

Readings in

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ANG 6930 - 26165/RK69 • ANT4930 - 27437/RK49

Legal Anthropology

WEIM 2050

F | Periods 7-9 (1:55 - 4:55PM)

Prerequisites: 10 credits in anthropology or instructor permission

Instructor:

**Richard
Kernaghan**

Grinter 335 | [zoom](#) | kernaghan@ufl.edu | (352) 392-2253

office hours:

Mondays 2-4:00 pm

Fridays 12pm-1pm

[\(by appointment\)](#)

Course summary: This seminar examines critical convergences between anthropology and the philosophy of law. Through close readings of canonical works, the class puts to the test a key anthropological insight: that legal phenomena begin with and are primarily entailed through relations—above all, the movements of bodies and passions giving shape to and altering social life. Following this broadly empiricist theoretical orientation, we will bring foundational texts into conversation with recent ethnographic studies on political emergency, indigeneity, the rights of rivers, illicit drugs and war. In this regard we will focus less on relationality per se than on the material and historical specificity of lived relations—their situational terms, tones and transformational potentials. Noticing that legal practice and scholarship frequently

revolve around attempts to anchor sense and reference, we will question what the word “law” variously names—whether it draws upon violence and provocation, endorses privileges, ramifies into divergent temporalities, or haunts imaginations. Here, attentive to the time-sensitive promises of law, we will ask: How long can rights be sustained? Do legal claims have afterlives, or merely different stages of animation? Most of all, this seminar will treat reading as a craft never to be taken for granted. Rather, through a slow, careful review of a handful of select texts, we will consider the multiple rhythms, pleasures, solitudes, and encounters enabled by historically situated acts of interpretation so that we too may better listen for and discover what new, critical insights reading can bring to the anthropology of law.

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Overview of Requirements: This class is run as an in-person, face-to-face, seminar with active participation in all discussions expected. Participants will circulate short discussion questions each week that critically engage the readings assigned in the course schedule. At least once during the semester each student will write a seminar report and give a related in-class presentation and help lead group discussion. Other major assignments include an annotated bibliography on works relevant to legal anthropology and a term paper handed in no later than the last week of classes. (An abstract describing questions and scope of the project is due by mid-semester).

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Course Learning Goals: By the end of the semester, seminar participants should be able to:

1. identify major themes and concerns of legal anthropology, articulating points of intersection with the philosophy of law (jurisprudence);
2. recognize what distinguishes ethnographic modes of empirical research and representation from purely text-based approaches to jurisprudence and legal phenomena more generally;
3. examine the significance of kinship studies for affirming legal pluralism and for situating legal ties (rights, obligations, threats) within the material, historical and affective circumstances of ordinary lives;
4. explain the theoretical contributions that studies of territory, terrain and fortification pose to recent trends in earth jurisprudence; and
5. describe how juridical techniques and media shape the time-sensitive specificities, promises and afterlives of law.

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completing the *Readings in Legal Anthropology* seminar, students will have acquired knowledge and skills that allow them to:

1. apply an anthropological theory of relations to a case study of legal phenomena;
2. employ well-honed skills of textual analysis and interpretation to weigh specific claims made by scholars of jurisprudence, including anthropologists of law;
3. critically analyze contemporary ethnographic approaches to the examination and representation of legal conflicts;
4. experiment with ethnographic techniques to underscore the empirical (temporal-material-affective) characteristics and stakes of law-laden situations; and
5. propose a plan of independent ethnographic research in conversation with foundational tenets of legal anthropology.

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Texts: Most class materials (readings, films, etc.) can be accessed via the Canvas course site.

The following e-books have also been placed on Library Reserve:

Butler, J. *Antigone's Claim* (Columbia UP, 2002)

Correia, J. *Disrupting the Patrón* (University of California Press, 2022)

Denman, D. *Fortress Power* (University of Minnesota Press, 2025)

Kafka, F. *The Castle*, trans. Mark Harman (Schocken Books, 2012)

Khan, N. *River Life and the Upspring of Nature* (Duke University Press, 2023)

Pine, J. *The Alchemy of Meth* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019)

Strathern, M. *Relations* (Duke University Press, 2020)

Thomas, Y. *Legal Artifices: Ten Essays on Roman Law in the Present Tense* (Edinburgh U. Press, 2019)

Zartaloudis, T. *The Birth of Nomos* (Edinburgh U. Press, 2019)

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Attendance: As a courtesy to all, please arrive punctually and remain until the end of class. If you must miss a session, please inform me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) and provide appropriate documentation (*except for religious holidays*). In such cases you are responsible for contacting a classmate to obtain notes on materials and topics covered while away.

