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ANT 391—State/Sovereignty/Territory

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Mondays 9:00am-12:00pm, WCP 5.118

Course Description:

This course provides a rigorous introduction to the anthropology of the state. Focusing primarily on key theoretical interventions within anthropology and cognate disciplines, the course introduces a set of different ways to understand the exercise and accomplishment of rule. Course readings are oriented around a series of key questions and debates in both historical and contemporary discussion of state power. Namely, the course asks:

- What is the state?
- What does it mean to examine “state formation” historically and ethnographically?
- What different forms (states?) might a state take?
- What is state power and how does it work?
- How might one understand and trace everyday experiences of and encounters with the state?
- What is the relationship between sovereignty, violence, and legitimacy?
- What is territory and how is it lived?

The course explores different ways that these questions have been engaged in Marxian thought, post-structural critique, and other schools of critical social theory. Though course readings are primarily theoretical in content, the course is targeted broadly at students interested in carrying out ethnographic and/or historical qualitative research on questions related to politics, power, and rule.

Course Goals

This course is designed as an introduction to the political anthropology of the state, but focuses specifically on three terms that have (again) come to dominate discussions of power in the contemporary moment: state, sovereignty, and territory. The relationship between and, indeed, the very meanings of these terms are hotly contested and by no means clear. Yet, they remain concepts that any student of power, politics, violence, development, environment and more must grapple with. The course, as such, aims to provide a solid foundation of understanding for students interested in pursuing ethnographic, historical, and qualitative research on politics and power in its many forms. Though by no means comprehensive, it should provide the tools for students to actively explore and engage a rich literature, set of methodological tools, and emerging areas of investigation. For the most part, it privileges theoretical readings over book length ethnographic and historical studies (with some exceptions). However, We have endeavored to provide a robust set of suggestions in each week for those wishing to dig further into any given topic. On completing this course, students should be prepared to:

- Explain (in both oral and written work) core theories and ideas about the anthropology of state, sovereignty, and territory.
- Understand different theoretical approaches to understanding state power (Marxian, Foucauldian, Feminist, etc.)
- Engage a series of key concepts and terms in discussions of state, sovereignty, and territory (hegemony, governmentality, exception, space, etc.)
- Articulate ways that theories of state, sovereignty, and territory might inform their own research designs, interpretations, and analyses.

Course Format, Expectations, and Procedures:

- This is a seminar course. The bulk of the class will be devoted to class discussion. We expect everyone to be an active, regular, and respectful participant of course discussion.
- This is a reading intensive course. We expect students to arrive in class having done the readings and prepared to engage in active class discussion.
- We reserve the right to treat this syllabus as provisional. That is: if we or course participants identify other readings that will be helpful, we reserve the right to swap them in for readings listed here as needed. The amount of reading listed in this syllabus will remain approximately the same.
- We ask that everyone write 6 reading responses over the course of the semester. More on how to do these will be provided in class. These response papers should be posted on the canvas Midnight on night before class.
- Everyone will have an opportunity to lead class discussion twice. We will discuss the format for this in class.
- There are two written assignments in this course (beyond the reading responses). A short (1200-1500 word) mid-term essay and a longer (3000 word) final essay. Prompts will be provided for each. Should students prefer to use the course to write something that advances their own career in a different way (e.g., a dissertation prospectus, an article for submission to peer review, etc.) you should use the mid-term essay as an opportunity to submit a proposal for the final project. We will discuss what forms this might take in class.

Required Material

All course materials with the exception of books are available on the course's Canvas site. This includes suggested readings (again, with the exception of books). The following book is required reading for the course

- Nusrat Chowdhury. 2019. *Paradoxes of the Popular: Crowd Politics in Bangladesh*. Stanford University Press.

Grading

- Course participation: 10% (based on regular and active participation in class)
- Reading Responses: 20% (based on completing and submitting weekly discussion questions)
- Course leadership: 10% (based on your two opportunities to lead a course)
- Mid-Term: 20%
- Final: 40%

January 22: Week 1: Course Introduction

Recommended:

- Tilly, Charles. "War making and state making as organized crime." In Evans, Peter, Dietrich Rueschmeyer and Theda Skocpol. *Bringing the State Back In*. Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat. 2011. "Introduction." In *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*. Duke University Press.
- Thelen, Tatjana, Vettors, Larissa and Benda-Beckmann, Keebet von. Introduction. *Stategraphy: Toward a Relational Anthropology of the State*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781785337017>

January 29: Week 2: Unsettling the State

- Philip Abrams. 1988. "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State." *Journal of Historical Sociology*.
- Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer. 1985. "Introduction." *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution*. Basil Blackwell.
- Derek Sayer. 1994. "Everyday Forms of State Formation: Some Dissident Remarks on Hegemony." In *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*. Duke University Press.
- Alexi Yurchak. 2015. "Bodies of Lenin: The Hidden Science of Communist Sovereignty." *Representations*. 129.

Optional:

- Timothy Mitchell. 1999. "Society, Economy, and the State Effect." In *State/Culture: State-Formation after the Cultural Turn*. Cornell.

