

ANG 6930 – Hunter-Gatherers (or, Small-Scale Societies in a Big World, and Microhistories in the Minds of Macro-Thinkers)

Spring 2013

Section 13H9

Monday, Periods 7-9 (1:55-4:55)

Weimer 1092

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Required Texts:

Panther-Brick, Robert H. Layton, and Peter Rowley-Conwy (eds.) 2001 *Hunter-Gatherers: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Clastres, Pierre 1998 *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians*. Zone Books, New York.

Additional reading as issued on e-learning site

Course Description

*Hunter-gatherer studies had long been the last vestige of anthropology's quest for natural man
(Barnard 2004)*

Although they are no longer the dominant form of human sociality and adaptation, and exist today in relatively minor numbers, hunter-gatherers continue to be the focal point of fundamental debates in anthropology and related fields of inquiry. From the romanticism of Rousseau and the rhetorical extremism of Hobbes, to the evolutionary baseline of Morgan and the ecological idealism of 1970s ethnographers, perceptions of “hunter-gatherers” have both conformed to and effected changes in anthropological inquiry and western society. Having undergone so many and so frequent conceptual shifts in the past two centuries, “hunter-gatherer” is a construct, some have argued, with no empirical or evolutionary validity. Clearly people have lived off the land without the aid of agriculture or animal husbandry, so at the level of subsistence, “hunter-gatherer” is a meaningful category. However, none of the essentialist qualities once assigned to this mode of subsistence hold up to serious cross-cultural analysis. That is, hunter-gatherer subsistence is not structurally linked to egalitarianism, generalized reciprocity, and settlement mobility, to name a few of the more prominent features. Moreover, hunter-gatherer populations once believed to be deeply rooted in evolutionary time are now understood as historical consequences of state expansion and political oppression. So, what does the concept of “hunter-gatherer” mean these days and what does anthropological knowledge of people living off the land tell us about long-term evolutionary trends, on the one hand, and modern power relations, on the other?

In this course, we address these questions by considering alternative perspectives on the incredible diversity of lifestyles typically described as “hunter-gatherer,” even those that would not typically be so classified, such as deliberate societies and resistance movements. We start with perspectives that treat hunter-gatherers as organisms whose biology, behavior, sociality, and cognition have been structured by long-term evolutionary processes, notably the forces of natural selection. Although evolutionary approaches remain popular in some circles, we will not spend much time with them but will review both classic works and more recent literature to see how such approaches have themselves “evolved” since the middle to late twentieth century, when they dominated anthropological discourse on hunter-gatherers.

We then take a look at literature since the 1960s that paints hunter-gatherers as the “primitive communists” of social evolution. This perspective traces to structural Marxism and the efforts of social scientists to draw contrasts between societies structured by egalitarian principles (thought to be “original” to humanity) and those structured by social rank, status, or class. Much of this discourse in the past few decades has centered on the conditions under which egalitarian social relations are asserted and reproduced, not simply inherited as a “natural” condition. This leads us to a third major perspective, namely the idea that hunter-gatherers consist of societies embedded in larger sociopolitical and geopolitical structures, at least in the modern world. In this sense, hunter-gatherer exists today because of modernity, not in spite of it. We will also consider in this section of the course the extent to which hunter-gatherer societies have always been enmeshed in networks of inequality, or at least difference.

Lastly we will consider that hunter-gatherers are “us,” always have been, both conceptually in the sense that we construct knowledge about hunter-gatherers to understand the modern condition, and objectively in the sense that we have underestimated the complexity of hunter-gatherer societies worldwide and through time.

Two books are required for this course. The first is a collection of papers showcasing interdisciplinary perspectives on hunter-gatherers. Edited by Catherine Panter-Brick, Robert Layton, and Peter Rowley-Conwy, this volume encompasses both evolutionary and historical perspectives, as well as those described as “biocultural” or “biosocial.” Its chapters are assigned throughout the course, as indicated in the schedule below with the shorthand “P-B.” We will also read Pierre Clastres' *Chronicle of the Guayaki Indians* of Paraguay, with whom he lived for two years in the 1960s. Apart from the rich ethnographic perspective Clastres offers, we have in this study a classic example of repeated societal transformations stemming from regional interactions, both Western and earlier. Clastres' account gives us due pause to the efficacy of behavioral ecological studies of the Guayaki that ignore or downplay history.

