



SYLLABUS

Subject name: State Power and Cultural Practices

Anthropological and sociological perspectives on the relation between cultural production and state formation

Subject code SZOCBA120:A3

Responsible lecturer: Szarvas Márton

Type: seminar

Level: BA

Credit: 4

Goal of the course:

The course aims to study the relation between state produced culture and cultural policy and its local implementation. It helps the students to understand the relation between cultural production and state institutions, policies and their local translation. During the semester we consider different theories of state and their take on culture.

States from an ethnographic point of view are not only operate on the macro level, creating symbols, discourses, produce and reproduce inequalities, frame the everyday life and experience of the population within its boundaries, but their existence is framed by its citizens by the way they perceive the everyday operation of it. Moreover, on the street level, where everyday encounters with institutions and policies are happening the subjects are modifying meaning and create narratives on it. Tatiana Thelen and her colleagues suggest that these modification of state practices can be perceived if one focuses on the boundary work, the surface of the encounter of bureaucracy and the citizens. Mary Luis Pratt calls that space of encounter the contact zone, where translation between intention of the policy maker and the interpretation of it by citizen or bureaucracy is taking place.

If we inquire the state from this point of view looking at empirical research we see that intentions of policies or interests of different dominant social groups are never fully determine the outcome, but contingencies created by local cultural and social practices modify them. In analyses of culture one is always eager to make a distinction between institutional definitions culture, which is a product of certain socially recognized processes and institutionally incorporated into a given set of values, and anthropological take on culture as a system of symbols and values. In this class the students are familiarized with both takes and their place in the analysis of the state.

Learning Goals

- Have an overview about history of the theocratization of the state and methodological problems which related to it as an object of study.
- Understand how culture have a significant role in the production and reproduction of state power.
- Become familiarized with the anthropological and sociological takes on state-culture relationship, see the differences and similarities.
- Develop a sensitivity about the way traditions and other forms of naturalized forms of cultural practices historically developed.

Assessment:

Participation in discussion – 25%

Reaction paper – 25%

Final paper – 50%

The course is designed as a discussion-based activity, therefore student presence and active student participation in class are required. A maximum of two absences is allowed. (25% of final grade). During the semester every student required to write a reaction paper on a chosen reading of the class (max 500 words). The papers should pose puzzles, questions about the topic of the class, which would be discussed in the beginning.

The final paper is the main requirement of the class. Students would choose a case based on any empirical material (newspapers, film, interview etc.) and analyze from the perspective of one of the theories the class covered. We would engage with choosing the topic from the beginning of the semester. On every second class there is time devoted to speaking about the puzzles around the chosen topic. For the 8th week the students need to present a 300 word long abstract and between the 8th and the 12th week they need to book a consultation with the instructor of the class. The end-term paper is maximum 2000 words long.

Readings

The readings will be posted online. The students are required to read the assigned texts and prepare questions about them

Week1 Introduction

I introduce the topic of the course through two cases. Speak about the requirements of the class and skim through the syllabus.

The two cases are the following:

1. Ragyogó burning in Mezőkövesd, Hungary: based on fieldnotes and a collection of archival sources on a ritual burning of an artifact considered non-authentic by local elites the students would discuss the role of the state and its interaction with local cultural practices. Through the case we would discuss the utility of looking at culture as

an object of study and an analytic framework when one chooses to conduct research on state practices.

2. PWAP (Public Works of Art Project) and public spending on art during the new deal in the US. We would discuss the relation between ideology, funding and policy.
<https://hyperallergic.com/114956/a-visual-history-of-federal-art-spending-in-the-united-states/>

Week2 Classics: Weber and Marx

The class introduces early sociological theories of the state, their differences, similarities and relevance in contemporary analysis. What is the difference between their take on power? How they integrate culture and the production of ideas to their analysis? Who are the actors they are focusing on and what that focus tells us about methodology?

Marx, Karl (1978) "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," in Robert C. Tucker ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: Norton, pp. 604-617.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1998). *The German ideology*. Amherst N.Y.: Prometheus Books (Chapter on Ruling Class and Ruling Ideas)

Weber, Max (1991) "Politics as a Vocation," in H. H. Gerth, C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 77-103.

Week3 State as a Field: Bourdieusian perspectives

The class reviews Bourdieu's take on state as a field and analyzes it in relations its utility of studying cultural production. During the course the students become familiar with theory of field, symbolic power and the take on the agency of cultural producers from the perspective of the theory of practice.

Bourdieu, P. (1994). Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field. *Sociological Theory*, 12(1), 1-18.

Optional

Steinmetz, G. (2008). The Colonial State as a Social Field: Ethnographic Capital and Native Policy in the German Overseas Empire before 1914. *American Sociological Review*, 73(4), 589-612.

Loveman, M. (2005). The Modern State and the Primitive Accumulation of Symbolic Power. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(6), 1651-1683.

Week4 Intellectuals, Culture and State in the Work of Antonio Gramsci

The class grapples with the Gramscian understanding of the relation between culture, state and reproduction of capitalist relations of production. They will be introduced to the problems of intellectuals as the mediators of state ideology. The class contextualizes his theories in relation to other understandings of the producers of knowledge and culture like Karl Mannheim, Pierre Bourdieu, Iván Szélenyi. Through the work of Raymond Williams, we review an application of the concept of hegemony in social analysis.

