



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Social and
Political Science

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

SUMMER READING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TEACHING STAFF 2026

BOOKS

Antiblackness and Global Health: A Response to Ebola in the Colonial Wake

Pluto Press <https://www.plutobooks.com/product/antiblackness-and-global-health/>

Lioba Hirsch

Antiblackness and Global Health offers a major new account of the 2014-2016 West African Ebola crisis and a radical perspective on the racial politics of global health.

Lioba Hirsch traces the legacies of colonialism across the landscape of global health in Sierra Leone, showing how this history underpinned the international response to Ebola. The book moves from the material and atmospheric traces of colonialism and enslavement in Freetown, to the forms of knowledge presented in colonial archives and in contemporary expert accounts, to disease control and care practices.

As the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed, health inequalities around the world disproportionately affect people of African descent. This book aims to equip critical scholars, medical and humanitarian practitioners, policy makers and health activists with the tools and knowledge to challenge antiblackness in global health practice and politics. The book argues that Black Studies can inform future research on medical interventions in Africa by unpacking postcolonial silences, centring Black perspectives and highlighting the endurance of colonial infrastructures in the present.

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Translating Worlds, Defending Land: Collaborations for Indigenous Rights and Environmental Politics in Amazonia

Stanford University Press <https://www.sup.org/books/anthropology/translating-worlds-defending-land>

Casey High

In 2019, after decades of ecological damage from oil, Waorani people took to the streets of Amazonian Ecuador to protest drilling on their ancestral lands. Working with international activists, lawyers, and other Indigenous groups, they successfully sued the government for selling oil concessions without prior consent. Placing their struggle for territorial autonomy in the global spotlight, this unprecedented legal victory for environmental rights by an Indigenous people reflected the new forms of collaboration emerging in contemporary Amazonia.

Translating Worlds, Defending Land explores how Waorani collaborations, whether with environmentalists or academic researchers, bring about new possibilities, challenges, and imaginative horizons.

Based on fieldwork over a period of twenty-five years, Casey High interrogates what these engagements mean for Indigenous communities and how they offer critical reflection on

collaboration as a concept, method, and practice. The alliances, misunderstandings, and conflicts that emerge in these contexts challenge the assumption that productive collaborations reflect—or require—shared purposes, generating important implications for an engaged anthropology open to reconsidering what constitutes ethnographic knowledge and who it is for. As some young Waorani adults become not just community leaders or environmental citizens, but also skilled researchers and ethnographers, translating between Indigenous understandings of land and the Western language conservation, they create a powerful new voice in international environmental politics.

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Vote of Faith: Democracy, Desire, and the Turbulent Lives of Priest Politicians

Fordham University Press <https://fordhampress.com/vote-of-faith-hb-9781531509088.html>

Maya Mayblin

What does desire have to reveal about the nature of power? Through a detailed focus on the lives and loves of Catholic priests as they enter the profane world of party politics, Maya Mayblin explores the complex intersection of democracy, patriarchy, and religiosity in Brazil. For over a hundred years, Catholic priests have been running for government office, challenging Brazil's constitutional separation of church and state and its self-image as a modern, secular nation. Priests find themselves walking a tightrope between religious and secular demands in one of Brazil's poorest regions. *Vote of Faith* is a beautifully crafted ethnography based upon decades of fieldwork that tells the story of the ambiguous and frequently transgressive relationship between Catholicism and state governance, a relationship ultimately mediated by kinship, gender, and sexuality.

For the protagonists of *Vote of Faith*, democracy becomes a sphere in which divine will and human ambition compete with one another, a tension embedded in the vernacular concept of faith. In the Brazilian context, faith signifies a complex set of assumptions about the nature of the world, assumptions derived not just from Christianity, but also from Afro-Brazilian and secular ideas about power, causation, and human agency. In combining ethnographic, theological, and feminist perspectives, *Vote of Faith* places desiring bodies at the very heart of Catholicism's complex connection to multiple forms of power and offers provocative new angles on the question of the secular.

The first work by an anthropologist to explore the unique phenomenon of the mayor-priest, this book offers an essential new angle on emerging debates about secularity as the condition of separation of the religious from the political. Brimming with originality, *Vote of Faith* is required reading for those interested in the gendered and sexual dimensions of the secular, the plasticity of religion, and the fundamental nature of the world's largest religious institution.

OTHER

Anthropologies of Health Policy

Anthropology & Medicine 31 (1-2): 1-17.