February 5: Week 3: States, Representation, and the Lumpen

- Karl Marx. 1869. Excerpts from "The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte." *The Marx-Engles Reader*. Norton.
- Stallybrass, Peter. "Marx and heterogeneity: thinking the lumpenproletariat." *Representations* 31 (1990): 69-95.
- Gayatri Spivak. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak." *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. University of Illinois Press.

February 12: Week 4: Bureaucracy, Law and the Everyday State

- Weber, Max. 2006. "Bureaucracy." In *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*. Blackwell.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1992. *The Social Production of Indifference: Exploring the Symbolic Roots of Western Bureaucracy*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Bayat, Asef. "Un-civil society: The politics of the 'informal people'." *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (1997): 53-72.
- Anders, Gerhard, and Monique Nuijten. "Corruption and the secret of law: An introduction." In *Corruption and the Secret of Law*, pp. 1-24. Routledge, 2017.

February 19, Week 5: Hegemony and the State

- Louis Althusser. 1971. "Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatus: Notes Toward an Investigation." In *Lenin and Philosophy*. Monthly Review Press.
- Antonio Gramsci. 2006. "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc." In *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*. NYU Press.
- Raymond Williams. 1993. "Selections from *Marxism and Literature*." In *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*. Princeton University Press.
- Stuart Hall. 2017. "Lecture 7: Domination and Hegemony." In *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*. Duke University Press.

February 26, Week 6: Public and Private

- Thelen, Tatjana and Alber Erdmute, (eds) 2017 *Reconnecting State and Kinship*: Philadelphia: University.
- Bhattacharjee, Anannya. 1997. "The Public/Private Mirage: Mapping Homes and Undomesticating Violence Work in the South Asian Immigrant Community." In M. J. Alexander and C. T. Mohanty (eds.), *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. New York and London: Routledge. [pp. 308–29]
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 2002. "Genealogies of the Intimate: Movements in Colonial Studies" and "Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Gender and Morality in the Making of Race." *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

March 4, Week 7: Governmentality and Power

- Michel Foucault. 1991. "Politics and the Study of Discourse" and "Governmentality." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ferguson, James, and Akhil Gupta 2002 *Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality*. *American Ethnologist* 29(4): 981–1002.
- Partha Chatterjee. 2004. "The Politics of the Governed" in *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*. Columbia University Press.
- Stephen Collier and Andrew Lakoff. 2015. "Vital Systems Security: Reflexive Biopolitics and the Government of Emergency." *Theory, Culture, and Society*. 32 (2)

Optional:

- Povinelli, Elizabeth A. "Chapter One" In *Geontologies: A requiem to late liberalism*. Duke University Press, 2016.

Midterm Essay Due: March 8, 5 pm

March 18 Week 8: Bodies and Biopolitics

- Michel Foucault. 1978. "The Right of Death and the Power Over Life" in *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*. Vintage.

- Giles Deleuze. 1990. "Control and Becoming" and "Postscript on Control Societies." In *Negotiations*. Columbia
- Puar, Jasbir K. 2018. Chapters 1 and 2. In: *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Duke University Press.

March 25, Week 9: Sovereign Power and State Violence

- Hannah Arendt. 1968. "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man." In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Harcourt.
- Giorgio Agamben. 1998. Introduction and "The Paradox of Sovereignty." In *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press.
- Jacques Rancière. 2004. "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 103(2/3).
- Achille Mbembe. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture*. 15 (1).

Optional

- Elizabeth Dunn and Jason Cons. 2014. "Aleatory Sovereignty and the Rule of Sensitive Space." *Antipode*.

April 1, Week 10: State/Space/Territory

- Henri Lefebvre. 2009. "Space and the State." In *State, Space, World*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Timothy Mitchell. "The Character of Calculability." In *Rule of Experts*. University of California.
- Sylvia Wynter. 1971. "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation." *Savacou* 5
- Katherine McKittrick. 2013. "Plantation Futures." *Small Axe*. 3 (42).
- Stuart Elden. 2013. "How Should We Do the History of Territory?" *Territory, Politics, Governance*. 1(1).

April 8, Week 11: Politics of the Crowd

- Nusrat Chowdhury. 2019. *Paradoxes of the Popular: Crowd Politics in Bangladesh*. Stanford University Press.

April 15, Week 12: Governance, Secrecies and Transparencies

- Akhil Gupta. 1995. "Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State." *American Ethnologist*. 22(2).
- Janet Roitman. 2014. "The Ethics of Illegality in the Chad Basin." In *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. University of Chicago Press.
- Joe Masco. 2010. "'Sensitive but Unclassified': Secrecy and the Counterterrorist State." *Public Culture*. 22(3).
- Katherine Verdery. 2014. "An Archive and Its Fictions." In *Secrets and Truths: Ethnography in the Archive of Romania's Secret Police*. Central European Press.

April 22, Week 13: Studying the State from the Margins

- Chari, Sharad, and Katherine Verdery. "Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 1 (2009): 6–34. doi:10.1017/S0010417509000024.

