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ANTH 180-01: Summer 2018
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Urban Legends, Moral Panics and Mythmaking

Overview of Course:

This course puts under critical review what we think we *know* about an issue. It provides the analytical tools for students to recognize statistics that defy logic, ideological claims that are passed off as data, moralizing dressed up as human rights issues; and myths, stereotypes and assumptions that justify exclusion, disenfranchisement, expulsion, incarceration and violence. In short, we will examine the anatomy of moral panics and myth-making and consider the consequences. We will unpack panics and myths around such issues as: human trafficking and the sex trade; migration and refugees; Muslim life in post-9/11 United States; race, poverty and violence; gender and sexuality; AIDS; art and pornography; and the American dream and upward mobility.

This course grows out of my own experience as a researcher on politicized topics such as sex work, trafficking, and undocumented migration. I routinely am asked to weigh in on statistics and claims that just don't make sense. They often grow out of racist thinking and strategy. And, as we will learn throughout the semester, these fears and the "evidence" they generate shape policy, funding, and resource allocation. Given how frustrated I have been -- particularly answering questions by the media on panics around trafficking -- I decided to call on a number of colleagues here at Georgetown to share their own experiences with moral panics and myths. We are extremely fortunate to hear from these experts on how they too must regularly disabuse the media of unproven statistics and point out policies born from bias.

As a class we will work together to monitor panics and myths as they unfold this semester. For example, we will keep a keen analytical eye as to the reporting on cases of police violence in the United States, Syrian refugees in Europe and the U.S, Central American migrants in the U.S., and the Trump Administration's talking points -- and policies -- on who should/should not belong in the U.S. While politicians (around the world) and the media flamboyantly ignore evidence -- and in some cases strategically incite panic -- we will carefully and coolly chart what they gain and what, in the process, we all lose.

Course Goals:

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

1. Identify systems of power at work that uphold certain normativities -- such as being white, male, heterosexual, middle-class, Christian, or Western.
2. Identify strategies and actions that aim to exclude and disenfranchise.
3. Identify who gains from panics and myth-making.
4. Question how and why data and statistics get produced, disseminated -- and vouched for or disputed.
5. Question the background, training, and motivations of "experts."
6. Understand the methodologies anthropologists use and the contributions they make -- as field

workers and writers of ethnography. (As opposed to scholars' methodologies and work products in other disciplines).

7. Make meaningful connections between your own readings and key theoretical concepts in anthropology.

Course Format and Requirements:

1. We will start every class sharing a panic/statistic that doesn't smell right/stereotype/myth-in-the-making in the news cycle, advertisement, on social media, TV etc.

2. A team of student discussants will lead class discussion. We will decide on a schedule during the first week of class. Teams must meet in-person to prepare how they will facilitate discussion.

3. Throughout the semester you will monitor in the media how the issues we talk about in class - and those that crop up -- unfold. **We will build an annotated bibliography as a class.**

Everyone is responsible for making **5 contributions to the bibliography**. Contributions can include books and articles; novels and poetry; media sources; congressional testimony or other statements released by government officials; or links to art, music, films. The annotation should be no more than a paragraph. It should summarize the material and explain how it is an example of a panic, a refutation of one, or the consequence of one. See the items on the syllabus as examples of the kinds of materials you would select. We will build the bibliography as a Wiki on Blackboard. You will put your name and the date after your contribution in parenthesis (Professor Brennan, 5/22/17). Do not leave your contributions to the final days of class! Rather, as you consume media daily and read for your other classes, keep an eye out for materials. **10% of grade.**

4. **Oral History and Podcast:** You will conduct a short (10-minute) oral history on a moral panic of your choice -- due during the first half of the summer session. This oral history will serve as a jumping off point for a longer podcast you will work on throughout the summer session. In other words, part of the oral history might appear in your podcast. **25% of grade.**

5. **Mock Conference Presentation: Write a 3-page double-spaced paper** on a panic of your choice. Everyone will present their paper in **10-minute conference-style presentations**. This is an important skill -- to convey thoughtful analysis succinctly and powerfully. You will hand the paper in for a grade. We will develop a schedule of presentations. Your paper is due the day of your presentation. **25% of grade.**

6. **Research paper on the topic of your choice.** This will draw from your own anthropological reading. Students will present their key findings and analysis in 10-minute presentations the last days of class. Ideally, your oral history, podcast, and 3-page paper (and conference-style presentation) will be on a topic in preparation for your final research paper. In this way, you will deepen your knowledge on a topic as the summer session unfolds. The paper is 12 pages (excluding the bibliography, endnotes and any other material such as photos and charts). Due: please email me your papers by noon on **40% of grade.**

You can find the grading scale I will use in the undergraduate bulletin: (<http://bulletin.georgetown.edu/regulation/studying>).

