

The Anthropology of the State UCSB

Instructor: Gehad Abaza
Contact: g_abaza@ucsb.edu

This class investigates notions and ideas of “the state” through an ethnographic and anthropological approach. We pose the questions: What is the state? How can one think of the state: as an abstract reality, an institution, a process/mode of governance, or a cultural formation? How does it govern, regulate, or relate to its citizens and subjects? What are its powers and limitations? To what extent can we speak of “it” as a clearly formed entity? Why types of relations, constructions, routines, and subjects do we speak of in discussions of the state? What alternatives can we imagine beyond the state? How do people speak or relate to the state in their day to day lives?

In this class, we will contemplate and rethink conceptions of the state. We will think through how formations of the state intersect with class, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, and even the body. By reading different anthropological, humanities, and other social science texts, we will address colonial and post-colonial states, everyday perceptions of the state, the state’s borderlands, notions of a “failed state,” and how perceptions and practices of the state seep into people’s everyday lives and struggles.

Grade Breakdown:

Weekly Reflection Papers: 25%
Film Critique: 25%
Group Project/Presentation: 25%
Final Essay: 25%

Weekly Reflection Papers: Each week students will be required to submit 300-word reflection papers outlining their main takeaways, thoughts, and possible critiques of the readings. These papers encourage freestyle and creative writing.

Film Critique: Students will be required to watch a film related to the theme of borderlands and migration. They will then be required to write a 500-word critique of the film and its implications.

Group Project/Presentation: Each week, a different group of students will be required to prepare a presentation on the readings. Groups can set up zoom appointments with me to do the presentations.

Final Essay: Students will be required to write 1,500-word argumentative essays pertaining to one of the themes discussed in class. Essays will be graded on the strength of the arguments made, on the works cited, and on structure. If students are able to include ethnographic material in their essays, this would be great. However, it is not required.

Grading Scale:

A+ = 97-100	C+ = 77-79
A = 93-96	C = 73-76
A- = 90-92	C- = 70-72
B+ = 87-89	D+ = 67-69
B = 83-86	D = 63-66
B- = 80-82	D- = 60-62
	F = 59 and below

Tentative Schedule

Week One: Philosophies of State-Making

Abrams, Philip. 1988. "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," *Journal of Historical Sociology* (1), 58-89.

Barkey, Karen and Sunita Parikh. 1991. "Comparative Perspectives on the State." *Annual Review of Sociology* 17: 523-549.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2002. "Introduction," In: *Face of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton University Press.

Submit two discussion questions/reflections from the readings

Week Two: Legibility and Governance

Aretxaga, Begoña. 2003. "Maddening States," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32: 393-410.

Das, Veena. 2004 "The Signature of the State: The Paradox of Illegibility" In: *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Veena Das and Deborah Poole (eds.) Oxford: James Currey. Pp. 225-252.

Scott, James. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press. (Excerpts)

Submit two discussion questions/reflections from the readings

Week Three: Citizenship, Structural Violence, and the Body

Bayat, Asef. 2013. "The Urban Subaltern and the Non-Movements of the Arab Uprisings: An Interview with Asef Bayat" *Jadaliyya* March 26, 2013.

Das, Veena. 2011. "State, Citizenship and the Urban Poor," *Citizenship Studies* 15 (3): 319-333.

Auyero, Javier. 2012. *Patients of the State: The Politics of Waiting in Argentina*. Duke University Press. (Excerpts)

Submit two discussion questions/reflections from the readings

Week Four: Post-Coloniality

Hill, Jonathan. 2005. "Beyond the Other? A Postcolonial Critique of the Failed State Thesis." *African Identities*. 3: 139-154.

Mbembe, Achille. 2000. "At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality and Sovereignty in Africa," *Public Culture* 12 (1): 259-284.

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2020. "Decolonizing the Political Community," In: *Neither Settler nor Native: The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*. Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Watch Film: *Battle of Algiers*

Submit Film Critique

Submit two discussion questions/reflections from the readings

Week Five: Gender and Citizenship

Conway, Daniel. 2008. "The Masculine State in Crisis." *Men and Masculinities* 10: 422-439.

Massino, Jill. 2019. "Introduction" and "Good Times, Bad Times: Gender, Consumption and Lifestyle," In: *Ambiguous Transitions: Gender, the State, and Everyday Life in Socialist and Post-socialist Romania*. Berghahn Books.

Submit two discussion questions/reflections from the readings

Week Six: Formations of Statehood

Ballvé, Teo. 2020. "Introduction" and "Producing the Frontier," In: *The Frontier Effect: State Formation and Violence in Colombia*. Cornell University Press.

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2012. *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*. Duke University Press.

Submit your Final Paper

Submit self and group assessment

EMAILS:

- Please check your @ucsb.edu account and GauchoSpace **regularly** for updates. This is your responsibility. These will likely be our main sources of communication.
- During office hours, I will do my best to sit in front of the computer and respond to your requests as soon as possible. Outside these hours, I will still try to answer your emails as quickly as possible, but please keep in mind there may be a 24-48 hour delay, especially if you are contacting me over a weekend or holiday.
- Please make sure you include your full name in the email.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. You must give credit to authors and other thinkers when you: 1. Use a direct quotation, 2. Paraphrase or summarize (in whole or in-part) any work that is not yours, 3. Use any sort of information from any venue that is not common knowledge.

You can read about UCSB's campus policy regarding academic honesty and submitting original work for course assignments via the university's [web page for academic conduct](#). This class will be strict in following and upholding the rules of academic integrity. If you cheat or plagiarize, I will have to report the incident to the Anthropology Department Chair and Judicial Review Board. Your final grade will be withheld until the Student-Faculty Committee on Student Conduct makes a final ruling in the case. If you are uncertain about what counts as plagiarism in any of your given assignments, please contact me.

OTHER INFORMATION TO BE AWARE OF:

- If you have a personal issue that may affect your performance in class, notify me as soon as possible so we can **work out a solution together**. The course syllabus contains several helpful resources, as well.
- It is important that you keep up with the course readings. It will be very difficult to catch up should you fall behind.
- Be thinking about your final paper well in advance and take the preliminary assignments seriously. You'll be thankful you did!
- Don't be shy to ask for help. Please remember that ***I am here to help and support you***. I encourage you to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Campus Resources:

- *Campus Learning Assistance Services (CLAS)*: CLAS offers students help with writing, test taking skills and time management. If your TA refers you to CLAS, you will need to bring written evidence that you have attended a CLAS session in order to receive

credit on the assignment(s). You may register for CLAS sessions online at clas.sa.ucsb.edu.

- *Counseling Services:* School can be especially stressful if enrolled in courses and working one or more jobs. UCSB Counseling Services is available on a crisis walk-in basis, as well as by appointment and by phone after-hours. To reach the Counseling Services office, please call 805.893.4411.
- *Disabled Services Program:* Students with either a permanent or temporary disability are eligible for learning support from the campus Disabled Students Program. It is the responsibility of the student to call the DSP office 805.893.2668 or visit the DSP office (located on the 2nd floor of SRB) to request assistance. *Students have a right to confidentiality and do not have to inform the Instructor of a disability if they prefer not to, although it is usually helpful to do so.*