Kaveri Qureshi & Marlee Tichenor. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13648470.2024.2373012>

In this introduction to our special issue, we take a wide view of the history and epistemic stakes of anthropological and ethnographic approaches to health policy. Drawing on the history of critical medical anthropology, the anthropology of policy, and critical policy studies, we show

how anthropologies of health policy are particularly essential in this current moment, as policy production becomes increasingly abstracted and even more entwined with specific forms of evidence making. Taken together, the contributors of this special issue argue that anthropology's interventions into health policy are essential in three ways. First, they shed light on the practices of policy 'communities', the pragmatic parameters under which they work, and the central logics under which health policy actors are operating. Second, they examine the effects of policy implementation upon those intended to be the subjects of health policy, highlighting the effects of policy for those marginalised by gender, race, and caste. Here, anthropology provides a view into the 'lived experience' of those targeted by health policy, but it also demands that anthropologists provide 'counter-stories' and 'counter-evidences' that dismantle narrow systems of policy knowledge production. Finally, anthropological attention provides an essential lens into the things that carry over in the act of policy reform—the past reverberations and imperial inheritances. Together with our contributors, we call for anthropologies of health policy that work to highlight and dismantle such inheritances.

The full special issue can be explored here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/canm20/31/1-2>

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(Im)mobile intimacies: Commodities and marriage at the crossroads of Asia
Feminist Anthropology 6(1):e12156 <https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12156>
Grace H. Zhou

This article follows traders and entrepreneurs that live and work between Kyrgyzstan and China's northwestern region of Xinjiang. Looking specifically at Islamic marriage and business partnerships forged between persecuted Uyghurs and their Uzbek partners, it argues that commodity-mediated forms of transnational intimacy create spaces of safety and possibility in the face of political oppression, carceral violence, and gendered limitations. These transnational mobilities are forged in spite of structural immobilities. Taking seriously the imbrications of objects and people, it advances a view of intimacy as a multi-scalar, trans-subjective, and multiply entangled field of relationality.

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Cinematic Word Machines: Grove Press Pictures an Incurable World
Chapter in *Film as World Literature*, edited by Robin Truth Goodman. *Bloomsbury* (2025)
<https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/film-as-world-literature-9798765113400/>
Richard Baxstrom

Between 1949 and 1986 Grove Press published in the United States a range of otherwise diverse works that collapsed the formal and aesthetic differences between literature and cinema and undermined the presumed coherence and singularity of the subject and the world. This chapter will establish this claim through a close analysis of several representative Grove publications: William S. Burroughs's 'Nova Trilogy' (*The Soft Machine* [1961/1966], *The Ticket That Exploded* [1962/1967], *Nova Express* [1964]); Marguerite Duras's *The Ravishing of Lol Stein* (1966); and Samuel Beckett's *Film* (1964). Cinema and literature bind in a dialectic of treason in these works, dissolving the coherence and singularity of each domain by oscillating between and within them, transgressing what we mean by 'cinema' or 'literature.' Owner Barney Rosset's approach to running Grove Press is a key element in grasping this claim as he actively operated as a curator seeking to 'curate the incurable.' He did this by publishing works that blurred the lines between technologies of expression and that expressed the incurability of the modern subject via forms of aesthetic self-alienation. This constitutes Grove's widest philosophical and aesthetic legacy.

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Intimate polarisation: political divisions within everyday family relationships in Colombia

Contemporary Politics (online first) <https://doi-org.eux.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/13569775.2025.2502640>

Gwen Burnyeat

Political polarisation became a dominant concern in Colombia following the 2016 referendum in which a peace accord signed with the FARC guerrillas was rejected, and subsequent electoral processes in which the referendum identity divides were recycled and evolved. This article explores lived experiences of political divisions within intimate relationships in Colombia, and proposes an anthropological approach to complement the political science-dominated field of polarisation studies. It uses ethnographic storytelling to reveal how political divisions are enmeshed in myriad intersecting divides, including class, race, experiences of armed conflict and interpersonal histories, and draws on the anthropology of politics, ethnographies of the Colombian conflict and feminist scholarship to propose the concept of ‘intimate polarisation’: a political division felt, perceived or otherwise experienced within intimate, everyday relationships. This approach complicates the binary and normative assumptions inherent in the concept of ‘polarisation’ and invites a rethinking of the category and its political effects.

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Army of the Vulnerable: Raising it, Fighting with it, Caring for it in Postimperial Britain

American Ethnologist 52(3):309-323 <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.70003>

Alexander Edmonds

Since ending conscription in 1963, Britain has fought its “small wars” with professional soldiers from deprived areas of the country, many recruited under the age of 18. During the 21st-century war on terror, these personnel were deemed vulnerable, at heightened risk of psychosocial harms, and entitled to more protection. Vulnerable soldiers bring a dangerous vulnerability into the state. While postimperial Britain relied on them to fill infantry units in an army with chronic personnel shortfalls, they pose thorny political and governance problems that I examine in three military spheres: recruitment, warfare, and mental health care. State violence is often seen as causing vulnerability in marginal groups, but when the state's own agents become vulnerable, they can disrupt its very capacity to exercise legitimate violence.