Class policies:

1. You must not just come to class, but be engaged. This means not only reading ahead of time, but also thinking critically about the material and how it relates to the core concepts of the class. How do the readings build on, diverge from, or challenge other material we have tackled? Come to class excited to share your insights and to hear fellow students' take. Be ready to listen to viewpoints you've never encountered.
2. More than three absences can affect your grade.
3. Computers are only to take notes or to pull up readings. Any other use could result in a no-computer policy.
4. I do not accept late work without a Dean's intervention. The grade drops a full grade for each day an assignment is late. The grade drops by the hour for the final research paper.

Guidance on monitoring the media and building our annotated bibliography:

Here are examples of hot-button themes that invite panics and myths. Let's see what unfolds in the months ahead for us to monitor and add to the bibliography -- and talk about in class -- throughout the semester:

1. Police and communities of color
2. Refugees in Europe
3. Immigrants in the U.S.
4. Trafficking

Guidance on how to keep an eye out for material for the annotated bibliography that documents the *consequences!!!* of panics:

While reading the news during the election, this one sentence in a letter to the editor caught my attention:

*8 and 10-year old children yelling "Build A Wall" at Trump Rally

"The Extreme Meets the Mainstream" -- Letters to the Editor, *Washington Post*, January 9, 2016.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-extreme-meets-the-mainstream/2016/01/08/3d9c0804-b3e3-11e5-8abc-d09392edc612_story.html

Perhaps you know about a well-publicized violent beating at an earlier Trump rally:

*Mercutio Southall Jr. beaten and choked at Trump rally in Birmingham, Alabama

<http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2015/11/23/3725051/trump-protester-beaten/>

*And here is a thoughtful response to Trump's call for a registry of Muslims based on research by Moustafa Bayoumi (whose book *How Does it Feel to Be A Problem?*) we will be reading:

"Registry for Muslims Already Has Created A Decade of Profiling and Fear:"

<http://www.progressive.org/news/2015/11/188438/special-registry-muslims-has-already-meant-decade-profiling-fear-and-secrecy>

Readings:

The following are required books. All of the other assignments are on blackboard. If you miss class, you are responsible for checking for any materials I handed out in class on blackboard.

Key texts:

Bayoumi, Moustafa. 2008. *How Does It Feel to Be A Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America*. New York: Penguin Books.

Brennan, Denise. 2014. *Life Interrupted: Trafficking into Forced Labor in the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Lucht, Hans. 2012. *Darkness before Daybreak: African Migrants Living on the Margins in Southern Italy Today*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pascoe, C. J. 2011. *"Dude You're a Fag:" Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. C. J. Pascoe. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ralph, Laurence. 2013. *Renegade Dreams: Living through Dreams in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Monday, May 21**Overview of class****Tuesday, May 22****Key Concepts****What is a Moral Panic? Legend? Myth?****and****The "Zombie" statistics that inspired this course (they won't die....)**

Goode, Erich and Nachman Ben-Yehuda. 2009. *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. Read the Prologue, Chapter 1 "Enter the Moral Panic," and Chapter 2 "The Moral Panic: An Introduction." pp. 1-50.

Kinzer, Stephen. 2015. "The United States of Fear and Panic." *The Boston Globe*. December 23. <http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2015/12/23/the-united-states-fear-and-panic/o3DvdxI1nUw45Z2Lza9aLM/story.html?event=event25?event=event25>

Urban Legends and Pulp Fiction about the Super Bowl and Trafficking into the Sex Sector

Kotz, Pete. 2011. "The Super Bowl Prostitute Myth: 100,000 Hookers Won't Be Showing up in

Dallas." *Dallas Observer*. January 27.

