ANTH 112.21 Introduction to Socio-Cultural Anthropology
Winter 2019
I acknowledge that St FX is in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.
Jan. 22, 24: What is the role of theory in anthropology?

  READ: Notes on Moodle: Susan Vincent, "Overview of Anthropological Theory" [assignment on reading: Hannity, Sean. 2018. "The Migrant Caravan and Three Simple Questions about What You Believe." *Fox News*. https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/sean-hannity-the-migrant-caravan-and-three-simple-questions-about-what-you-believe
  aaaguestcontributor. 2018. "Five Things You Should Know about the Migrant Caravan." American Anthropological Association https://blog.americananthro.org/2018/11/05/five-things-you-should-know-about-the-migrant-caravan/
  Wheatley, Abby C. and Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz (2016) "Keep Moving: Collective Agency along the Migrant Trail." *Citizenship Studies*, 20(3-4):396-410.
  Fill out CRAAP sheet for each – see Moodle]

Research questions, such as those pursued in the research projects we explored in the section on methodology, are generated through theoretical frameworks.
  - theory tells us what is important, and how those important features are linked
    - since no one can study everything about a society, and since all of us already make choices about what we see as important, theory provides a consistent frameworks to select and analyse information

What are/have been the major anthropological theories and how might one use these theories to generate research questions and analyse anthropological information?
  - **Classical nineteenth century evolutionary theory** (up to about the 1920s, although subsequent theories sometimes reflected similar assumptions; Tylor, Frazer, Morgan)
    - says all societies go through the same sequence of stages ("savagery" [divided into lower, middle and upper stages]; "barbarism" " [divided into lower, middle and upper stages]; and "civilization")
    - Morgan's version is a materialist approach in that the focus is on real things and how people relate to them (e.g. "middle savagery" was based on the skill of fishing, with simple monosyllabic language and a family form in which a group of brothers married a group of sisters).
    - deeply flawed in terms of racist assumptions, belief that there was one line of evolutionary development
  - **Diffusionism** (1890s-)
    - technology and ideas invented once and spread out from where they were invented.
    - idealist
  - **Historical particularism** (Boas) - cultural relativism; each society a unique product of its past
    - tends to be an idealist approach in that the focus is on the way people think and

on the full description of their culture
- **Functionalism** (1890s-; Durkheim, Malinowski)
    - focus on the social purpose of an aspect of society; use an organic analogy that assumes social harmony and lack of change
    - social structuralist
- **Structural functionalism** (1930s on; Radcliffe-Brown)
    - interested in social structure as the most important feature of a society
    - "structure" as a patterned system of social relations
    - social structuralist
-**Cultural ecology** (1950s - ; Steward, Cohen)
    - a neo-evolutionary multilineal framework that focuses on the connections between the environment, the technology and the socio-political organization of a society;
    - provided much of our understanding of categories such as "bands," "tribes," "chiefdoms," and "states" (in political anthropology) and "foragers," "horticulturalists," "pastoralists," "intensive cultivators," and "industrial society" (in economic anthropology)
    - materialist
- **Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches**: (in anthropology, especially from 1960s on)
    - focus is on way in which people are involved in relationships to produce items (social relations of production);
    - Class is a central concept
    - materialist
- **Performance/Interactionism** (1960s on; Goffman)
    - focus is on how people perform a role in face-to-face interactions
            - impression management
            - front stage/back stage
            - stigma (visible/invisible; discredit/discreditable)
- **Theory of Practice** (1980s on; Bourdieu)
    - what behaviours and understandings do people develop from lived experience? Are there different behaviours and understandings for different groups in a society? How do the behaviours relate to the political structure of the society?
    - tends to idealist in focus on behaviour, but based on material relations
- **Post modern anthropology**:
    - diverse forms, but tend to reject the idea that there is a single theoretical perspective that can explain everything.
    - usually tend to be idealist

Group work: How to evaluate what you read? CRAAP sheets and the readings on migrants at the Mexico-US border.