



Culture Incribed

The Newsletter of the Department of Anthropology

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Anthropologist of the Fortnight

Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)

On Friday, October 8, Jacques Derrida died at a Paris hospital of pancreatic cancer. This French, post-structuralist philosopher had a profound influence on the development of anthropological theory. The following was what the press said of this influential thinker.

Derrida's theory of **deconstruction** asserted that all writing was full of confusion and contradiction, and that the author's intent could not overcome the inherent contradictions of language itself, robbing text of truthfulness, absolute meaning and permanence. The concept was eventually applied to the whole gamut of arts and social sciences, including linguistics, anthropology, political science, even architecture.

While he had a huge following, he was the target of as much anger as admiration. For many he was the personification of a French school of thinking they felt was undermining many of the traditional standards of classical education, and one they often associated with divisive political causes.

Literary critics broke texts into isolated passages and phrases to find hidden meanings. Advocates of feminism, gay rights and Third World causes embraced the method as an instrument to reveal the prejudices and inconsistencies of Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Freud and other "dead white male" icons of Western culture....

Towards the end of the 20th century deconstruction became a code word of intellectual discourse, much as existentialism and structuralism - two other fashionable, slippery philosophies that also emerged from France after World War II - had been before it. Derrida and his followers were unwilling - some say unable - to define deconstruction with any precision, so it has remained misunderstood, or interpreted in endlessly contradictory ways. (The New York Times, Los Angeles Times 10/11/04)

Anthropological Terms of Interest

Ramadan is the name of the ninth month of the Muslim year. Ordained in the Qur'an, **Ramadan** is the month long commemoration of the prophet's reception of the divine revelation recorded in the Qur'an. The fast is an exacting act of deeply personal worship in which Muslims seek a richer perception of God. It begins with the sighting of the new moon (October 15th this year), after which abstention from eating and drinking, as well as abstaining from sexual intercourse, is obligatory every day between dawn and sunset. Fasting is one of the five pillars (obligations) of Islam. (Adapted from: www.masjidannur.com)

AnthroGeek

By Mike Mullooly

Student: Hey AnthroGeek, how destructive is Deconstruction?

AnthroGeek: In 1981, Barbara Johnson wrote that "deconstruction" is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis' itself, which etymologically means "to undo"—a virtual synonym for "to de-construct"... If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not the text, but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text's critical difference from itself."

Student: Hey AnthroGeek, it sounds like you are making an unequivocal claim of one mode of signification over another.

Images on paper version only

Anthro Student Contributions:

Light the Night Walk

By Tara Ders

On Saturday, October 16th I took part in a fundraiser for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. My husband and I raised over \$100 and for our efforts we received a pasta dinner, a t-shirt, and a balloon with a light. We also gained the feeling of being a part of something to help other people in need. It was amazing how many people participated in the walk and all the money that was raised. I believe approximately \$150,000 was raised in the central valley alone. As we were all making our way down Shaw Avenue, cars that drove by were honking and people were hollering in support. It must have been an amazing sight to see from outside the group of walkers. I am already thinking about next year, hoping that I will be able to organize a team so we can raise even more money for the people who suffer from this terrible disease.

International Culture Night

By Crystal Alvarez

On October 1st, I attended the International Culture Night. It is an informative and fascinating event held one night a year on campus, and it's free! It is a night for culture, dance, and musical performances and an opportunity to showcase the diversity of our community. This year, as usual, there was not an empty seat in the house! Such performances as Spanish Flamenco, Chinese Moving Meditation, and Polynesian dances were presented. By attending this event next time, you will be able to celebrate the "diversity of all people everywhere and the values that each individual brings to our University community". For more information contact Associated Students at CSU Fresno (312-4780).

Up Coming Cultural Event

Stories of Armenia and It's People 1892-1922

The Armenian Studies Program cordially invites you to attend a lecture by Lucille Aparcar. **WHEN:** Tuesday, October 26, 2004 * 7:30 PM **WHERE:** Alice Peters Auditorium, University Business Center. Free and Open to the Public. For more information please contact the Armenian Studies Program office at 278-2669.

AnthroClub Minutes

By Crystal Alvarez, Club Secretary

On October the 7th, the Anthropology club meeting was held in the Peters Building room 102. There were over 20 people in attendance, all of whom enjoyed junk food provided by Jim Mullooly! We discussed the next event we will be supporting. The "Welcome to America" party at Stone Soup on December 18th, will be a wonderful way to help newcomers in our community. Attend the next meeting to find out more, and to learn how you can be involved! Meetings are now every other Tuesday at 5pm in the anthropology office (Peters 389). **The next meeting will be on November 2nd at 5pm.** Plan on attending and don't forget your \$5 dues.

Important New Club

-- Cineculture --

Cineculture is a new club, which will host a cultural film every Friday night from 7-9 p.m. in the Kremen School with discussion afterwards. The films are open to the campus and community and are free of charge.

WHEN: Friday, October 22nd, 7-9 pm.

WHERE: ED 170, Kremen School of Education

FILM: Hmong Voices

Description: A collection of minidocumentaries, which are first-hand accounts of Central Valley Hmong whose lives were linked to the Vietnam War and the Secret War in Laos. Discussion by the filmmaker/participants will follow.

This film was produced by Fresno Unified Title III and the Center for Multicultural Cooperation. For additional information, please contact Denni Blum at 278-0248 or e-mail <dblum@csufresno.edu>

It's Go Time! Homecoming 2004

Next week (10/28-10/30) join the Fresno State Alumni Association, students and friends for exciting event promoting BULLDOG loyalty, pride and spirit! For details call 278-ALUM or visit < www.fresnostatealumni.com >.

Contributing Editorial Board

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