- Das, Veena, and Poole, Deborah. 2004: "Chapter 1: State and its Margins: Comparative Ethnographies." In *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Edited by Das, Veena and Poole, Deborah. SAR Press: 3-33.
- Anna Tsing. 1994. "Government Headhunters." In *In the Realm of the Diamond Queen: Marginality in an Out of the Way Place*. Princeton University Press.
- Abdulmaliq Simone. 2022. "Without Capture: From Extinction to Abolition." In *The Surrounds: Urban Life Within and Beyond Capture*. Duke University Press.

April 29, Week 14: Course Conclusion

- Read the Introduction and a chapter (of your choice) from Malini Ranganathan, David Pike, and Sapana Doshi. 2022. *Corruption Plots: Stories, Ethics, and Publics of the Late Capitalist City*. Cornell University Press.
https://search.lib.utexas.edu/permalink/01UTAU_INST/be14ds/alma991058517275906011

Final Paper Due: May 6 by Noon

Classroom Policies

Policy on late work: Unexcused late papers will receive 1/3 of a letter grade deduction if less than 12 hours, a full letter grade deduction if between 12 and 24 hours late, two full letter grade deductions between 24 and 48 hours late, and will not be accepted if more than 48 hours late. Reading responses must be posted the night before class.

Policy on absences: I expect you to attend each class. I also recognize that things happen. Please contact me in advance if you will be missing class. Missing more than 2 classes will be grounds for failing the course.

Classroom Safety and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is still with us. Please protect yourself, your classmates, and the larger University community by noting the following guidelines and information.

If you have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19, we strongly encourage you to do so. Almost all pharmacies carry the vaccine, and it is available free of charge.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, please follow the [Action Chart](#) by UT Health Services. If you have symptoms or tested positive, please stay home and isolate. You will not be penalized for any class absence due to COVID-19 or other documented illness.

Course readings and syllabus

I believe that a course and its instructor should be adaptable. This means that readings and course activities may change to suite course developments, forward fruitful discussions, or to address student interests. For this reason, the readings in this syllabus should be regarded as provisional. For any given week, the readings will be available on Canvas.

While readings may, from time to time change, the course policies and procedures listed in this syllabus will not. It is your responsibility to know them.

Statement on Learning Success

Your success in this class is important to me. We will all need accommodations because we all learn differently. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. We will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT. Many are listed on this syllabus, but I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

Student Rights & Responsibilities

- You have a right to a learning environment that supports mental and physical wellness.
- You have a right to respect.
- You have a right to be assessed and graded fairly.
- You have a right to freedom of opinion and expression.
- You have a right to privacy and confidentiality.
- You have a right to meaningful and equal participation, to self-organize groups to improve your learning environment.
- You have a right to learn in an environment that is welcoming to all people. No student shall be isolated, excluded or diminished in any way.

With these rights come responsibilities:

- You are responsible for taking care of yourself, managing your time, and communicating with the teaching team and with others if things start to feel out of control or overwhelming.
- You are responsible for acting in a way that is worthy of respect and always respectful of others.
- Your experience with this course is directly related to the quality of the energy that you bring to it, and your energy shapes the quality of your peers' experiences.
- You are responsible for creating an inclusive environment and for speaking up when someone is excluded.
- You are responsible for holding yourself accountable to these standards, holding each other to these standards, and holding the teaching team accountable as well.

Personal Pronoun Preference

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name different than what appears on the roster, and by the gender pronouns you use. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Jason's pronouns are he, him, his.

Oviya's pronouns are she, her, hers

UNIVERSITY POLICIES & RESOURCES

COVID-19, Campus, and Personal Safety

To help keep everyone at UT and in our community safe, it is critical that students report COVID-19 symptoms and testing, regardless of test results, to [University Health Services](#), and faculty and staff report to the [HealthPoint Occupational Health Program](#) (OHP) as soon as possible. Please see this [link](#) to

understand what needs to be reported. In addition, to help understand what to do if a fellow student in the class (or the instructor or TA) tests positive for COVID, see this [University Health Services link](#).

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Q Drop Policy

If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you'll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

Student Accommodations

Students with a documented disability may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). <http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/about/>

- Please request a meeting as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you

Academic Integrity

Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

This means that work you produce on assignments, tests and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. I will make it clear for each test, exam or assignment whether collaboration is encouraged or not.

Always cite your sources. If you use words or ideas that are not your own (or that you have used in previous class), you must make that clear otherwise you will be guilty of plagiarism and subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course.

You are responsible for understanding UT's Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

University Resources for Students

The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning, use these to help you succeed in your classes

The Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic

coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

The University Writing Center

The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students' resourcefulness and self-reliance.

<http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Counseling and Mental Health Center

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students' academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/>

Student Emergency Services

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>

ITS

Need help with technology? <http://www.utexas.edu/its/>

Libraries

Need help searching for information? <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

Canvas

Canvas help is available 24/7 at <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials>

Important Safety Information

BCAL

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn't feel right – it probably isn't. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.

Evacuation Information

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when an alarm or alert is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside, unless told otherwise by an official representative.

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy.

Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency