

## FROM SUBSISTENCE TO SPECTACLE

### *Explorations in Economic Anthropology*

Spring 2006

Masaryk University in Brno

This seminar gives an overview of the history of economic anthropology, one of the oldest subfields of cultural anthropology, and introduces the students into its various specific research interests. The major goal of the course is to explore the culturally and historically diverse models of economic practices and institutions.

The lectures will draw on the substantive economic tradition of Karl Polányi which sees economy as embedded in the wider context of culture and society, and not as an autonomous field. The seminar discussions will focus on certain cultural economic forms and phenomena (such as gift-giving, kula, household economy, money, conspicuous consumption, cargo cult, potlatch, fashion, bazaars, etc.) that have not only significant theoretical currency in the history of economic anthropology but also remain present in the globalized world economy. The course will repeatedly emphasize that economic processes operate in an open, and not closed, cultural system; thus each and every local economic form has to be understood in the context of globalization.

The format of the course is a combination of brief lectures and a thorough discussion of various assigned readings. The students are encouraged to read both classic and innovative ethnographies as well as theoretical syntheses of the relevant literature, and be prepared to give concise presentations on them. The course meets three times this spring: on the long Fridays of March 17, May 12, and May 19.

1	March 17	09.00–10.20	Introduction: what is economic anthropology anyway?
2	March 17	10.30–11.50	<i>Homo oeconomicus?</i> On human nature and material progress
3	March 17	13.00–14.20	Reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange
4	March 17	14.30–16.00	Money and capital: cultural forms
5	May 12	09.00–10.20	<i>In-class test</i>
6	May 12	10.30–11.50	Household economy and agricultural production
7	May 12	13.00–14.20	The morals, ethics and cultures of capitalism
8	May 12	14.30–16.00	The spread of capitalism: the formation of world economy
9	May 19	09.00–10.20	Exploitation and resistance in the capitalist world economy
10	May 19	10.30–11.50	Ethnic economy: the economic value of cultural difference
11	May 19	13.00–14.20	Class cultures and new tribalism: consumer identities
12	May 19	14.30–16.00	Summary
	May 29	12.00	<i>Final papers due</i>

The course grades will be based on written work and class participation. Appearance and participation in the discussions of the meetings will account for 30 percent, the short in-class test of May 12 for 30 percent, and the final take-home essay for 40 percent of the grade. The deadline for submitting the final essay paper, in an electronic format, is at noon on May 29. Specific readings for the successive topics of the course will be distributed separately; the general readings from which chapters are going to be selected are listed below.

## GENERAL READINGS: A CANON OF THE FIELD

- Blim, Michael (2000) Capitalisms in Late Modernity. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29: 25–38.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul .
- Dalton, George (1969) Theoretical Issues in Economic Anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 10(1): 63–102.
- Evans-Pritchard, Edgar Evan, ed. (1954) *The Institutions of Primitive Society*. Glencoe: Free Press.
- Godelier, Maurice. (1972 [1965]) The Object and Method of Economic Anthropology. In *Rationality and Irrationality in Economics*, Maurice Godelier, ed. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Harvey, David (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Marx, Karl (1859) *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. Many editions, e.g. vol. 3 of Marx and Engels Collected Works (New York: International Publishers, 1998).
- Marx, Karl (1867) *Capital. Volume I: A Critique of Political Economy*. Many editions.
- Mauss, Marcel (1924) *Essay sur le don*. English edition first published in 1954 as *The Gift. Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Many editions.
- Morgan, Lewis Henry (1877) *Ancient Society*. New York: Henry Holt and Co.
- Polányi, Karl (1944) *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. New York. Many editions.
- Polányi, Karl (1957) The Economy as Instituted Process. In Karl Polányi, Conrad M. Arensberg and Harry W. Pearson, (eds.) *Trade and Market in the Early Empires. Economies in History and Theory*. Glencoe: The Free Press, 243–269.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1961 [1955]) *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. Glencoe: Free Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall (1972) *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago and New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Sahlins, Marshall (1976) *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Said, Edward (1977) *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon.
- Steward, Julian H. (1972 [1955]) *Theory of Cultural Change. The Methodology of Multilinear Evolution*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Thompson, Edward P. (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class*. London: Victor Gollanz.
- Veblen, Thorstein (1899) *Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. New York: Macmillan. Many editions.
- Wallerstein, Immanuel (1974) *The Modern World System*. Part I. New York: Academic Press.
- Weber, Max (1905) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Many editions.
- Willis, Paul (1977) *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids get Working-Class Jobs*. Farnborough: Saxon House.
- Wolf, Eric R. (1982) *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Miklós Vörös

Budapest, February 25, 2006