

## Economic Anthropology

Anthropology 122  
U.C. Riverside  
Winter 2013  
Watkins 1350  
2:10-3:30 PM

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or by appointment  
<http://ilearn.ucr.edu>

### Course Overview

This course explores the social and cultural dimensions of production, exchange, saving, borrowing and consumption. We hear every day about “the economy,” an identifiably separate sphere of human life with its own rules and principles and its own scholarly discipline (economics). This class starts from the premise that this “common sense” idea of the economy is only one way to view the way people meet their basic and not-so-basic human needs.

This class asks some big questions. Do all people everywhere seek to accumulate property, and to maximize profits? Is “rationality” the same in every culture? Do all think the same way about debt, bribery, or marriage payments? Do human economies evolve inexorably—for example, from public to private property, from cowrie shells to electronic money, or from gifts and barter to sale and credit? Or is the picture more complex and the direction inconstant? Is there really any such thing as a “free” gift? Why do people value things?

We’ll ask these questions in a characteristically anthropological way. In considering other ways of understanding the aspects of human behavior that are conventionally called “economic,” we’ll read in detail about peoples’ lives, including Maine lobstermen, Oaxacan migrants, West African traders in New York City, and aspiring entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. Throughout the course, we’ll take a cross-cultural perspective, confronting “Western” arguments about economic behavior and human nature with alternative practices and understandings.

### Requirements

**Read this syllabus.** Understand the policies stated here. If anything is unclear, contact me for clarification. Always bring your syllabus to class in case changes are announced. Check it frequently to be sure you are aware of upcoming assignments and due dates. The syllabus is subject to change. I will announce all changes in class and post an updated version on the course iLearn site.

**Get an iLearn account,** if you don’t have one already. To log on to iLearn you will need the same username and password that you use for logging into your UCR webmail. All emails will be sent through iLearn so please be sure to check your UCR email.

**Attend class.** Attendance is essential for success in the course. If you miss class it is your responsibility to get notes, find out about any announcements, etc. Questions and comments are always welcome in lecture. Copies of slides will be provided, but these cannot replace active engagement and notetaking.

**Take notes on lecture and readings.** This course requires basic academic skills such as taking notes in class, identifying the main points in readings. These are learned skills rather than innate talents. If

you are not sure that your notetaking and studying techniques are as effective as they could be, I encourage you to make use of the UCR Academic Resource Center, where there are educators, counselors, and advanced students trained to help student succeed in their college courses. Their services are free and open to any student needing help with completing assignments and writing papers. The Academic Resource Center is located on the first floor of the Surge Building. See <http://arc.ucr.edu/> for more details.

**Do the readings listed prior to class.** For example, you should read Wilk and Cliggett for Thursday, January 10.

**Bring your texts to class.** I will frequently refer to specific pages and passages from the readings, and expect you to be ready to do the same. Some of the readings will be fairly easy, but others will be difficult—lectures and discussion will provide the opportunity to work through challenging texts and build your comprehension and understanding of what you've read.

**In the classroom:** Show respect for your fellow students. Do not engage in conversations or other behavior that will interfere with others' learning. Please turn off all cell phones. You are welcome to eat and drink as long as you are not disturbing others. Please think about the environment: use recyclable or reusable containers, and clean up after yourself.

**Appropriate classroom laptop use:** Although having a laptop in class opens up new learning possibilities for students, sometimes students utilize it in ways that are inappropriate. Please refrain from instant messaging, e-mailing, surfing the Internet, playing games, writing papers, doing homework, etc. during class time. Acceptable uses include taking notes, working on assigned in-class activities, projects, and discussions. It is easy for your laptop to become a distraction to you and to those around you. Inappropriate uses will be noted and repeat offenses will affect your final grade.

**Satisfactory / No-credit.** Students in good academic standing (2.00 GPA or above) may take courses not required in their majors on S/NC grading basis. You have until March 1, 2013 to decide about grading status. Full details are at [http://chassstudentaffairs.ucr.edu/academic\\_standing/options.html](http://chassstudentaffairs.ucr.edu/academic_standing/options.html).

**Withdrawal.** I hope that you won't withdraw! But if you do so after January 18, 2013, a "W" will appear on your transcript, indicating withdrawal from the course. Students are allowed to withdraw from a course until Feb. 15, 2013.

**Disability Accommodations.** If you may need accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to see me or come to my office hours. You should also arrange with the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (<http://specialservices.ucr.edu/>) to provide appropriate documentation.

**Academic Integrity.** You should be familiar with UCR's regulations on academic honesty and plagiarism (available from <http://conduct.ucr.edu/learnPolicies/Pages/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>); any instance of cheating or plagiarism will be referred to the University administration for further disciplinary action. If you have questions about how to cite or quote material, ask me.

### **Dissemination of Course Materials**

The unauthorized sale and dissemination of class notes from your course lectures is a violation of campus values and policies. UCR students who sell class notes without permission are subject to

disciplinary action. The University of California's student conduct policy prohibits "Selling, preparing, or distributing for any commercial purpose course lecture notes or video or audio recordings of any course unless authorized by the University in advance and explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing..." (§102.23).

