

University of Chicago
Anthropology 46601
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Michael Dietler
Office: Haskell 131
Phone: 702-7150
mdietler@uchicago.edu

ECONOMIC ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

This seminar is an exploration of anthropological approaches to the study of economic systems of the past and present. Readings and discussions are structured so as to: 1) give the participants a grounding in the theoretical framework of, and intellectual background to, this domain of inquiry; 2) critically explore major current research issues and methods; and 3) furnish a comparative perspective on the role of economy in society and history. This is not a "cookbook" technical course in how to do economic analysis, but rather an exploration of how to think about economic issues in ways that may lead to productive research strategies and insights.

The course will begin with a discussion of definitions of "economy" and a comparison of different approaches to the subject both within and outside the discipline of anthropology, including especially differences between anthropology and the discipline of economics. The place of economic archaeology in relation to the subfields of economic anthropology and economic history will be evaluated, and both the potential contribution and special methodological and theoretical characteristics of economic archaeology will be emphasized. The first four weeks will be devoted to understanding the different major theoretical and analytical orientations that have guided research on the economy. Subsequent class sessions will be devoted to the exploration of particular themes illustrating the range of human activity subject to investigation within the rubric of "economy" and the range of competing, or complementary, theoretical approaches to the study of that activity. Readings for each of these thematic discussions will include both general statements of theory and goals and specific case studies that illustrate methods, problems, and the state of current research. Readings are drawn from the fields of cultural anthropology, archaeology, and ancient history.

This is a field animated by lively controversies over everything from basic definitions to methods, epistemology, and metaphysics, in which heated debate and polemic are frequent. As will become clear, the one thing that unites many of these scholars is an extremely critical view of economic analysis as practiced by economists: neo-classical economics is often regarded as little more than "heavily mathematized superstition purveyed as science" (in the words of rogue economist Yanis Varoufakis); that is, a set of narrow (and largely erroneous) ethnocentric assumptions projected as universal laws. Students are advised to approach all the readings with a critical and practical eye, seeking to understand the competing perspectives within a larger theoretical framework and to evaluate them in terms of

application and efficacy in comprehending the role of "economy" in society and history. This is also a field that has generated an enormous literature that can only be highlighted selectively here. Other readings are suggested for those who wish to pursue particular theoretical perspectives or issues in greater depth. Some related perspectives and topics (such as ecological anthropology and hunter-gatherer economies) cannot be accommodated at all in the time available, and interested students are simply referred to some of the key literature. The class format will be biased toward discussion, with formal lecturing kept to a minimum after some initial orientation and exegesis.

Requirements for the class (your grade will be based on an evaluation of all three):

- 1) Preparation and Participation: All students should read and critically digest all the readings for each seminar session. Students should come to every class prepared to participate in an analytical discussion of the readings assigned for the week (be prepared to be called upon).
- 2) Leading Discussion: The class will be divided into two groups. One group will prepare a brief critical commentary and a series of questions that will orient the discussion. The second group is responsible for providing responses to those questions. Responsibilities will alternate each week. The group asking questions is not excused from discussion. Quite the opposite: I will expect comments and challenges from them concerning the responses to their questions. The instructor will also add questions and background context.
- 3) Research Paper: prepare a 15 page research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. The paper will consist of a critical analysis of an archaeological case study of economic relevance. Each seminar participant will select a case not covered in the course readings and examine theoretical orientations and methodological strengths and weaknesses. The paper should also include suggestions for improving the given study to produce a better understanding of the economic questions being explored. It is expected that this analysis will make full critical use of the theoretical literature covered in the course as well as demonstrating some expanded reading in the literature covering the chosen theme. A short **paper proposal** (2 pages plus bibliography) outlining the gist of the final paper will be posted on the CANVAS site and circulated in class on **May 7** and we will leave some time during the following session for students to exchange suggestions and critical responses. Each student will also be responsible for providing a brief written response to the proposal of one other student (the exchange partners will be arranged in class). **Final papers are due June 8.**

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

I. March 28: ***Introduction to the seminar***

- Why study economic history and economic anthropology?
- Definitions and dimensions of "economy" and the approaches to its study.
- Definition of Economic Archaeology (or the Economic Archaeologies); examination of its relationship to Economic Anthropology, Economic History and Ecological Anthropology; and discussion of its potential contribution and methodological problems.
- An historical perspective on the development of the field.

