

David Sutton
Anthropology 567

HOW CULTURE HAPPENS: KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, AND THEIR TRANSMISSION

This seminar will examine processes of learning knowledge and skills. By focusing on the ways knowledge and skills are valued and distributed through society, the ways that they become attached to persons, objects and institutions, and the storage of knowledge/skills through writing or digitally we will address basic questions about how culture is transmitted through time and how culture does or does not reproduce itself from one generation to the next. In other words, how does change *and continuity* happen? What is the role of creativity in these processes? What is the relationship of improvisation to cultural categories and cultural “stocks of knowledge.” Approaches will be drawn from phenomenology, the anthropology of apprenticeship, cognitive anthropology and actor-network theory, with a particular interest in how knowledge/skills become embodied. We will approach these topics primarily through ethnography.

Required Books:

Frederick Barth *Cosmologies in the Making: a Generative Approach to Cultural Variation in New Guinea*

Lamont Lindstrom *Knowledge and Power in a South Pacific Society* (Available used on Amazon.com)

Bruno Latour *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*

Lucy Suchman *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions*

Kathryn Geurts *Culture and the Senses: Embodiment, Identity and Well-Being in an African Community*

Rane Willerslev *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism and Personhood Among Siberian Yukaghirs*

Michael Herzfeld *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*

Anna Tsing *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections*

Tom Boellstorff *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human* (Will be available in April)

Week One: Introduction: Classical Approaches

*M. Crick Anthropology of Knowledge Annual Review of Anthropology 1982, v. xi: 287-313

*A. Salmond Theoretical Landscapes: On cross-cultural conceptions of knowledge In: D. Parkin ed. Semantic anthropology

Week Two: Knowledge, Apprenticeship and Skill

*Tim Ingold "Two Reflections on Ecological Knowledge." In *Nature Knowledge: Ethnoscience, Cognition and Utility*. Eds. G Sanga & G. Ortali. Oxford: Berghan,

*Christina Toren "Making History: The Significance of Childhood Cognition for a Comparative Anthropology of Mind" In *Mind Materiality and History*. London: Routledge, 1999.

*Maynard, A., P. Greenfield & C. Childs. 1999. "Culture, History, Biology and Body: Native and Non-Native Acquisition of Technological Skill." *Ethos* 27:379-402.

*Karen Barber "Improvisation and the Art of Making Things Stick." In *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. E. Hallam & T. Ingold eds. Oxford: Berg, 2007.

*Christina Grasseni "Good Looking: Learning to be a Cattle Breeder" in *Skilled Visions* Oxford: Berghan, 2007.

*Julia Hendon. 2006. "Textile Production as Craft in Mesoamerica: Time, Labor and Knowledge." *Journal of Social Archaeology* 6(3): 354-78.

*Jean Lave "The Culture of Acquisition and the Practice of Understanding." In *Cultural Psychology: Essays on Comparative Human Development*. J. Stigler, R. Schweder & G. Herd eds. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Week Three Knowledge, Ritual and Reproduction

Frederick Barth *Cosmologies in the Making*

Harvey Whitehouse "Memorable Religions: Transmission, Codification and Change in Divergent Melanesian Contexts." *Man* 27(4):777-797, 1992.

Michael Rowlands "The Role of Memory in the Transmission of Culture" *World Archaeology* 25(2)142-151, 1994.

Week Four Knowledge as Discursive Power

Lamont Lindstrom *Knowledge and Power in a South Pacific Society*

Week Five Enculturating the Senses: Learning to Balance.

Kathryn Geurts *Culture and the Senses: Embodiment, Identity and Well-Being in an African Community*

Week Six Apprenticeship: Theft, Power and the Global Hierarchy of Value

Michael Herzfeld *The Body Impolitic: Artisans and Artifice in the Global Hierarchy of Value*

Week Seven Digital Knowledge: A Critique of Plans

Lucy Suchman *Human-Machine Reconfigurations: Plans and Situated Actions*

Week Eight BREAK

Week Nine: Nature Knowledge: Rethinking Animism and the Environment

Rane Willerslev *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism and Personhood Among Siberian Yukaghirs*

Week Ten: Anthropological Knowledge 1: Actor-Networks

Bruno Latour *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*

Week Eleven Anthropological Knowledge 2: Global/Local Knowledge

Anna Tsing *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections*

Week Twelve Anthropological Knowledge 3: Creative Knowledge

Elizabeth Hallam & Tim Ingold *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation* (selections)

Week Thirteen

TBA

Week Fourteen Fantasy Knowledge: Online Personhood

Tom Boellstorff *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*

Week Fifteen

TBA