

ANTHROPOLOGY 196I
Fall 2013
D. Linger

Hard Problems

This senior seminar explores a set of interrelated, long-standing, difficult problems in human theory. At one level, we will be trying to understand why they are important and what it is that makes each of them so forbidding. At another, we will be thinking about what it is that makes a problem “hard,” and whether hard problems come in different varieties or strengths. The seminar is exploratory. Because the problems are so basic, the readings range far outside conventional anthropology, into areas where your expertise, as well as mine, is limited. Expect to struggle and to be confused. Confusion is our starting point; it will sharpen and deepen, not vanish, by the course’s end.

Why should we bother entering this swamp? Because the problems are fundamental and how we approach them is consequential for the theory and practice of anthropology.

We begin with a consideration of what the philosopher David Chalmers has called “the hard problem of consciousness,” which is, if not necessarily the hardest problem, certainly an excellent example of one that will scramble your mind. The remainder of the course will draw upon readings that bear on issues of mind, self, agency, experience, objectivity, subjectivity, context, emergence, patterns, explanation, nonlinearities, systems, and limits to human understanding. These are not the only hard problems in anthropology, but they are really significant ones, and their linkages provide the seminar with an overarching coherence.

Of necessity the course has a linear structure, but one of my aims is to jolt you out of linear thinking. As our discussions proceed, think about the ways the topics interconnect and turn back on one another. The work of Gregory Bateson, who once taught in this department, anchors our approach. Heed Bateson’s advice to attend to patterns, contexts, levels, and relationships. We will not solve these hard problems, but we will try to clarify what it is we are so confused about and why the confusions matter.

I may make some changes in or additions to this syllabus as the quarter progresses.

Required texts

Bateson, Gregory. 2000 (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bateson, Gregory. 2003 (1979). *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. N.Y.: Hampton Press.

Blackmore, Susan. 2006. *Conversations on Consciousness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Twain, Mark. 2012 (1916). *The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories*. N.Y.: Signet Classics.

N.b. Because the Bateson books have been reissued various times, page numbers listed below may differ from those in the edition you acquire.

And at least one ethnography from among the following (for week 5):

- Belmonte, Thomas. 1989. *The Broken Fountain*. Second expanded edition. N.Y.: Columbia University Press.
- Biehl, João. 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bar-On, Dan. 1989. *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with Children of the Third Reich*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Briggs, Jean L. 1998. *Inuit Morality Play: The Emotional Education of a Three-Year-Old*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Desjarlais, Robert. 1997. *Shelter Blues: Sanity and Selfhood among the Homeless*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Fong, Vanessa L. 2011. *Paradise Redefined: Transnational Chinese Students and the Quest for Flexible Citizenship in the Developed World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Jackson, Michael. 2004. *In Sierra Leone*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Linger, Daniel T. 2001. *No One Home: Brazilian Selves Remade in Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- McGinty, Anna Månsson. 2006. *Becoming Muslim: Western Women's Conversions to Islam*. N.Y.: Palgrave.
- Myerhoff, Barbara. 1978. *Number Our Days*. N.Y.: Touchstone.
- Parish, Steven M. 2008. *Subjectivity and Suffering in American Culture*. N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1992. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Northeast Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wikan, Unni. 2008. *In Honor of Fadime: Murder and Shame*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Recommended texts

- Bateson, Gregory, and Mary Catherine Bateson. 1987. *Angels Fear: Toward an Epistemology of the Sacred*. N.Y.: Bantam Books.
- Nagel, Thomas. 1986. *The View from Nowhere*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

ASSIGNMENTS

Active, informed participation in seminars is mandatory. On a rotating basis students will lead seminar discussions. For weeks when you are not assigned to lead such discussions, please submit a brief (two-page) paper that responds concisely and thoughtfully to the readings. This should not be a formal essay but it should be well

written and carefully considered. The main written assignment is a 20-page paper on the relevance of issues addressed in this course to theory and practice in anthropology.