C. Hann & K. Hart (2011). *Economic Anthropology: History, Ethnography, Critique*. Polity Press. Chapters 1 & 2, pp. 1-36.

M.I. Finley (1985) [1973]. *The Ancient Economy*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 1 & 2.

P. Cartledge (2002). The economy (economies) of ancient Greece. In *The Ancient Economy*, edited by W. Scheidel & S. von Reden. New York: Routledge . Pp. 11-32.

A. Bresson (2016). *The Making of the Ancient Greek Economy: Institutions, Markets, and Growth in the City-States*. Princeton U.P. Chapter 1, pp. 1-27.

II. April 4: ***Exploring theoretical approaches to the study of economy I:***

- Anthropology vs. Neoclassical Economics (round 1)
- The "Formalist vs. Substantivist" and "Modernist vs. Primitivist" debates
- The economy as instituted process

N.B. This session will be orchestrated as a debate, with the class divided into Formalist and Substantivist camps. The major issues to be debated are: "Do universal principles of economic behavior exist?"; "Are differences between economies a matter of degree or of kind?"; and "How should anthropologists/archaeologists study economic phenomena?". Each team should prepare an opening statement and a set of themes to guide the debate and they should be prepared to cite specific passages for close critical analysis in challenging their opponents positions and making clear their own. The debate will be followed by a discussion of the controversy and ways of moving beyond it.

- K. Polanyi (1958). The economy as instituted process. In *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires*, ed. by K. Polanyi, C. Arensberg & H. Pearson, pp. 243-270.
- G. Dalton (1961). Economic theory and primitive society. *American Anthropologist*, 63:1-25.
- E. LeClair (1962). Economic theory and economic anthropology. *American Anthropologist*, 64:1179-1203.
- R. Burling (1962). Maximization theories and the study of Economic Anthropology. *American Anthropologist* 64(4):802-821.
- R. Firth (1967). Themes in economic anthropology: a general comment. In *Themes in Economic Anthropology*, ed. by R. Firth, pp. 1-28.
- A. Johnson (1980). The limits of formalism in agricultural decision research. In *Agricultural Decision Making: Anthropological Contributions to Rural Development*. P.F. Barlett, ed. Pp. 19-43. New York: Academic Press.
- J. Andreau (2002). Twenty years after Moses I. Finley's *The Ancient Economy*. In *The Ancient Economy*, edited by W. Scheidel & S. von Reden, pp. 33-49.
- R. Saller (2002). Framing the debate over growth in the ancient economy. In *The Ancient Economy*, edited by W. Scheidel & S. von Reden, pp. 251-269.

III. April 11: Exploring theoretical approaches to the study of economy II:

- Culture, practice, and critiques of economic rationality
- Anthropology vs Economics and Rat Choice Theory (round 2)

- M. Sahlins (1976). *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chapters 4 & 5, pp. 166-221.
- P. Bourdieu (2005). *The Social Structures of the Economy*. Introduction, Part II: Principles of an Economic Anthropology, and Postscript: pp. 1-13, 193-232.
- E. L. Rubin (2005). Rational choice and rat choice: some thoughts on the relationship among rationality, markets, and human beings. *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 80(3):1091-1127.
- M. Chibnik (2011). *Anthropology, Economics, and Choice*. University of Texas Press, Austin. Introduction and Chapter 1: pp. 1-37.

M. Douglas (1962). The Lele – resistance to change. In *Markets in Africa*, ed. by P. Bohannan & G. Dalton.

IV. April 18: *Exploring theoretical approaches to the study of economy III:*

- Marxism and Political Economy
- Production, modes of production, and reproduction
- The infrastructure/superstructure debate
- Dependency Theory and World-Systems

S. Plattner (1989). Marxism. In *Economic Anthropology*, ed. by S. Plattner, pp. 379-396.

B. Trigger (1993). Marxism in contemporary Western archaeology. *Archaeological Method and Theory*, 5: 159-200.

W. Roseberry (1988). Political economy. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 17:161-185.

A.G. Frank (1993). Bronze Age world system cycles. *Current Anthropology*, 34:383-429.