Crehan, K. A. F. (2002). Gramsci, culture, and anthropology. University of California Press. (98-105; 128-135)

Williams, R. (2005). Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays. In Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays. London: Verso. (31-50)

Optional:

Joseph, G. M., & Nugent, D. (1994). Everyday forms of state formation: revolution and the negotiation of rule in modern Mexico. Durham: Duke University Press. (Introduction)

Week5 Culture and State Formation

The class problematizes the historicity of the relation between dominant culture and state formation. Is culture necessary part of the making of the nation state? How cultural practices become canonized by the state and its institutions? What are the social processes in work? We will critically engage the term of “invention of tradition” through Marshal Sahlins work, while revisiting Bourdieu’s understanding of “naturalization” of social practices.

Hófer, T. (1995). The “Hungarian Soul” and the “Historic Layers of National Heritage”: Conceptualizations of Hungarian Folk Culture. In I. Banac & K. Verdery (Eds.), National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe (pp. 65–82). New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies.

Optional:

Corrigan, P., & Sayer, D. (1985). The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. (Introduction)

Weber, E. (1976). Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Introduction)

Eric Hobsbawm. 1983. “Mass-producing tradition: Europe 1870-1914” in Hobsbawm and Ranger The Invention of tradition, Cambridge UP.

Week6 Marxist approaches

Through the work of Bob Jessop and Luis Althusser we engage with the Marxist reconceptualization of state-culture relationship. We critically engage with the functionalist take of Althusser, understanding its context (academic and political alike), while analyzing the merits and handicaps of integrating state theories in the capital centered inquiries.

Jessop, B. (1990). State theory: putting the Capitalist state in its place. Cambridge: Polity Press. (1-19)

Louis Althusser. 2006 (1970). "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses—Notes Towards an Investigation" in Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner eds. Media and Cultural Studies. Key Works. Blackwell.

Optional:

Taylor, P. J. (2014). Materialist Framework for Political Geography. Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 7(1), 15–34.

Cox, Robert W. 1983. “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations : An Essay in Method.” Millennium: Journal of International Studies 12 (2). Sage UK: London, England: 162–75.

Pijl, K. van der. (2004). Two faces of the transnational cadre under neo-liberalism. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, (7), 177–207.

Week7 Weber Re-discovered: Power Centered analyses

This course is devoted to understanding and review the contemporary applications of Weber's conceptualization of the state. We look at the institutions which exercise state power and analyze the means they mobilize.

Geva, D. (2015). Selective Service, the Gender-Ordered Family, and the Rational Informality of the. *American Journal of Sociology*, 121(1), 171–204.

Optional:

Evans, P. B., Rueschemeyer, D., & Skocpol, T. (1985). *Bringing the state back in*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mann, Michael. 1984. "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results." *European Journal of Sociology* 25 (2): 185.

Week8 Relational Analysis of the State

Can we study the state as a thing? If not, what are the other epistemological positions of social research. If we imagine state as the result of the interaction of different organization, social groups and their imaginations what do we lose or gain? What is the position of institutions of cultural production and everyday cultural practices in this analysis?

Thelen, T., Vettters, L., & Benda-Beckmann, K. von. (2018). *Stategraphy: toward a relational anthropology of the state*. New York: Berghahn books. (Introduction)

Optional:

Jansen, S. (2015). *Yearnings in the meantime : "normal lives" and the state in a Sarajevo apartment complex*. New York: Berghahn.

Yashin, Y.-N. (2012). *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Week9 Policy as an Object to Study

What is policy and why is it important to study when one engages with the study of the state? We engage with the literature of the subfield of critical policy studies to look at the processes and actors involved in social engineering. Can experts and policy makers have culture? What happens when policies are implemented and how translation and everyday operation of state institutions modify them?

Clarke, John "What's culture got to do with it? Deconstructing welfare, state and nation." University of Aarhus, Denmark, 17-18 November, 2005.

Pratt, Mary Luis (1991) 'Arts of the Contact Zone' *Profession* 91. New York: MLA, 33-40.

Optional:

J. Wedel, C. Shore, G. Feldman, and S. Lathrop, "Toward an anthropology of public policy" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 600: 30-51 (July, 2005).

Week10 Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Culture

The course studies the transformation of state-culture relationship started in the 1970's. We review the utility of the analytical framework of neo-liberalism, if it is capable to grasp the complexity of social processes of contemporary times. Looking at concrete examples we understand the relation between capitalist transformation, cultural policy and the role of the state in commodification of certain cultural practices.

Wu, C. (2002). *Privatising Culture*. London: Verso. (16-30)

Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff. 2009. *Ethnicity Inc*. U. of Chicago Press (6-22)

Optional:

Boltanski, L., & Chiapello, É. (2005). *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso. (on artistic critique)

Clarke, J. (2008). Living with/in and without neo-liberalism. *Focaal*, 51, 135–147.

Week11 Post-Socialist Transformation

Focusing on the former socialist bloc we study the way the dismantling of the socialist institutional system gave rise to new cultural practices. We focus on the interaction of these practices and the post-socialist state. Revisiting the understanding of the state as an ever-changing social formation we try to understand how institutions and social groups adapt and how new practices within and outside state institutions emerge.

Poblocki, K. (2009). Whither Anthropology without Nation-state?: Interdisciplinarity, World Anthropologies and Commoditization of Knowledge. *Critique of Anthropology*, 29(2), 225–252.

Taylor, M. N. (2008). *The Politics of Culture: Folk Critique and the Transformation of State in Hungary*. City University New York. (284-295)

Optional:

Haney, Lynne A. 2002. *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Introduction)

Buyandelgeriyn, M. (2007). Dealing with uncertainty : Shamans, marginal capitalism, and the remaking of history in postsocialist Mongolia. *American Ethnologist*, 34(1), 127–147.

Week12 Conclusion

Presentation of the end-term papers, discussion of them and feedback from the students.

Colonial Period to the Outbreak of the Civil War. Harper Torchbooks. New York