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Right to mobility, right to belong: Bottom-up citizenship practices of Syrian refugees in Europe

Migration Studies 12(4): 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnae047>

Ann-Christin Zuntz & Alessandro Columbu

Through a small-scale interview study with Syrians with Swedish citizenship who have either relocated to, or are regularly visiting, the UK, this article sheds light on the nexus between mobility and bottom-up citizenship practices of refugees in Europe. We mobilize the twin concepts of ‘affective’ and ‘instrumental’ citizenship to highlight how refugees’ quest for belonging and safety challenges usual assumptions about displacement: first, our data defy push-pull models of migration, showing that quick access to naturalization and generous welfare policies attracted some Syrians to Sweden, but were not enough to make them stay. The fact that for those leaving Sweden, the UK was only one possible destination—with other Syrians moving to the Global South—calls into question a hierarchy of desirable destinations

with Western and Northern Europe at the top. Second, seen through the lens of affect, refugees' and host states' interactions are not merely legalistic or bureaucratic: while our interlocutors perceived Swedish welfare interventions and political discourse as top-down affective control, they also engaged in grassroots practices of affective citizenship, devising alternative forms of belonging through mobility. Ultimately, affective citizenship can inform ambitions to stay, or move on, regardless of how affluent host countries are. Third, while our protagonists' back-and-forth movements point to the non-linearity of refugee journeys, their use of the UK's EU Settlement Scheme as a deferred 'insurance policy' highlights the complexity of temporalities of displacement. Legal security may not be sufficient to ending refugees' lingering feelings of insecurity, and thus not preclude further mobility-based strategies.

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Detailing Scenes of Ordinary Grief across Ethnography and Poetry

Chapter in *A Matter of Detail. Anthropology, Philosophy, and Aesthetics*. Edited by Andrew Brandel, Veena Das, Sandra Laugier and Perig Pitrou. Toronto University Press (2025).

<https://utppublishing.com/doi/book/10.3138/9781487550646>

Lotte Segal

With this chapter I ask how grief becomes ordinary? This question has been a stowaway in my work for many years of examining how family members, spouses, mothers, sons and daughters have dealt with the violent loss of their kin in Palestine. I have hitherto struggled to make sense of the way in which grief in this context is somehow always present. Thinking about how I learned about ordinary grief in Palestine, I have in re-reading some of my material been struck by the role played by details so small that they might easily be overlooked but which nonetheless mean the world for how my interlocutors inhabit their ordinary world *with* grief, and do not simply *overcome* it. Overall, the chapter hopes to unsettle the assumption that just because something is ordinary it is somehow less painful.

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“What Kind of Hindu Are You?” Muscular Hinduism and the Making of Majorities and Minorities

Chapter in *Studies in Religion and the Everyday*, edited by Farhana Ibrahim, Oxford University Press (2024). <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/studies-in-religion-and-the-everyday-9780198902782?cc=gb&lang=en&>

Moyukh Chatterjee

Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) is often interpreted as the perversion of religion for politics. However, this idea can confound rather than clarify the question of religion (and politics) in India because it is based on the idea that religion is a fixed and immutable theory about the world rather than a form of being in the world. Rather than assume that Hindu supremacy is a perversion of religion, the chapter suggests that Hindu supremacy as performed by Bajrang Dal activists in Ahmedabad, Gujarat is based on crafting a particular kind of everyday religion in public within secular states like India that reinforces and establishes majorities and minorities. Here, religion is not a fixed set of rules but deeply implicated in the genealogy of religion as a form of life in postcolonial states and as a resource for making permanent majorities and minorities in the public sphere, which are recognized as such by the state and the wider public.

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Historical Vertigo: Art, Censorship and the Contested History of Bangladesh

Chapter in *Freedoms of Speech: Anthropological Perspectives on Language, Ethics, and*

Power, edited by Matei Candea, Taras Fedirko, Paolo Heywood and Fiona Wright. University of Toronto Press (2025). Pp. 303-318.

<https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.3138/9781487552978/html>

Lotte Hoek

In this chapter, I analyse the unexpected closure and censure of the exhibition 'Age of Saturn' (Omar Chowdhury) in Bangladesh 2016. Taking my cue from Age of Saturn's distinctly unreliable narrator, I theorize the experience of censorship as a dizzying, disorienting feeling that impels and propels, rather than stalls, one's unsteady account of the past. To do so, I present a close reading of the content and closure of Age of Saturn and show how these elicited a set of disorientations that befell artist, collaborators, spectators, and authorities, as well as myself as I tried to narrate and analyse these events. I describe that disorientation as "historical vertigo": a condition of disorientation that befalls one when narrating a history that can only be experienced and told within the terms of its own repression or censorship.

