Periodic evaluation, ANTH4010, autumn semester 2020

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Course description: See
https://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/sai/ANTH4010/index.html#course-content

Statistics: 51 students were enrolled; 47 took the final exam. I am currently marking the exams, and expect the distribution of grades to be similar to last year's.

Previously conducted reports: This is the second offering; a periodic evaluation was submitted after the first offering of the course, one year ago.

Student evaluations: The responses were positive overall, with students mentioning their enjoyment of the prerecorded videolectures, and suggesting the ways discussions over Zoom might be improved.

Points of Evaluation

<u>General</u>

- This was the second time the course was offered. Overall, I feel it was a success, and the positive comments on the midway evaluations support this.
- There were two major challenges this year. The first was obviously coronavirus and the restrictions it placed on students—for example, many overseas students could not come to Oslo at all—and the new demands on technology.
- The second major challenge was simply the number of new students. From 2019 to 2020 we literally doubled our number of new MA students. While this is a wonderfully positive development for the department, the dynamics of teaching 50 students are much different from those of teaching 25.
- The prerecorded lectures were well received by students.
- The Zoom discussions went well overall, although it was suggested that student group presentations might be redesigned for more effective online presentation.
- A separate Zoom discussion session was held for students in the Americas, as the time of the regular class meeting was too early in the morning for them with the time zone difference.
- A pleasant and unplanned development was that a group of 10-12 students showed interest in staying on Zoom after the Friday class discussion, continuing to talk about the readings, anthropological theory, and their projects, sometimes for well over an hour afterward. I came to think of this as a virtual "Anthro Café" and it seemed to be enjoyable and intellectually productive for the students who chose to participate.
- If changes are made for 2021, they might include: (a) further refining of the syllabus (see below); (b) redesigned student group presentations so more students participate more equally (although, n.b., the presentations are not a marked assignment); (c) if live

attendance is possible, using a mixed-media approach which might include some prerecorded lectures as well as live-streamed discussions.

Curriculum changes for the future

- Based on last year's feedback, readings the students tended to do in other courses (Ortner, Geertz, etc.) were dropped from this year's syllabus, and happily, there were no complaints this year about students having read the same material earlier.
- New readings (including Zengin, Daswani, and Gershon) seemed to be well received. The Gershon reading, in fact, turned out to be indispensable for pulling together the discussion of boundaries raised by other readings (including Barth and Bashkow).
- As always, the main challenge is to include enough classic literature to ground students firmly in anthropological theory while devoting most of the reading to contemporary theory. Although more contemporary theory was added for 2020, more can always be added, especially updated approaches to actor network theory, interspecies anthropology, and the Anthropocene. However, in typing this, I note that I said in last year's report that I intended to add more this year! As mentioned above, refining the reading list is an ongoing task.

Exam

- I am currently marking the exam. So far, I am encouraged by the results, with many good papers and well distributed grades.

Teaching administration

- If live teaching is possible again in 2021, it would be ideal to bring in guest lecturers on several topics. In 2019, the course had excellent guest lectures from Marit Melhuus and Cathrine Thorleifsson. However, there were no guest lectures in 2020, because with everything shifting online, I did not want to add extra unknown variables.