Religious observances (e.g., Students seeking modification of due dates for class participation, assignments, and exams for religious reasons should contact the instructor well in advance to request this modification, which will then be granted.)

In accord with university attendance policies ([click here to read](#)), absences for reasons of illness, religious holiday, and official university business are excused.

If the absence is planned, please notify me ahead of time and as early as possible.

If the absence is unplanned, then as soon as it is feasible for you to do so.

Please note: Since participation as well as assimilation of class materials depend upon attendance, multiple absences (4 & above) will undermine academic performance and may even risk failing. Students, however, with perfect or near perfect attendance will receive bonus credit.

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Course Communications

- Students are responsible for reviewing all materials posted on E-Learning (Canvas) at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>, including required readings, announcements, details on assignments, and other supplementary material.
- Canvas technical support available at <https://elearning.ufl.edu/student-help-faqs/>.
- The instructor may use email to make general class announcements or to contact you directly about your work. You are responsible for checking your official UF email regularly to be aware of communication from your instructors. There are no allowances for students who fail to read their email announcements or whose inboxes are full at the time an announcement is sent.
- Canvas Notifications: In your Canvas “Account,” click on “Notifications.” Set the notification for “Submission Comment” to either “Notify Immediately” or “Daily Summary.” The instructor may communicate with you regarding your assignments through Submission Comments more so than e-mail. Please read submission comments within 24 hours. Many may require immediate action on your part.

Evaluations - Final grades will be determined according to the following components/assignments:

Participation (& related class activities)	20%	Ongoing
Seminar presentation (& discussion prompt)	15%	TBA: sign up sheet
Seminar report	20%	TBA: sign up sheet
Term project abstract	5%	Oct 17
Annotated bibliography	15%	Oct 31
Final term project paper	25%	Dec 3

Participation: A grade will be assessed at the end of the semester based on the degree to which you have played an active and informed role in class discussions, and in so doing contributed to the overall success of the course. So please come to each session prepared to share impressions, questions and interpretations of all assigned materials. I also encourage you to visit office hours two to three times during the semester to talk about your progress in the course and specific questions about major assignments.

participation grading scheme

5% - **i.** regular, punctual attendance

5% - **ii.** attentive listening, informed contributions during in-class conversations

5% - **iii.** sharing written questions and other in-group activities (SLOs 1 & 2)

5% - **iv.** effective communication with instructor (i.e. email, office hours, etc.)

Presentation & discussion prompt: During our first class, you will select a theme-week from the course calendar for the date you wish to guide discussion. You might therefore review the syllabus ahead of time, looking for two, or perhaps three weeks with topics and materials that closely align with your own interests and/or program of study. (SLOs 2 & 3)

On your assigned week, you should circulate a list of discussion points and questions *via Canvas* at least **24 hours prior to your seminar presentation** (in other words: *no later than 9am on Thursday*). Then, when class begins, you should open the session with a 10- to 15-minute presentation that provides an overview of that week's readings, before leading the class through a more in-depth group conversation. One excellent and efficient way to start off is by reading your written seminar report to the class (see below).

The Seminar Report: is a short essay, 5-6 pages (1250-1500 words) in length, that undertakes a close interpretation of one or more assigned texts. Crafting a succinct, insightful essay has one overarching purpose: to help the rest of the class better grasp what we have also read. (SLOs 2 & 3)

This assignment not only gives you a chance to practice the art of seminar paper writing, but you will also receive constructive feedback from the class (instructor and peers).

While we will talk more about how to approach this assignment, here is some general advice: *a seminar report should not merely summarize but offer a well-crafted, spirited interpretation, which situates the required readings within the ideas and concepts of the course. It should outline specific concerns as well as hone questions. For that, an economy of language and a precision of one's written words is crucial.*

The seminar report is due (and should be submitted via Canvas) by the beginning of class on the week you have chosen to lead discussion.

The remaining assignments (abstract, annotated bibliography, term paper) are all interrelated since they are intended to serve as critical parts of a research project, related to legal anthropology, that you will devise and flesh out during this class. *Creativity is encouraged!* Most of all, you should choose a topic you feel passionate about, one that brings some aspect of the course into close conversation with your own interests and things you care deeply about.