### ***Appropriate Use of iLearn***

Please do not use the course iLearn e-mail feature for purposes unrelated to the course. Such e-mails are a violation of the University's Electronic Communications Policy campus policy # 400-31 section III.A.

### **Required Texts**

(available for purchase at the UCR bookstore)

Richard Wilk and Lisa Cliggett, *Economies & Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology*

James Acheson, *The Lobster Gangs of Maine*

Michael Chibnik, *Anthropology, Economics, and Choice*

Paul Stoller, *Money Has No Smell: the Africanization of New York City*

Lamia Karim, *Microfinance and Its Discontents: Women in Debt in Bangladesh*

### **Assignments and Evaluation**

There are 100 points total in the course, distributed as follows:

Quiz #1	5 points	Unannounced
Quiz #2	5 points	Unannounced
Essay #1	30 points	February 5
Essay #2	30 points	February 26
Essay #3	30 points	March 18 (Monday of exam week)

Each essay will be 6-8 double-spaced pages, with a choice of questions based primarily upon course readings and/or films.

### **Class Schedule**

#### **Week One - Introduction**

**Tue Jan 8** Introduction to the course

**Thu Jan 10** Wilk and Cliggett: ch. 1 and 2  
In-class film: *In and Out of Africa*

#### **Week Two - Anthropology, Economics and Choice**

**Tue Jan 15** Wilk and Cliggett: ch. 3  
Chibnik: Intro, ch. 1 and 2

**Thu Jan 17** Chibnik: ch. 3 and 4  
Henrich, J. et al., "The Weirdest People in the World?": excerpts (iLearn)  
Banerjee and Duflo, *Poor Economics*: excerpts (iLearn)

### **Week Three - Property and Uncertainty**

**Tue Jan 22** Chibnik: ch. 6  
Acheson: Introduction, ch. 1-4

**Thu Jan 24** Acheson: ch. 5-6, 8  
Lesorogol, “Transforming Institutions among Pastoralists” (iLearn)  
Heller, *The Gridlock Economy*: “The Tragedy of the Anti-Commons,” pp. 121-131 “Share Choppers” (iLearn)

### **Week Four - Egalitarianism and Power**

**Tue Jan 29** Wilk and Cliggett: ch. 4  
Sahlins, “The Original Affluent Society” (iLearn)

**Thu Jan 31** Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*: excerpts (iLearn)  
David Kaplan, “The Darker Side of the ‘Original Affluent Society’” (iLearn)

### **Week Five - Households and the Market**

**Tue Feb 5** Chibnik: ch. 5  
Strathern, “The Division of Labor and Processes of Social Change in Mount Hagen” (iLearn)  
In-class video – *Ongka’s Big Moka*  
**First Paper Due**

**Thu Feb 7** Schroeder, “Shady Practice: Gender and the Political Ecology of Resource Stabilization in Gambian Garden/Orchards” (iLearn)  
Li, “Working Separately but Eating Together: Personhood, Property, and Power in Conjugal Relations” (iLearn)

### **Week Six - Trade and Consumption**

**Tue Feb 12** Wilk and Cliggett: ch. 5  
Stoller ch. 1-4

**Thu Feb 14** Stoller ch. 5, 7  
West, “National Coffee” (iLearn)

### **Week Seven**

**Tue Feb 19** De Vidas, “Containing modernity: The social life of Tupperware in a Mexican indigenous village” (iLearn)  
Shipton, “How Gambians Save” (iLearn)  
In-class video - *Advertising Missionaries*

#### **Reciprocity**

**Thu Feb 21** Wilk and Cliggett: ch 6  
Simpson, “On Gifts, Payments and Disputes: Divorce and Changing Family Structures in Contemporary Britain”  
Surowiecki, “Check Please”

## **Week Eight**

**Tue Feb 26** Malinowski, "Kula; the Circulating Exchange of Valuables" (iLearn)  
In-class film - *The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea* (iLearn)  
**Second Paper Due**

**Thu Feb 28** Cliggett, "Gift Remitting and Alliance Building in Zambian Modernity: Old Answers to Modern Problems" (iLearn)  
Bohannan, "The Impact of Money on an African Subsistence Economy" (iLearn)

## **Week Nine - Money**

**Tue Mar 5** Bloch and Parry, "Money and the Morality of Exchange" (iLearn)  
Bloch, "The Symbolism of Money in Imerina" (iLearn)  
Shipton, "Bitter Money: Cultural Economy and Some African Meanings of Forbidden Commodities" (iLearn)

**Thu Mar 7** Kiernan, "Other side of the coin: the conversion of money to religious purposes in Zulu Zionist churches" (iLearn)  
Zelizer, "The Creation of Domestic Currencies" (iLearn)  
Shore, "The euro crisis and European citizenship: The euro 2001--2012 -- celebration or commemoration?" (iLearn)

## **Week Ten - Debt**

**Tue Mar 12** Karim: Introduction, ch. 2-3  
Graeber, *Debt: the First 5000 Years*: excerpts (iLearn)  
Hansen, "The Great Bambi War: Tocquevillians versus Keynesians in an Upstate New York County" (iLearn)

**Thu Mar 14** Karim: ch. 4 and 6

**Final Paper due March 18, 5 PM**