Other readings are assigned on a weekly basis as noted below and others may be assigned by seminar participants on an ad hoc basis. All such readings will be posted on the e-learning site as pdf files and available for downloading at least one week in advance.

This course is designed for students of ethnography and archaeology alike. Students of ethnography will become familiar with a wide range of comparative material, as well as alternative conceptual frameworks for interpreting hunter-gatherer diversity. Most important, this seminar will help to develop intellectual skills for debasing normative and typological

approaches to societal variation. For archaeologists the seminar offers the opportunity to delve into the empirical record of hunter-gatherer diversity for analogical purposes, while reminding us of the shortcomings of uniformitarian principles. We will actually consider very little archaeological material in this class, though I hope you will agree that everything we cover is extremely relevant to any archaeology of hunter-gatherer “prehistory.”

Format and Expectations

This is a graduate seminar so the expectation is that everyone will prepare for each class session by reading all the assigned materials and developing some thoughts for discussion. I will provide a brief overture of each week’s topic, as well as a list of questions and topics to discuss. Your major assignment is a term paper, which will be divided into two parts, the first conceptual, the second substantive. The conceptual portion of the paper will center on one or more themes drawn from a list of possible topics; the substantive portion will focus on a particular society or group of people, either “traditional” hunter-gatherers or some small-scale equivalent. Either way, you are expected to relate your case material to the conceptual theme you choose, as well as place your case material into broader historical and sociopolitical context. Each portion of the paper is expected to be ~15 double-spaced pages. I will provide guidelines for writing papers by our third meeting. Your final grade for this seminar will be based on the quality of the paper (30 percent each part), a 20-minute presentation of your research (20 percent), and participation in discussion (20 percent), which of course requires attendance.

Course Outline

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan. 7	Conceptualizing Hunter-Gatherers	Panther-Brick et al. 2001 (P-B, Ch. 1); Lee and Daly 1999; Barnard 1999; Yengoyan 2004
Hunter-Gatherers as Organisms		
Jan. 14	Relationship to Nature	Winterhalder 2001 (P-B, Ch. 2); Torrence 2001 (P-B, Ch. 4)
Jan. 21	<i>MLK Day - No Class</i>	
Jan. 28	Biological Constitution	Pennington 2001 (P-B, Ch. 7); Jenike 2001 (P-B, Ch. 8); Froment (P-B, Ch. 9)
Hunter-Gatherers as Primitive Communists		
Feb. 4	Evolutionary Nature of Egalitarianism	Sahlins 1968; Rowley-Conwy 2001 (P-B, Ch. 3); Kuhn and Stiner 2001 (P-B, Ch. 5); Marlow 2005; Henrich 2012; Apicella et al. 2012
Feb. 11	Egalitarianism as Culture	Ingold 1999; others TBD
Feb. 18	Egalitarianism as Politics	Lee 1992; Suzman 2004; Leacock 1972
Hunter-Gatherers as Marginalized People and Freedom Fighters		

Feb. 25	Hunter-Gatherers and the Others	Headland & Reid 1989; Layton 2001 (P-B, Ch. 11); Bird-David 1988; Sassaman 2001
<i>Mar. 4</i>	<i>Spring Break – No Class</i>	
Mar. 11	H-G – Farmer Interaction (Conceptual Paper Due)	Bailey et al. 1989; Spielman and Eder 1994
Mar. 18	Whither Egalitarianism?	Wiessner 2002; Woodburn 1988; Stiles 2001
Hunter-Gatherers as “Us”		
Mar. 25	Problem of "Complexity" I	P-B 2001:Ch. 3 (Rowley-Conwy); Arnold 1996; others TBD
Mar. 31	Problem of "Complexity" II	Conkey 2001 (P-B, Ch. 10); Sassaman 2004
Apr. 1	Persistence and Transformation in Modernity	Asch 1982; Trigger 1999
<i>Apr. 8</i>	<i>SAA – No Class</i>	
Presentations		
Apr. 15	Presentations	
Apr. 22	Presentations (Substantive Paper Due)	