Early in the semester or at latest several weeks before the abstract is due, I highly recommend that you take advantage of my office hours, even multiple times, so I can help you, serving as a sounding board, offering suggestions and constructive feedback.

Term project essay abstract: In 250-300 words please describe your final project, setting forth your main questions as well as the potential contributions of your research for the anthropological study of legal phenomena/relations. (SLOs 1, 4 & 5)

Annotated bibliography: For this assignment you should prepare a list of texts/works that you intend to consult as you prepare the final paper. The bibliography must have a minimum of fifteen (15) annotated entries, arranged alphabetically and formatted using a recognized academic style (Chicago, Harvard, AAA, etc.) The annotation that follows each entry should explain in several sentences how the text is relevant to your project. Try to be as specific as possible in crafting your annotations, stating in which ways the work cited supports your arguments and/or research objectives. At least six (6) of your entries should be scholarly texts selected from our class: i.e. readings that are assigned, supplemental or available in the Canvas course archive. Remaining entries may include creative works and/or other kinds of non-academic documents. Once you have completed your annotated entries, place a short description (250 words approximately) at the beginning of your document that provides a general overview of your collection of texts. (SLOs 1, 4 & 5)

The Final Term project essay should be an original, carefully-crafted, engagement with the project you have already described in your abstract. For **undergraduate students** the expected length is approximately 3000 words; for **graduate students** between 4500 & 6000 words. (SLOs 1, 4 & 5)

All students are welcome to experiment with the form of your writing in the final essay. You may also include different kinds of representational media. In other words, you have options and a good bit of leeway in terms of genre and style. Whichever representational route you ultimately decide to pursue, please be sure to discuss your ideas with me ahead of time and then be prepared to justify the choices you have made.

Some students, graduate students particularly, might consider using this longer writing assignment pragmatically: for instance, to prepare a grant proposal or to draft something that can immediately contribute to professional development in some other way (e.g., a conference paper, journal article, publishable essay, or thesis chapter).

All assignments should be submitted via Canvas: typed in a common 12pt font and double-spaced with one-inch margins and pages numbered.

Please keep in mind that writing assignments must be prepared in accordance with the [student conduct code and University of Florida standards of academic honesty](#).

Small use of generative AI in preparing assignments is permitted in this class. However, *if you choose to use generative AI—for instance Grammarly or translation services—you must acknowledge how it was used on each assignment and to what extent.*

Assignments submitted via Canvas are screened with the tool Turnitin to assess plagiarism. If there is any evidence of violation of the [Student Honor Code](#), that suggests the student *has not written the majority of the content on their own (at least 80%) and that content is egregiously plagiarized*, the instructor may do one or more of the following: ask the student to redo the assignment, deduct major points from the score, or receive a *grade of zero* for the assignment. Repeat offenses will be reported to the Anthropology department administration for review and could result in a report to the [Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution](#) Office.

Grading: The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 79-82=B-; 76-78=C+; 72-75=C; 69-71=C-; 66-68=D+; 62-65=D; 59-61=D-; 58 and below=E (failing). Click [this link to consult current UF policies for grades and grading](#).

Assignment Deadlines

- *seminar paper* & presentation – TBA
- *term project abstract* – 10/17
- *annotated bibliography* – 10/31
- *term project essay* – 12/3

Late submission & assignment extension policies Apart from the term paper, I can accept any assignment handed-in for a grade up to one week (7 days) past their scheduled due date. Late assignments will, however, be docked 10 points (on a letter grade / 100-point scale). After that they will no longer be accepted, unless justified by mitigating circumstances (e.g. a documented accident, illness, etc.). Please note: For the final paper extensions are generally not granted, except in special, extenuating cases, as mentioned above, and in accordance with university policies (those policies may be consulted by clicking [here](#)).

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This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#). (<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>.)

Procedure for conflict resolution Any issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Prof. John Krigbaum (krigbaum@ufl.edu, (352) 294-7540), Chair of Anthropology. Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>Links to an external site.; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>Links to an external site.; 352-392-1261).

Library Resources

- The **UF Libraries** provide access to numerous resources and services that will help you succeed in this course. Access thousands of **online databases, books, and articles** or visit one of the **branch locations** for additional **resources, services, and study spaces**. Further, as this class requires students to complete a bibliography, research paper, or project, both the [Anthropology Library Guide](#) and the [Anthropology Assignment Guide](#) may be of assistance.
- You can also contact the [Anthropology Librarian](#) **Ginessa Mahar** directly for help with developing your research topic/question, searching for sources, and evaluating information: gjmahar@ufl.edu, office: Library West Room 500
- And you can also [Ask A Librarian](#) for help by email, chat, text, or phone.

