) Michael Hardt (1999), “Affective Labor” (on moodle only)

due: Friday, Oct. 19 by 9am: Short Paper 3

FALL BREAK

No class Tuesday, Oct 23

due: Friday, Oct 26 by 9am: final project proposal

(Re)theorizing Affect IV: Sensation / Sensuality**Tuesday, Oct 30: Intensity and Sensation: Sense and Memory**

- Giles Deleuze (1996), "Percept, Affect, Concept" in *What is Philosophy?*
- Nigel Thrift (2004), "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect," *Geografiska Annaler*
- Yael Navaro-Yashin (2009), "Affective Spaces, Melancholic Objects: Ruination and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*
- C. Nadia Seremetakis (1994), "The Memory of the Senses: Historical Perception, Commensal Exchange and Modernity" *Visual Anthropology Review*
- Joseph Masco (2008), "Survival is Your Business": Engineering Ruins and Affect in Nuclear America," *Cultural Anthropology*

(rec): Spinoza, Book III, Prop. 2 in *Ethics* (on moodle only)

(rec): Félix Guattari (1996), "Ritornellos and Existential Affects," *The Guattari Reader* (on moodle only)

Tuesday, Nov 6: Anthropology of the Senses

- Kath Weston (2012), "Politics Ecologies of the Precarious" *Anthropological Quarterly*
- Elizabeth Povinelli (2006), "Rotten Worlds," in *The Empire of Love*
- Paul Stoller (1994), "Embodying Colonial Memories," *American Anthropologist*
- Charles Hirschkind (2001), "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt" *American Ethnologist*

(rec): "On the Visceral" *GLQ* (on moodle only)

due: Friday, Nov. 9 by 9am: Short Paper 4

Conclusion: Ethnography's Affect**Tuesday, Nov 13: Representing Affect**

TBD

Tuesday, Nov 20: Representing Affect

TBD

Tuesday, Nov 27: Representing Affect

TBD

Tuesday, Dec 4: Ethnography's Affect

- Ruth Behar (1996), excerpts from *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* ("The Vulnerable Observer" and "Anthropology that Breaks your Heart")

(rec): Kamala Visweswaran (1994), "Refusing the Subject" *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (on moodle only)

Final papers are due December 15 by 5pm