Your grade will be determined as follows: response papers 10%, seminar presentations 10%, final paper 80%. I may also take contributions to class discussions into account when determining your final grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (9/26) Introduction

- Levy, Robert I. and Roy Rappaport. 1982. Gregory Bateson, 1904-1980. *American Anthropologist* 84:379-394.
- Linger, Daniel T. 2012. Bateson in a Nutshell: 1, 2, and 3. (unpublished)
- Linger, Daniel T. 2013. Hard Problems in a Nutshell. (unpublished)
- Wallace, David Foster. 2005. Commencement Address, Kenyon College.
<http://moreintelligentlife.com/story/david-foster-wallace-in-his-own-words>

Week 2 (10/3) Thinking with Bateson

Bateson, *Steps*

- Introduction: The Science of Mind and Order, pp. xxiii-xxxii.
- Part I, Metalogues, pp. 3-58.
- Culture Contact and Schismogenesis, pp. 61-72.
- Experiments in Thinking about Observed Ethnographic Material, pp. 73-87.
- Morale and National Character, pp. 88-106.
- Bali: The Value System of a Steady State, pp. 107-127.
- A Theory of Play and Fantasy, pp. 177-193.
- Coppo, Carlo. 1987. Shawn Left Them Laughing, Confused. *Los Angeles Times*, May 10.

Week 3 (10/10) What Links Material and Mind – If Anything?

- James, William. 1997 (1910). The Stream of Consciousness. In *The Nature of Consciousness: Philosophical Debates*. Ned Block, Owen Flanagan, and Güven Guzeldere, eds. Pp. 71-82. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Wallace, David Foster. 2004. Consider the Lobster. *Gourmet Magazine*. August.
http://www.gourmet.com/magazine/2000s/2004/08/consider_the_lobster
- Nagel, Thomas. 1974. What Is It Like to Be a Bat? *Philosophical Review* 4:435-450.
- Levine, Joseph. 2002 (1983). Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap. In *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. David J. Chalmers, ed. Pp. 354-361. N.Y.: Oxford University Press.
- McGinn, Colin. 1989. Can We Solve the Mind-Body Problem? *Mind* 98:349-366.
- Chalmers, David J. 1995. Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2(3):200-219.
- Blackmore, *Conversations*
 Ned Block, pp. 24-35.

David Chalmers, pp. 36-49.
Patricia and Paul Churchland, pp. 50-67.

Recommended:

Blackmore, *Conversations*. Browse at will.
Schneider, Susan. 2007. Daniel Dennett on the Nature of Consciousness. In *The Blackwell Companion to Consciousness*. Max Velmans and Susan Schneider, eds. Pp. 313-324. Oxford: Blackwell.
Searle, John R. 1984. *Minds, Brains, and Science*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (Ch. 1, The Mind-Body Problem, and Ch. 2, Can Computers Think?, pp. 13-41.)

Week 4 (10/17) Can We See Inside from Outside? Or Vice Versa?

Auden, W. H. 1940. As I Walked Out One Evening.
(<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15551>)
Twain, The Mysterious Stranger. In *The Mysterious Stranger and Other Stories*.
Nagel, *View*
Introduction, pp. 3-12.
Knowledge, pp. 67-89.
Birth, Death, and the Meaning of Life, pp. 208-231.
Linger, Daniel T. 2010. What Is It Like to Be Someone Else? *Ethos* 38(2):205-229.

Recommended:

Nagel, Thomas. 1979. Subjective and Objective. In *Mortal Questions*. Pp. 196-213.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Nagel, *View*
Mind, pp. 13-27.
Mind and Body, pp. 28-53.
The Objective Self, pp. 54-66.

Week 5 (10/24) Can You Write Experience?

Choose one or more from the list of ethnographies. **(Do not choose an ethnography you have read before or are now reading for another class.)**

Week 6 (10/31) How Can You Tell the Dancer from the Dance?

Carroll, Lewis. 1960 (1865, 1871). Advice from a Caterpillar. In *The Annotated Alice*. Introduction and notes by Martin Gardner. Pp. 67-78. N.Y.: New American Library.
Blackmore, *Conversations*
Susan Greenfield, pp. 92-103.
John Searle, pp. 198-212.

- Daniel Wegner, pp. 245-257.
- Scott, Joan W. 1992. "Experience." In *Feminists Theorize the Political*. Pp. 22-40. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds. N.Y.: Routledge.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 2006. *Anthropology and Social Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Chapter 6, Power and Projects: Reflections on Agency, pp. 129-153.)
- Frank, Katherine. 2006. Agency. *Anthropological Theory* 6(3):281-302.
- Rapport, Nigel and Joanna Overing. 2007. *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts*. N.Y.: Routledge. (Agent and Agency, pp. 3-11.)
- Bateson, *Steps*
The Cybernetics of "Self": A Theory of Alcoholism, pp. 309-337.

