RESEARCH SEMINAR ON ECONOMIC CULTURES

Course Description:

This is a research seminar that aims to explore and analyze the interaction between culture and economy by observing different types of economic practices. The purpose of the seminar will be the generation of new knowledge in this field. Students will be expected to develop research and original thinking and to produce a research paper of publishable quality. Students are welcome to use the seminar as a testing ground in theory and methodology for work related to their theses and dissertations. Papers are due the last week of classes.

The seminar will be organized around three elements:

1) A series of joint presentations by the instructors on specific topics followed by an open discussion with the participants in the seminar.

2) Supporting reading for every topic treated in the seminar, and specifically recommended readings for students engaged in a given research project.

3) Empirical studies conducted by each one of the students, leading to a research paper at the end of the semester. Research topics will be selected in agreement with the instructor, within the thematic area of the seminar. Students must present their work in progress in one session of the seminar during the semester, to receive comments and suggestions from the whole class. Active participation by all students in each session is required.

The seminar will meet once a week, in a three hour session. Presentations by the instructors will take part in the first half of the semester, so that research work by the students can proceed in the meantime.

Grading will be based on active participation in the discussion in the seminar, as well as in the effort invested in the research project, regardless of the final results of the research.
Pre-requisites:

Graduate standing, no exceptions. Social science background is necessary.

Annenberg students have priority but the seminar is open to students from other departments. Enrolment is limited to 15 students.

Themes of Presentations by the Instructors (presenting jointly in each session)

READINGS FOR EACH SESSION ARE REQUIRED.

Week One:

August 28: Economy is Culture: The Theoretical Debate.


Week Two and Three:

September 4 & 11: Informational Financial Capitalism and the Crisis of 2008


Week Four:

September 18: Consumerism and the Culture of Branding


Week Five:

September 25: The Culture of Financial Capitalism: From the Ideology of Risk to the Practice of Greed (including field work report from Professor Banet-Weiser)


Week Six:

October 2: Gendering the Recession


Week Seven:

October 9: The Culture of Silicon Valley and New Means of Payment: Bitcoin and Beyond (guest speaker: Lana Swartz)

Reading: Bill Maurer, “Payment, Forms and Functions of Value Transfer in Contemporary Society”, Cambridge Anthropology 30 (2) Autumn 2012: 15-35.

Bill Maurer, Taylor C. Nelms, and Lana Swartz, “When perhaps the real problem is money itself!: the practical materiality of Bitcoin,” Social Semiotics 2013.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2013.777594

Week Eight:

October 16: Contesting the Values of Financial Capitalism: Social Movements Against the Management of the Crisis


Week Nine:


Week Ten:
October 30: **Discussion of Piketty’s book**


Weeks Eleven Through Fifteen:

November 6 – December 4: Student presentations of their research projects and discussion in class.

**Required Books/Readings:**


   


17. Required viewing: *Aftermath. The cultures of the economic crisis*, directed by Bregtje Van der Haak, set of 4 videos, Amsterdam: VPRO (Dutch Public Television) (available online)
Recommended Readings


