

## **Anthropology (ANG) 6286 Structuralism and Semiotics**

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Class meets Wednesday 9-11:30 in 1208H Tur

Spring 2025  
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Course # 25547, Section #A050 - 3 credits

**Course Description:** Humans create and navigate meaningful worlds, which means anthropologists require methods to analyze meaning. Among the various options, structuralist analysis and semiotics (sign theory) stand out as the most rigorous and productive. Both methods focus on the *relationships* among signs rather than the signs or their referents themselves. They allow for interpretations of *how* things have meaning, even if we cannot be certain *what* they mean. Furthermore, they are not restricted to language or text and apply to material phenomena. This advanced seminar in social theory focuses on the development and applications of the theory of structuralism proposed by Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget along with the semiotic theory of American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Although there are alternative approaches in both structuralism and semiotics, these two methods continue to gain adherents, especially in contemporary anthropology. Both are dynamic, in process, and able to account for historical change. Case studies will explore the many facets of these analytical methods.

This is not a linguistics course, and students are not expected to have a background in linguistics.

**Course Design:** This course is designed for graduate students in Anthropology, History, Journalism, and Media Studies, and fields such as Art, Architecture, and Literature.

**Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes:** Students will identify and explain specific anthropological approaches that draw on theories of structure, including structural linguistics and analysis of narrative. They will be able to characterize and comprehend the different approaches to structuralism in 20th-21st century Europe and America, focusing on Piagetian structuralism. They will identify the key facets of Peirce's sign theory, especially sign modes and his phanerozoology (phenomenology). From case studies they will analyze a variety of methods of application of these theories. Students will formulate and develop an original analysis of empirical data using a selection of these theories and methods on a topic relevant to their research interests. Students will communicate their analysis and findings in oral and written formats.

**Course Delivery:** This is an in-person class; however, a zoom link will be provided for those unable to attend due to illness or other absence. Tell the instructor if you need to use zoom; it is not automatic. All assignments will be submitted on the Canvas website for this course ([elearning.ufl.edu](http://elearning.ufl.edu)). Reading materials are organized by weekly Modules on Canvas.

**Course Format:** Because of the material, a good portion of class period is devoted to lecture; however, discussion or activities are also included. Every student is expected to be prepared to participate in class discussions of the reading assignments.

**Class Participation Requirements:** All students are expected to discuss all the readings each week, although they are not expected to understand them! Readings must be finished *before* class meets so that you have thought about and are prepared to discuss them. Notes must be taken on each reading and brought to class. In addition, except where noted on Canvas, each student is expected to **post** (at least) **three specific relevant questions** drawn from at least **three** different readings. They are to be posted on the Canvas discussion page for each week no later than **noon on Tuesday afternoon before class**. You must read what is already posted there before uploading your questions to avoid duplication. If someone has already taken your question, compose a different one. You are also expected to read *all* postings

before class, and **respond to at least three** of them (responses are in addition to questions) by **8:00 pm** Tuesday evening. Everyone is expected to have read all questions and responses before class begins Wednesday morning. Posting and reading questions and responses account for 50% of the class participation grade. The other 50% is based on active and informed contributions to in-class discussion each week.

**Required Readings:** No textbooks need to be purchased. All readings are drawn from book chapters and journal articles. They are listed in each week's module on Canvas, provided as pdf files except for journal articles that can be downloaded from the library website.

**Research Paper and Presentation:** A further requirement is a research paper, an *original* analysis of a body of data using one or more of the discussed analytical methods in structuralism or semiotics. Paper topics must be pre-approved by Week 9 (March 12), with a very brief presentation to the class on that day. An in-class powerpoint oral presentation (15 minutes) at the last class meeting is required, together with the final paper. The paper should be formatted like a publishable article (c. 8000 words of text), double-spaced, 12 point font, for a journal such as *American Anthropologist*, **OR** the content section of a grant submission (to NSF, NEH). The paper is due **Apr 30**.