<http://www.dallasobserver.com/news/the-super-bowl-prostitute-myth-100-000-hookers-wont-be-showing-up-in-dallas-6424288>

Abad-Santo, Alexander. 2014. "The Super Bowl Sex-Trafficking Story that Just Won't Die." *The Wire, News from the Atlantic*. January 6.

<http://www.thewire.com/culture/2014/01/super-bowl-sex-trafficking-story-just-wont-die/356735/>

The GAATW report cited in this news article (read the Executive Summary and flip through the report): <http://www.gaatw.org/publications/WhatstheCostofaRumour.11.15.2011.pdf>

Wednesday, May 23

**Numbers and Truth Aura
and**

Those Talked *about* Talk Back to Representations, Rescue, Help, Advice, and Aid

[Merry, Sally Engle. 2009. "Measuring the World: Indicators, Human Rights, and Global Governance." *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting \(American Society of International Law\)*. Vol. 103, March 25-28. pp. 239-243.](#)

Kessler, Glenn. 2015. "Why You Should Be Wary of Statistics on 'Modern Slavery' and 'Trafficking'". April 24.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/04/24/why-you-should-be-wary-of-statistics-on-modern-slavery-and-trafficking/>

Pinto, Nick. 2011. "Women's Funding Network Sex Trafficking Study is Junk Science." *The Village Voice*.

<http://www.villagevoice.com/news/womens-funding-network-sex-trafficking-study-is-junk-science-6434306>

And response:

<http://www.villagevoice.com/news/the-schapiro-group-responds-to-our-cover-story-about-sex-trafficking-study-6677280>

Suggested Reading (Note how much money was thrown around in Seattle v. how many people helped):

Shapiro, Nina. 2004. "The New Abolitionists." *Seattle Weekly*. Aug. 25-31.

<http://www.seattleweekly.com/2004-08-25/news/the-new-abolitionists/>

And

Cole, Teju. 2012. "The White-Savior Industrial Complex." *The Atlantic*. March 21.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

Mathers, Kathryn. 2011. "Mr. Kristof, I Presume?" *Transition*. Hutchins Center Institute for African and African American Research, Harvard University.
<http://hutchinscenter.fas.harvard.edu/transition-107>

Agustin, Laura. 2012. "The Soft Side of Imperialism." Counterpunch. January 25.
<http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/01/25/the-soft-side-of-imperialism/>

Ahmed, Aziza. 2012. "The Unintended Consequences of Nick Kristof's Anti-Sex Trafficking Crusade." *The Guardian*. March 26.
<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/mar/26/nick-kristof-anti-sex-trafficking-crusade>

DasGupta, Sayantani. "Your Women Are Oppressed, But Ours Are Awesome': How Nicholas Kristof and Half the Sky Use Women Against Each Other." *Racialicious*. October 8, 2012.
<http://www.racialicious.com/2012/10/08/your-women-are-oppressed-but-ours-are-awesome-how-nicholas-kristof-and-half-the-sky-use-women-against-each-other/>

Two Short Video Clips:

Empower Foundation. "Last Rescue in Siam." Empower Foundation. 2012.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70rPAxLFFKU>

Somaly Uh Uh Bad Rehab -- by sex worker rights group in Cambodia
Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM0r7N1rIMI>

Context:

<https://blog.witness.org/2010/11/karaoke-human-rights-videos-from-cambodia/>

Thursday and Friday, May 24th and 25th:

**Beyond Spectacularization:
What Trafficking -- and Life After -- Really Looks Like**

Brennan, Denise. 2014. *Life Interrupted: Trafficking into Forced Labor in the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Read chapters: Introduction, Chapters 1-2

Disentangling trafficking and sex work:

<http://www.nswp.org/resource/un-womens-note-sex-work-sexual-exploitation-and-trafficking>

And

Life Interrupted

Read chapters: Chapters 3-5, and the Conclusion

Report by members of Damayan, a grassroots organization based in New York of and for Filipino im/migrant workers and led by Filipino women domestic workers.

Suggested Reading:

National Domestic Workers Alliance. 2015. *Beyond Survival*.

http://www.domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/beyond_survival_campaign_report_full-_final.pdf

(Monday is Labor Day -- **Tuesday, May 29 and Wednesday May 30:**

Immigration: Worthy and Unworthy Citizens

Lucht, Hans. 2012. *Darkness before Daybreak: African Migrants Living on the Margins in Southern Italy Today*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Read through p. 115.