Additional Readings

- Apicella, Coren L., Frank W. Marlowe, James H. Fowler, and Nicholas A. Christakis
2012 Social Networks and Cooperation in Hunter-Gatherers. *Nature* 481:497-501.
- Arnold, Jeanne
1996 The Archaeology of Complex Hunter-Gatherers. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 3:77-126.
- Asch, Michael I.
1982 Dene Self-Determination and the Study of Hunter-Gatherers in the Modern World. In *Politics and History in Band Societies*, edited by Eleanor Leacock and Richard Lee, pp. 347-372. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bailey, R. G. Head, M. Jenike, B. Owen, R. Rechtman, and E. Zechenter
1989 Hunting and Gathering in Tropical Rain Forest: Is It Possible? *American Anthropologist* 91:59-82.
- Barnard, Alan
1999 Images of Hunters and Gatherers in European Social Thought. In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, edited by R. B. Lee and R. Daly, pp. 375-383. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bird-David, Nurit H.
1988 Hunter-Gatherers and Other People: A Re-examination. In *Hunters and Gatherers, Vol. 1: History, Evolution, and Social Change*, edited by T. Ingold, D. Riches, and J. Woodburn, pp. 17-30. Berg, New York.
- Headland, T. N., and L. A. Reid
1989 Hunter-Gatherers and Their Neighbors from Prehistory to the Present. *Current Anthropology* 30:43-66.
- Henrich, Joseph
2012 Hunter-Gatherer Cooperation. *Nature* 481:449-450.
- Ingold, Tim
1999 On the Social Relations of the Hunter-Gatherer Band. In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, edited by R. B. Lee and R. Daly, pp. 399-410. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Leacock, Eleanor Burke
1972 Introduction to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, by Frederick Engels, pp7-67. New World Paperbacks, New York.

Lee, Richard B.

1992 Art, Science, or Politics? The Crisis in Hunter-Gatherer Studies. *American Anthropologist* 94:31-54.

Lee, Richard B., and Richard Daly

1999 Introduction: Foragers and Others. In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, edited by R. B. Lee and R. Daly, pp. 1-19. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Marlowe, Frank

2005 Hunter-Gatherers and Human Evolution. *Evolutionary Anthropology* 14(2)54-67.

Sahlins, Marshall

1968 Notes on the Original Affluent Society, in *Man the Hunter*, edited by Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, pp. 85-89. Aldine, New York.

Sassaman, Kenneth E.

2001 Hunter-Gatherers and Traditions of Resistance. In *The Archaeology of Traditions: Agency and History Before and After Columbus*, edited by T. R. Pauketat, pp. 218-236. University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

2005 Complex Hunter-Gatherers in Evolution and History: A North American Perspective. *Journal of Archaeological Research* 12:227-280.

Spielman, K. A., and J. F. Eder

1994 Hunters and Farmers: Then and Now. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23:303-323.

Stiles, David

2001 Hunter-Gatherer Studies: The Importance of Context. *African Studies Monographs*, Supplement 26:41-65.

Suzman, James

2004 Hunting for Histories: Rethinking Historicity in the Western Kalahari. In *Hunter-Gatherers in History, Archaeology, and Anthropology*, edited by A. Barnard, pp. 201-216. Berg, Oxford.

Trigger, David S.

1999 Hunter-Gatherer Peoples and Nation-States. In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Hunters and Gatherers*, edited by R. B. Lee and R. Daly, pp. 473-479. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Wiessner, Polly

2002 The Vines of Complexity: Egalitarian Structures and the Institutionalization of Inequality among the Enga. *Current Anthropology* 43(2).

Woodburn, James

1988 African Hunter-Gatherer Social Organization: Is It Best Understood as a Product of Encapsulation? In *Hunters and Gatherers, Vol. 1: History, Evolution, and Social Change*, edited by T. Ingold, D. Riches, and J. Woodburn, pp. 31-64. Berg, New York.

Yengoyan, Aram A.

2004 Anthropological History and the Study of Hunters and Gatherers: Cultural and Non-Cultural. In *Hunter-Gatherers in History, Archaeology, and Anthropology*, edited by A. Barnard, pp. 57-66. Berg, Oxford.