**Attendance:** Because the course is designed entirely around in-class discussions of the reading material, missing class will prove detrimental to your understanding of that material as well as to the other students' understandings, because your contribution will be lost. More than one unexcused absence and frequent tardiness will result in a drop in the final letter grade (e.g., from A- to B+, B+ to B). Failure to be prepared for the discussion or to participate in discussion is not much different from being absent.

**Make-up Policy:** Students with excused absences will not be penalized for missed discussion but are expected to learn the material on their own and to submit discussion questions and responses even if past the deadline. Students unable to finish the presentation or paper on time must meet the requirements and submit the paperwork for an Incomplete grade. See full attendance and make-up policy below.

**Components of Final Grade:** Posting of discussion questions and responses (40 points), and participation in every class discussion (40 points) constitute 40% of the grade (80 out of 200 points). Questions and responses are counted each week to determine that portion of the grade. Every student is assessed a score of 1-3 points for each discussion period (1 = minimal participation; 2 = answered questions, volunteered some information; 3 = fully engaged with discussion, showed knowledge of readings, provided insightful comments). Raw scores are adjusted to reach the 40 point maximum for each component. The research paper plus the oral presentation make up the other 60% of the grade (120 points; 100 points paper, 20 points presentation).

### **AI Use Policy**

Writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are among the learning objectives of this course. Thus all writing assignments should be prepared by you, the student, without assistance. Developing strong competencies in these areas will prepare you for a competitive workplace. AI-generated (i.e., text-generating software such as Chat GPT) submissions are not permitted and will be flagged and treated as plagiarism.

### **Library Resources**

Library resources with direct links to critical library websites designed for graduate students:

<https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/anthroUF/grad>

**Acceptance of Course Requirements:** By remaining registered in this class, you indicate your agreement to accept the course requirements and expectations as stated in this syllabus. These are in addition to other general University requirements and codes of conduct as stated in official documents. *Please fill out the grad information form on Canvas and return it to me by the second class meeting.*

**GRADES:** Letter grades are assigned at the end of the semester, based on a total of 200 points; see the grading scale below. See University policy: <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
180-200	176-179	170-175	160-169	156-159	150-155	140-149	136-139	130-135	120-129	116-119	115 or lower
4.00	3.67	3.33	3.00	2.67	2.33	2.00	1.67	1.33	1.00	.67	0.00

Federal privacy regulations prohibit the release of scores and grades over the phone or by email

### WEEKLY TOPICS

All readings and other assignments are listed and updated on the weekly modules on Canvas. Be mindful of changes to reading assignments—don't read too far ahead!

Date	Week	Topic
Jan 15	1.	Introduction: Structuralism and Semiotics
Jan 22	2.	Early Structural Linguistics (Saussure and Jakobson)
Jan 29	3.	Philosophers of Time (Bergson and Husserl)
Feb 5	4.	Structuralism in European Anthropology (Lévi-Strauss and others)
Feb 12	5.	Piaget's Structuralism
Feb 19	6.	Structure in History
Feb 26	7.	Piagetian Operational Analysis of Myth
Mar 5	8.	Case Study of Operational Analysis of Myth (Popol Vuh)
Mar 12	9.	Peirce's Semiotics: Sign Modes Deadline this week to confirm your paper topic
Mar 19		<i>Spring Break</i>
Mar 26	10.	Peirce's Phanerology: Firstness, Secondness, Thirdness
Apr 2	11.	Applications of Peirce's Semiotics in Anthropology
Apr 9	12.	Leftovers and Wrap-up
Apr 16	13.	No class; every student meets with professor to discuss their paper
Apr 23	14.	Presentations (last class meeting)
Apr 30		<b>All written papers due by noon</b>

In this class, students are encouraged to employ critical thinking and to rely on data and verifiable sources to interrogate all assigned readings, lecture material, and other subject matter presented in this course, or beyond the course, as a way of determining whether they agree with their classmates, their instructor, and the authors of those readings. No lesson is intended to espouse, promote, advance, inculcate, or compel a particular feeling, perception, viewpoint or belief.