And

Darkness at Daybreak

Read the remaining chapters

Thursday and Friday, May 31 and June 1

Policing Borders and the Collateral Damage

We will watch the documentary *Becky's Journey* by Sine Plambech.

Here's the trailer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOnL0Ib1H-k>

The Dangers of the Migrant Trail -- borders in the desert and in the ocean

I will give you a handout of articles, films, and art to choose from

Monday, June 4 and Tuesday June 5

Race, Safety, Belonging, and Opportunity

Criminalizing Blackness

Ralph, Laurence. 2013. *Renegade Dreams: Living through Dreams in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Read the first half of the book through p. 114

Kehinde Wiley's paintings:

<http://kehindewiley.com/>

<http://npg.si.edu/exhibit/recognize/paintings.html>

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. "The Enduring Myth of Black Criminality." Short video that accompanies his series in *The Atlantic*. September 10.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/404674/enduring-myth-of-black-criminality/>

And

Renegade Dreams

Read the remaining chapters.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. "The Gangsters of Ferguson." *The Atlantic*. March 5.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/03/The-Gangsters-Of-Ferguson/386893/Gangland?>

Wednesday, June 6 and Thursday, June 7

Post-9/11 and Belonging

Bayoumi, Moustafa. 2008. *How Does It Feel to Be A Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America*. New York: Penguin Books.

Read through p. 114

And

How Does It Feel to Be A Problem?

Read the remaining chapters.

And on Bayoumi's website:

"So, I Rewrote the Mayor of Roanoke's Statement on Admitting Refugees"

<http://moustafabayoumi.com/so-i-rewrote-the-mayor-of-roanokes-statement-on-admitting-syrian-refugees/>

Friday, June 8

Students bring in video clips, readings, art, social media etc. on identity, belonging, and safety

Monday and Tuesday, June 11 and 12

Policing Gender and Sexuality

AIDS

Cullen, Trevor. 2003. "HIV/AIDS: 20 Years of Press Coverage." *Australian Studies in Journalism*. 12: 64-82.

Kramer, Larry. 2005. "1,112 and Counting." In *Queer Theory*, edited by I. Morland and A. Willox. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. pp.28-39.

Dowsett, Gary. 2009. "The 'Gay Plague' Revisited. AIDS and Its Enduring Moral Panic." In *Moral Panics, Sex Panics: Fear and the Fight over Sexual Rights*, edited by G. Herdt. New York: New York University Press. pp.130-156.

Documentary, *The Age of AIDS*

Sexuality

Pascoe, C. J. 2011. "*Dude You're A Fag:*" *Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. C. J. Pascoe. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Read through p. 83.

And

Dude You're A Fag

Read remaining chapters.

Selections from the graphic novel:

Dimassa, Diane. 1993. *Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist*. Cleis Press.

Wednesday, June 13

Art and Censorship

Hammer, Barbara. 2010. *Hammer! Making Movies Out of Sex And Life*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York.
Chapter: "Censorship."

Carole S. Vance. 1992. "The War on Culture." *Art in America* (September 1989) reprinted in Richard Bolton, ed., *Culture Wars: Documents from Recent Controversies in the Arts*. New York: New Press.

Moore, Kevin. 2015. "Whipping Up A Storm: How Robert Mapplethorpe Shocked America." *The Guardian*. November 17.
<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/nov/17/robert-mapplethorpe-the-perfect-moment-25-years-later>

Suggested:

For a chronology see:

Koch, Cynthia. "The Contest for American Culture: A Leadership Case Study on The NEA and NEH Funding Crisis." *Public Talk: Online Journal of Discourse Leadership*.
<http://www.upenn.edu/pnc/ptkoch.html>

Karden, Janet. 1989. *Robert Mapplethorpe: The Perfect Moment*. Institute of Contemporary Art,

University of Pennsylvania.

Thursday, June 14

Class Choice

I am keeping this class as a placeholder for a topic and readings that we will select together. By this point in the semester students will have a firm grasp of how to identify and analyze a moral panic.

Friday, June 15

Class Presentations