I. Wallerstein (1991). World system versus world-systems: a critique. *Critique of Anthropology*, 11:189-194.

J. Schneider (1991). Was there a precapitalist world-system? In *Core/Periphery Relations in Precapitalist Worlds*, ed. by C. Chase-Dunn & T. Hall. pp. 45-66.

V. April 25: *Consumption:*

- Perspectives on the gift/commodity distinction
- Value and the cultural politics of demand
- Cross-cultural consumption

M. Dietler (2010). Consumption. In *The Oxford Handbook of Material Culture Studies*, edited by D. Hicks and M. Beaudry, pp. 207-226. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

P. R. Mullins (2011). The archaeology of consumption. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40:133-144.

A. Appadurai (1986). Introduction: commodities and the politics of value. In *The Social Life of Things*, ed. by A. Appadurai, pp. 3-63.

I. Morris (1986). Gift and commodity in Archaic Greece. *Man*, 21:1-17.

D. Graeber (2001). *Toward and Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. Chapters 1 and 2: "Three ways of talking about value" (pp. 1-22) and "Current directions in exchange theory" (pp. 23-47).

VI. May 2: Distribution: Exchange and trade:

- The role of exchange in social life
- The forms of exchange and distribution
- Multi-centric economies/spheres of exchange/transactional orders
- Traders and commodity chains
- Emporia, trade diasporas, and entanglement
- Archaeological analysis of local and regional trade; issues of scale

S. Narotzky (1997). *New Directions in Economic Anthropology*. Chapter 2: "Distribution and Exchange", pp. 42-98.

M. Mauss (1969). *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. pp. 1-45. New York: Norton (original: 1925).

M. Sahlins (1972). excerpt from "On the sociology of primitive exchange". In his *Stone Age Economics*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 185-230.

P. Bohannan (1955). Some principles of exchange and investment among the Tiv. *American Anthropologist*, 57:60-70.

C. Piot (1991). Of persons and things: some reflections on African spheres of exchange. *Man*, 26:405-424.

C. Humphrey & S. Hugh-Jones (1992). Introduction: barter, exchange and value. In *Barter, Exchange and Value: An Anthropological Approach*, ed. by C. Humphrey & S. Hugh-Jones, pp. 1-20.

M. Dietler (2010). *Archaeologies of Colonialism: Consumption, Entanglement, and Violence in Ancient Mediterranean France*. University of California Press. Chapter 5: "Trade and Traders", pp. 131-156.

M. Dietler (2018, in press). Emporia: spaces of encounter and entanglement. In *The Emporion: Trade and Colonial Encounters in the Western Mediterranean*, ed. by E. Gailledrat, R. Plana-Mallart and M. Dietler. Montpellier University Press.

C. Panella & A. Tcherna (2002). Agricultural products transported in amphorae: oil and wine. In *The Ancient Economy*, edited by W. Scheidel & S. von Reden, pp. 173-189.

VII. May 9: *Production I: Households, ecology, and the agrarian economy:*

- Chayonov and the "Domestic Mode of Production" debate
- Subsistence, diet, and ecological relationships
- Scarcity, risk, effort, and strategies of choice
- Agricultural production and land tenure
- Property
- Weber's "Consumer City": Rural-Urban production relationships

S. Narotzky (1997). *New Directions in Economic Anthropology*. Chapter 1: Production, pp. 8-41.

M. Sahlins (1972). The Domestic Mode of Production. In his *Stone Age Economics*.

D. Donham (1981). Beyond the domestic mode of production. *Man*, 16:515-541.

P. Halstead (2002). Traditional and ancient rural economy in Mediterranean Europe: plus ça change? In *The Ancient Economy*, edited by W. Scheidel & S. von Reden, pp. 53-83.

M. Hudson (1998). Private landownership, debt, and fiscal crisis in the ancient Near East. In *Property in Economic Context*, ed. By R.C. Hunt & A. Gilman, pp. 139-169. Lanham: University Press of America.

P. Sheets (2000). Provisioning the Ceren household: the vertical economy, village economy, and household economy in the southeastern Maya periphery. *Ancient Mesoamerica* 11: 217-230.

