INFRASTRUCTURE MATTERS
POWER, PROTEST, AND THE GRID

ANTH 305  
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office: anthro 22 (281 High St)

Spring 2017  
Tuesdays 7:10-10:00pm  
room: Fisk 312  
office hours: Thursdays, 1-4pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is an anthropological exploration of infrastructure: the material grids that exist beneath society, economy, and culture. Infrastructures are the foundation upon which everyday life rests and depends; they also materialize foundational political ideals like freedom, progress, equality, and nature. Infrastructures like ports, rails, and roads embody the connections and disconnections of the globalized world. While meant to remain invisible, out of sight and out of mind, diverse infrastructures - from Michigan’s corroded pipes to mega-dams on the River Nile - have become lightning rods for political protest and demands for justice, rights, and a good life. Taking an anthropological perspective, this course asks: why has infrastructure taken on vital importance to the modern nation-state? How is infrastructure implicated in the reproduction of racial, gendered, and classed identities and inequalities? What happens when infrastructures fail? Through multi-disciplinary readings and a course-long visual research project, this course challenges students to see the world beneath their feet in new ways and to trace the material connections that define and sustain modern life itself.

REQUIRED TEXTS
Democracy’s Infrastructure: Techno-Politics & Protest After Apartheid  

Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal.  
Ashley Carse. MIT Press. 2014

The Undersea Network  

The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade  

Books are available at Broad Street Books and on reserve at Olin. All other readings will be available on Moodle and in a two-volume course pack. To order: log into your student portfolio and click on “Course Pack” under Academic Resources.
GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion questions</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Weekly (9 total)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion leading</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Twice during the semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Stories</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Once during the semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project: INFRASTORIES</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prospectus</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Due: Mar 28 (draft) &amp; Apr 11 (final)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>In class: May 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Photo-Essay</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Due: Final exam period</td>
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Participation:
This is a discussion-centered class and your participation is crucial. It is your responsibility to come to class prepared. This means having read the assigned carefully, taking time to reflect on them (use the reading guide at the end of the syllabus), selecting key concepts and passages you would like to discuss. This will allow you to be an active participant during class discussions. Remember that quality is more important than quantity in class discussion and that listening to and responding to your peers is vital for successful discussion.

Discussion questions:
All students are required to post one discussion on Moodle nine weeks during the semester. These questions should be clear, thoughtful, and (most importantly!) discussable. You can ask for clarification on key concepts (explain what you found unclear), about the methodologies used in different articles, links to current events, or about the broader implications of readings. Be sure that your questions are actually usable in class (see below on discussion leading). You will only receive credit if you post the required nine times.

Discussion leading:
Twice during the semester you will give a short opening presentation and lead the first 20-30 minutes of course discussion. These presentations should not summarize the readings. Instead, discussion leaders should (1) elaborate the main themes in the texts that the presenter believes should be the focus of class discussion and bring in the questions posted on Moodle, and (2) distribute a one-page handout for all students in the class outlining the main points and keywords/terms in the texts.

Case Stories
In pairs, you will give one 10 to 15-minute presentation on an example thematically connected to the week’s readings. While each week has a suggested topic (and recommended resources), if you would like to research and present on another issue, object, or story you may do so. Email
or meet with me about your new idea by the Thursday prior to your presentation. Your presentation should introduce the class to the topic, assuming that we have not heard of it before, and address the following questions (as appropriate): what is the historical/social context for the case-story? How, and for whom, does infrastructure become visible in this case? What do the key concepts and theoretical questions from the week’s reading tell suggest about this infrastructure?

Final Project: INFRASTOREIS

For a final project you will produce an image-essay that explores an infrastructure of your choice. This will consist of 12-15 images that you compile from a range of sources (self-taken, archival, stills from videos, maps, advertisements, artists’ depictions, journalistic etc). You should curate a set of images that tells a story that helps us to see infrastructure in new and surprising ways. Your encouraged to be creative in how you conceptualize the infrastructure at the center of your project, use course readings and case-stories as guiding examples, and explore the links (on Moodle) to Cultural Anthropology, Limn and The Funambulist for more ideas. The final form of the projects will be a page online at infrastories.wordpress.com.

For each image, write a paragraph (300-500 words) that explains what the image reveals about a social category (ie. race, gender, class, sexuality, etc) and/or a political/cultural value (ie. freedom, communication, humanity, sovereignty, borders etc). To frame your images, write an introductory essay (1,200-1,500 words) that describes the infrastructure you have chosen, situates it historically, and sets out the question that your image set explores. Be sure to draw on key concepts from course readings, lectures, and discussions in your framing essay and in your interpretation paragraphs.

The first draft of your project proposal (500-700 words) is due on March 28th – we will workshop these in class and you will turn in the complete prospectus on April 11th. This proposal should identify the infrastructure you have chosen, the social categories and cultural values that it will allow you to examine, the sources you plan to use to find images, how your project connects to course concepts, and at least 3 secondary sources you plan to use to situate your chosen infrastructure.