The following information is included in conformance with University Policy:

#### 1. Policy related to class attendance, make-up exams, and other work

Requirements for class attendance, make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course (e.g., excused absences) are consistent with [university policies](#). University policy states that absences count from the *first* class

meeting, not the first meeting after you added the class. “In general, acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to participate in class include illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. The university recognizes the right of the individual professor to make attendance mandatory. After due warning, professors can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.” The UF [Twelve-Day Rule](#) for student-athletes states that students who participate in athletic or scholastic teams are permitted to be absent 12 scholastic (regular class) days per semester without penalty. Students seeking this exemption *must provide documentation* to the instructor for each absence. It is the student-athlete’s responsibility to maintain satisfactory academic performance and attendance.

## **2. Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Students who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565) to register. It is important for students to *share their accommodation letter* with their instructor and discuss their access needs. Do not simply assume that the instructor has the letter. Follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. No accommodations will be granted until the letter is received.

## **3. Religious observances**

Students seeking modification of due dates for class participation, assignments, and exams for religious reasons (e.g., holiday observances) should contact the instructor in advance and request this modification; it will then be granted. Please make requests early in the semester.

## **4. Academic honesty**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The [Student Honor Code](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Instances of dishonesty include conducting unauthorized research on the internet and failing to cite sources of information on any work submitted, as well as unauthorized collaborating with students or others to determine the answers on assignments and exams. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. All suspected instances of violations of the Honor Code (plagiarism, copying, cheating) will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. Students who have not committed any prior violations will be sanctioned by the instructor; the usual penalty is a loss of all credit for the plagiarized assignment, or a grade of 0 on an exam. Students with prior violations will be sanctioned according to the Honor Code Resolution Process. If you are accused of academic dishonesty, you are not allowed to drop the course until the matter is resolved. **DO NOT CHEAT**—the penalties are too severe. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, or have concerns about completing an assignment on time, please consult with the instructor.

## **5. In-Class Recording**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or

transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

#### **6. Campus Resources: Counseling and Emergency Services**

U Matter, We Care serves as the umbrella program for UF's caring culture and provides students in distress with support and coordination of a wide variety of appropriate resources. Contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) seven days a week for assistance if you are in distress. Call 352-392-1575 for a crisis counselor in the nighttime and weekends.

- the [University Counseling and Wellness Center](#), 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575
- Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
- Center for Sexual Assault/Abuse Recovery and Education (CARE), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- University Police Department 392-1111 (non-emergency); call 9-1-1 for emergencies
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601

#### **7. Online course evaluation process**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/](http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/). 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.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/).

#### **8. Electronic Course Reserves**

The electronic course reserve service is offered by the George A. Smathers Libraries. Under the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with disabilities have the right to equal access, use and benefit of the course materials that have been placed on reserve in the Libraries.

Students who have registered with the Disability Resource Center should initiate their request for assistance and accommodation in accessing these materials. The Center will work with the Libraries Course Reserve Unit to provide accessible course materials. All information submitted by the student to the Libraries in fulfilling the request for accommodation will be kept confidential. For more information on services for students with disabilities, contact the DRC at 352-392-8565 or see link above. For general information on course reserves, please contact the Course Reserves Unit at 352-273-2520, or email at [eres@uflib.ufl.edu](mailto:eres@uflib.ufl.edu).

If you are not using a UF computer, you must **use the UF VPN client** when accessing electronic materials course reserve materials as well as e-books, on-line journals, databases, etc. offered by the library. The VPN client is easily installed and configured, and provides easy access to electronic materials using off-campus computers. For more information on using the VPN client, go to <http://www.uflib.ufl.edu/login/vpn.html>

#### **9. The Writing Studio**

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.