Course feedback: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluer.com/ufl/. [Summaries of](#)

[course evaluation results are available to students here.](#)

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Additional UF Resources:

Health & Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#)

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Please note: I may make minor adjustments to class readings or assignment requirements during the semester. Any and all modifications will be announced ahead of time.

course schedule

Week 1 **introductions: the ordinary lives of legal arcana**

8/22 Kafka, "The problem of our laws"

Canetti, "The Command" (*Crowds & Power*)

Week 2 **empiricism**

8/29 Kernaghan, interlude (*Crossing the Current*)

Strathern, *Relations*: Introduction, Ch. 1

Locke, "Of Relation"

Browne, "The Feds are Watching"

Deleuze, "Hume" (*Pure Immanence*: Ch. II)

Hume, "Of the connection or association of ideas" (*A Treatise of Human Nature*)

supplemental:
Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Book I, Part I)
Deleuze, "Cultural World & General Rules" (*Empiricism & Subjectivity*: Ch. 2)

Week 3 **hiding materials**

9/5 Pine, *The Alchemy of Meth*

Week 4 **grieving kin**

9/12 Butler, *Antigone's Claim*: Ch. 1

Lorau, "Mothers in Mourning"

supplemental:
Sophocles, *Antigone*
Levi-Strauss, "The Universe of Rules" (*Elementary Structures of Kinship*)
Butler, *Antigone's Claim*: Chs. 2 & 3

Week 5 what is *nomos*? (to the Earth)

9/19 Zartaloudis, "Preface: *Anthroponomikos*" (*The Birth of Nomos*)

Weber, "Antigone's *Nomos*"

Deleuze & Guattari, "Treatise on Nomadology" (*A Thousand Plateaus*): pp. 380-87 only

Schmitt, "Appendix: Three Concluding Corollaries" (*Nomos of the Earth*:)

supplemental:

Douzinis & Warrington, "Antigone's Dike"

Latour, "States of Nature between War & Peace" (Facing Gaia, Lecture 7)

Stergiopoulou, "Taking Nomos"

Week 6 from territory to terrain

9/26 Deleuze and Guattari, "Of the Refrain" (*A Thousand Plateaus*): pp. 313-323 only

Cunninham, "Necrotone"

Min, "Echolocation"

Elden, "Secure the volume"

Gordillo, "The Power of Terrain"

Billé, "[Speaking volumes](#)"

McGlynn, "[Quake](#)"

Whitt, "Mudflats | Fluid Terrain" (*Territory beyond Terra*: Ch. 6)

supplemental:

Billé, Introduction to *Voluminous States*

Humphrey, "Warren"

Week 7 erosions

10/3 Khan, *River Life and the Upspring of Nature*

Serres, "Revisiting the Natural Contract"

Week 8 fortifications

10/10 Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*: Preface

Denman, *Fortress Power*: Introduction, Chs. 1-2

Kernaghan, "Between Twilights" (*Crossing the Current*: Ch. 7)

Week 9 personal | impersonal

10/17 **No Class** – University Holiday

Strathern, *Relations*: Ch. 2

Noble, "Your Robot Isn't Neutral"

recommended: Kafka, *The Castle*

Week 10 legal media

10/24 Vismann, *Files*: Preface, Chs. 2 & 3

Hakyemez, "Margins of the Archive"

Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive & its Limits"

Week 11 enduring with & against (the law)

10/31 Correia, *Disrupting the Patrón*

Week 12 roman techniques

11/7 Pottage, "Finding Melanesia in Ancient Rome: Mauss' Anthropology of *nexum*"

Thomas, *Legal Artifices* (selected chapters)

supplemental:

Benton & Straumann, "Acquiring Empire by Law"

Pottage, "Law after anthropology: object and technique in Roman law"

Week 13 **imagination | justice**

11/14 Strathern, *Relations*: Ch. 5

Hume, "Of Justice & Injustice" (*A Treatise of Hume Nature*)

Deleuze, "Cultural World & General Rules" (*Empiricism & Subjectivity*)

de la Cadena, "Uncommoning Nature"

supplemental:

Deleuze, "Immanence: A Life"

Week 14 **final remarks**

11/21 student presentations