During the final week of class, you will give a 10-minute presentation of your project based on a sampling of 5-8 images. We will discuss each project as a class, offering constructive critique you can use to complete the project. During the prospectus workshop in class, we will discuss the rubric detailing how your projects will be evaluated.
COURSE SCHEDULE

Tue Jan 31  Introductions

Tue Feb 7  Social Structure & Structural Violence
AR Radcliffe-Brown – “Social Structure”
Teju Cole – “A True Picture of Black Skin”
Case Story: Flint Lead Water Crisis

Tue Feb 14  Extractive Infrastructure
Timothy Mitchell – “Carbon Democracy”
Jen Preston – “Neoliberal Settler Colonialism, Canada, and the Tar Sands”
Case Story: Water Protectors against the Dakota Access Pipeline

Tue Feb 21  Techno-politics of Freedom
Nikolas Rose – “Freedom”
Chris Otter – “Making Liberal Objects: British Techno-Social Relations 1800-1900”
Gilles Deleuze – “Post-Script to Societies of Control”
Case Story: Surveillance and Sousveillance

Tue Feb 28  Promises of Modernity
Gyan Prakash – “The Sign of Science”
Stephan Meischer – “‘Nkrumah’s Baby’: the Akosombo Dam and the dream of development in Ghana”
Caroline Humphrey – “Ideology in Infrastructure: Architecture and Soviet Imagination”
Penny Harvey & Hannah Knox – “The Enchantments of Infrastructure”
Case Story: China’s Ghost Cities

Tue Mar 7  Informal Infrastructures
James Scott – “The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups”
Asef Bayat – “The Quiet Encroachment of the Ordinary”
Case Story: Infra-Politics of Cairo’s Tahrir Square

Tue Mar 14 & Tue Mar 21 – No Class: Spring Break
Tue Mar 28  Splintering Urbanism
Simon Graham – “Constructing Premium Networked Spaces”
Antina Von Schnitzler - Democracy’s Infrastructure: Techno-Politics and Protest After Apartheid  
   Chapters 1-4  
Due: Prospectus First Drafts – In Class: Project Ideas Workshop

Tue Apr 4  Cyborgs and Infrastructural Assemblages
Donna Haraway – “A Cyborg Manifesto Science Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century”
Karen Barad – “Re(con)figuring Space, Time, and Matter”
In Class: Visual Research Resources & Strategies at Wesleyan Libraries - Susanne Javorski, Art Librarian

Tue Apr 11  Ecologies of Infrastructure
Ashley Carse - Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology, and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal  
   Chapters: 1, 3-6, 8, 12-13  
Case Story: Watering New York
Due: Project Prospectus

Tue Apr 18  Hyper-Mobility
Nicole Starosielski - The Undersea Network  
   Chapters: Intro, 1, 3-4  
Case Story: Are airports places?

Tue Apr 25  Policing Movement
Simone Browne – “Branding Blackness: Biometric Technology and the Surveillance of Blackness”
Junaid Rana - "The Racial Infrastructure of the Terror-Industrial Complex"
Miriam Ticktin – “Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders”
Case Story: Reworking Border Cities with Architect Teddy Cruz

Tue May 2  Logistics of the Global
Deborah Cowen – The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade  
   Chapters: Intro, 1-3  
John Lanchester – “The Robots Are Coming”
Case Story: Amazon/Walmart and the Labor-Logistics of Fulfilment

Tue May 9  Presentations
READING GUIDE

As you read the texts for this course, consider the following questions to guide you:

OBJECT - What is this text about, empirically? What is being studied as the object? Where is it located? What is the scale - nation, region, city, institution, person? What is the time of the study? Is there a comparison? of what?

CONTEXT – What conversation is this text part of? What other academic research, widely held beliefs, or world events does it cite? How does it stand in relation to these? Who are its friends/enemies?

ARGUMENT & CONCEPTS - In your own words, what is the main argument and goal of the writing? What are the key concepts used? How are they defined? Are concepts challenged, revised, or invented? How?

METHOD & EVIDENCE - What evidence is provided for the argument? What method was used? How was the data generated? How was the data analyzed? How were people grouped or categorized?

ANALYSIS - What is new and/or important about this article? What assumptions shaped the inquiry? On what grounds could the main argument be challenged? What data would strengthen the text or challenged?
COURSE POLICIES

Attendance
You are expected to come to class on time and ready to contribute to class discussion in a positive, relevant, and respectful way. You may miss one class without explanation or penalty. Each unexcused absence after one will lower your final grade by half a grade (ie. B+ to B, A to A-). If you think you have a valid reason for missing class (emergency, health problem etc) please contact your class dean/other relevant Wesleyan official and have that person contact me. Excused absences are only granted when a Wesleyan official contacts me on your behalf (not when you send me an email).

Screens
Electronic devices (laptops, phones, tablets etc.) may not be used during class discussions without express permission. This means you must use the course pack or print course readings. Printed readings make it easier to mono-task, reading with fewer distractions and focusing on argumentation. Taking notes by hand improves retention, eliminates distractions from the classroom, and contributes to more participatory discussion.

Students with Disabilities
Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Acto of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey [patey@wesleyan.edu] in Disability Resources located in North College, room 021, or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Academic Integrity
Wesleyan’s values and standards of academic conduct are embodied and detailed by the Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code, such as giving or obtaining assistance without acknowledgement, plagiarism, and the willful falsification of data, information, or citations, are reported to and dealt with by the Honor Board. We will cover using citations in researched work during class on November 1. For details regarding the Honor Code, Honor Board, and judicial procedures, see:
http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/studentconduct.html
For details about what constitutes plagiarism and illustrative examples, see:
http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html