Recommended:

- Dupré, John. 2001. *Human Nature and the Limits of Science*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (Chapter 1, Introduction, pp. 1-18; Ch. 7, Freedom of the Will, pp. 154-187.)
- Hacking, Ian. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Quinn, Naomi. 2006. The Self. *Anthropological Theory* 6(3):362-384.
- Nagel, *View*
Freedom, pp. 110-137.

Week 7 (11/7) How Can You Ever Learn Anything New?

- Bateson, *Steps*
Social Planning and the Concept of Deutero-Learning, pp. 159-176.
The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication, pp. 279-308.
Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia, pp. 201-227.
Minimal Requirements for a Theory of Schizophrenia, pp. 244-270.
- Twain, Mark. 1984 (1883). Perplexing Lessons. In *Life on the Mississippi*. Pp. 85-90. N.Y.: Penguin Books.
- Wallace, Anthony F. C. 2003. *Revitalizations and Mazeways*. Robert S. Grumet, ed. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. (Chapter 8, The Disaster Syndrome, pp. 149-163; Chapter 9, Mazeway Resynthesis, pp. 164-177; Chapter 10, Mazeway Disintegration, pp. 178-188.)

Week 8 (11/14) What Can't You Know?

- Linger, Daniel T. 2005. *Anthropology Through a Double Lens*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (Chapter 5, The Semantics of Dead Bodies, pp. 111-125.)
- McGinn, Colin. 2004. *Consciousness and Its Objects*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Chapter 3, Solving the Philosophical Mind-Body Problem, pp. 56-76; Chapter 8, The Problem of Philosophy, pp. 169-195.)
- Bateson, *Steps*
Style, Grace, and Information in Primitive Art, pp. 128-152.
Conscious Purpose Versus Nature, pp. 426-439.
Effects of Conscious Purpose on Human Adaptation, pp. 446-453.

- Form, Substance, and Difference, pp. 454-471.
 Pathologies of Epistemology, pp. 486-495.
 Morozov, Evgeny. 2013. The Perils of Perfection. New York Times, March 2.
 Chalmers, David J. 2010. The Singularity: A Philosophical Analysis. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17(9-10):7-65.

Recommended:

- Freud, Sigmund. 1989 (1915). The Unconscious. In *The Freud Reader*. Peter Gay, ed. Pp. 572-584. N.Y.: W. W. Norton.
 Freud, Sigmund. 1989 (1915). The Ego and the Id. In *The Freud Reader*. Peter Gay, ed. Pp. 628-658. N.Y.: W. W. Norton.
 Freud, Sigmund. 1919. The "Uncanny." In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII (1917-1919): An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*. James Strachey, ed. Pp. 217-256. London: Hogarth Press.
 Linger, Daniel T. 2005. *Anthropology Through a Double Lens*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (Chapter 4, The Hegemony of Discontent, pp. 79-110.)
 Nagel, *View*
 Thought and Reality, pp. 90-109.

Week 9 (11/21) How Far Out Does It Go?

- Bateson, Gregory. 1980. *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. (Introduction, Chapters 1-4, pp. 26-142; Chapters 7-8, pp. 207-237; Appendix, pp. 239-248.)
 Bateson, Gregory, and Mary Catherine Bateson. 1987. *Angels Fear: Toward an Epistemology of the Sacred*. N.Y.: Bantam Books.
 The World of Mental Process, pp. 16-30.
 Let Not Thy Left Hand Know, pp. 69-81.
 The Unmocked God, pp. 135-144.

Recommended:

- Freud, Sigmund. 1962 (1930). *Civilization and Its Discontents*. James, Strachey, trans. N.Y.: W. W. Norton. (Chapter 1, pp. 11-20.)
 Barrow, John D. 1991. *Theories of Everything: The Quest for Ultimate Explanation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. (Chapter 1, Ultimate Explanation, pp. 1-11; Chapter 9, Is "Pi" Really in the Sky?", pp. 172-210.)
 Bateson, *Mind and Nature*. Browse at will.
 Bateson and Bateson, *Angels Fear*.

Week 10 (12/5): Discussion of papers

FINAL PAPERS DUE 12/5