R. Osborne (2002). Pride and prejudice, sense and subsistence: exchange and society in the Greek city. In *The Ancient Economy*, edited by W. Scheidel & S. von Reden, pp. 114-132.

VIII. May 16: *Production II: Labor:*

- Mobilization, control, and exploitation
- The division of labor
- Commodity production and craft specialization
- Labor theory of value
- Gender issues

- S. Ortiz (1994). Work, the division of labour and co-operation. In *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. By T. Ingold, pp. 891-910.
- M. Dietler & I. Herbich (2001). Feasts and labor mobilization: dissecting a fundamental economic practice. In *Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power*, ed. by M. Dietler & B. Hayden, pp. 240-264.
- M.I. Finley (1985). *The Ancient Economy*. Chapter 3 & 7(2).
- I. Kopytoff (1982). Slavery. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 11: 207-30.
- C.L. Costin (1991). Craft specialization: issues in defining, documenting, and explaining the organization of production. *Archaeological Method and Theory*, 3: 1-56.
- E.M. Harris (2001). Workshop, marketplace and household: the nature of technical specialization in classical Athens and its influence on economy and society. In *Money, Labour and Land: Approaches to the Economies of Ancient Greece*, ed. By P. Cartledge, E.E. Cohen & L. Foxhall, pp. 67-99. London: Routledge.
- E.P. Thompson (1967). Time, work discipline, and industrial capitalism. *Past and Present*, 38:56-97.
- M. Leone (1999). Ceramics from Annapolis, Maryland: a measure of time routines and work discipline. In *Historical Archaeologies of Capitalism*, edited by M. Leone & P. Potter, pp. 195-216.
- M. Strivens (2005). Gender. In *A Handbook of Economic Anthropology*, ed. By J.G. Carrier, pp. 323-338. Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

IX. May 23:

Money, Credit & Debt:

- Forms of money
- The origin and spread of commodity money
- General purpose money and multi-centric economies
- Debt and credit
- Numismatic analysis

G. Dalton (1965). Primitive money. *American Anthropologist*, 67:44-65.

P. Bohannon (1959). The impact of money on an African subsistence economy. *Journal of Economic History*, 19:491-503.

- C. Haselgrove and S. Krmnicek (2012). The archaeology of money. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41:235-250.
- C.M. Thompson (2003). Sealed silver in Iron Age Cisjordan and the 'invention' of coinage. *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 22: 67-107.
- M. Saul (2004). Money in colonial transition: cowries and Francs in West Africa. *American Anthropologist*, 106:71-84.
- M. Gerriets (1985). Money in Early Christian Ireland according to the Irish laws. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 27: 323-339.
- M. Bloch & J. Parry (1989). Introduction: money and the morality of exchange. In *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, ed. by J. Parry & M. Bloch, pp. 1-32.
- J. Aarts (2005). Coins, money and exchange in the Roman world. A cultural-economic perspective. *Archaeological Dialogues* 12(1): 1-44.
- A. Bresson (2016). *The Making of the Ancient Greek Economy: Institutions, Markets, and Growth in the City-States*. Princeton U.P. Chapter 10, "Money and Credit", pp. 261-285.
- D. Graeber (2011). *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House. Chapters 1, 2 & 3: pp. 1-71.

X. May 30: Markets:

- Markets and market exchange
- The origin and development of markets
- The state and the informal economy

- P. Bohannan & G. Dalton (1962). Introduction. In *Markets in Africa*, ed. by P. Bohannan & G. Dalton, pp. 1-26.
- S. Plattner (1989). Markets and marketplaces; and Economic behavior in markets. In *Economic Anthropology*, ed. by S. Plattner, pp. 171-208; 209-221.
- G. M. Feinman and C. P. Garraty (2010). Preindustrial markets and marketing: archaeological perspectives. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39:167-191.
- L.D. Minc (2006). Monitoring regional market systems in prehistory: models, methods, and metrics. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 25: 82-116.

- J. Redfield (1986). The development of the market in Archaic Greece. In *The Market in History*, ed. by B.L. Anderson & A.J.H. Latham, pp. 29-58.
- A. Tchernia (2016). *The Romans and Trade*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 3, "The Matter of the Market", pp. 72-96.

June 8: PAPER DUE