#Viral Phenomenon Hero Alom: Social Media, Bad Taste, and Digital Politics in Bangladesh
Journal of Bangladesh Studies 26(2):46-54 <https://doi.org/10.1163/27715086-02602008>

Lotte Hoek & Paul James Gomes

Hero Alom is a Bangladeshi media entrepreneur whose online content has generated a huge, often negative, response. The response to his public presence, frequently expressed in a violent, gendered, and classed rhetoric of taste, appears outsized compared to the low production value music videos and short films he produces. In this article we analyse this virulent response to Hero Alom's content as an index of broader transitions in media infrastructure in Bangladesh that has reorganised the possibilities for crowd politics in the country. We suggest that in the conjoined transformation of media infrastructure and legal controls on public speech, Hero Alom uses the under-determined aspects of new media to produce a style of publicness that gathers online and offline crowds of supporters and detractors. Part of digital circulation machines, his style of publicness provides insight into the centrality of publicity to public order and political presence in Bangladesh

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When do forests matter?

Environment and Planning D: Society and Space:02637758251374799

<https://doi.org/10.1177/02637758251374799>

Zeynep Oguz

This article traces how forests in Turkey acquire meaning through their entanglement with nationalism, securitization, and racialized governance. The catastrophic wildfires of 2021, which destroyed over 150,000 hectares along the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts, became a site where ecological devastation was quickly translated into nationalist paranoia. Refugees and Kurdish insurgents were accused of arson, and fire was narrated as evidence of invasion, conspiracy, and betrayal. These claims drew on deeper histories in which forests have been managed through militarized strategies—burned during counterinsurgency operations, surveilled for signs of fugitivity, and recast as threatened zones in the service of territorial control. Building on the concept of "political forests," the article shows how wooded landscapes in Turkey function as terrains of belonging, where ecological crisis intensifies nationalist claims, legitimizes violence, and reinforces exclusionary forms of governance. The 2021 fires illuminate the ways forests matter as stages for securing identity, policing movement, and naturalizing punitive state power.

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Towards a Minor Logistics: Community and Ecology in a Watershed Project
Theory, Culture & Society (online first) <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764251364378>
Sophie Haines

This article proposes a reconfiguration of logistics thinking, through attention to water provisioning and protection in the context of diverse economies and ecologies. With reference to a community-based watershed management project in rural Belize, I discuss how elements of this initiative at once accompany extractive resource management and reveal its limits and alternatives. Challenging a teleology of optimization, the participants' coordination efforts and ethical negotiations draw attention to logistics in an alternative register: historically grounded; relational; involving compromise among people and with more-than-human agencies. This rural water system is not historically positioned 'before' the reach of globalized supply chains – indeed its landscape is steeped in enduring colonial-extractive legacies. Instead, I suggest a typology of logistics (including community and ecological forms) to account for the uneven effects and percolations of industrial logistics, and for the situated politics of moving, sustaining, and mediating water, people and ideas across fields of difference.

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Getting Your Ducks in a Row: Marriage, Protection, and Love without Regret in Virginia
Cultural Anthropology 40(2):301-27. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca40.2.05>
Siobhan Magee

Marriage, as a topic of ethnographic and historical exploration, ties together kinship, politics, economics, and faith in complex and significant ways. In the United States, federal and state governments have used legal marriage to create insiders and outsiders along lines of "race," sexuality, and religion. Those who have not been allowed to marry a consenting partner of their choice have been cast as dangerous, and as threats to the nation. Drawing on fieldwork in the Virginia city of Charlottesville, I argue that protection is a key idiom through which to understand marriage and kinship in the United States. The research took place at the time of the 2017 white nationalist attack on Charlottesville, and discussions of marriage and kinship resonated with wider political questions about what it means to be safe, and how kinship often means loving against and caring against—protecting against—dangers that threaten those closest to us.

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"People are afraid of getting injections": feasibility of community-placed atropine auto-injectors in treating organophosphate poisoning in Sri Lanka
Clinical Toxicology (available soon at <https://doi.org/10.1080/15563650.2025.2571456>)
Upul Wickramasinghe, Janet E. Perkins, Alice Street, Champika Samaranayake,
Theekshana Balasuriya, Erandi Dissanayke, Michael Eddleston, Jane Brandt Sørensen

Introduction: Organophosphorus insecticide poisoning remains a major problem in rural low- and middle-income communities. Atropine auto-injectors are used for organophosphorus nerve agent poisoning, but not organophosphorus insecticide poisoning. We explore the social and practical feasibility of introducing atropine auto-injectors in Sri Lankan villages to initiate first-line treatment for acute organophosphorus insecticide poisoning; understand how auto-injectors might be best integrated into the social and spatial context of rural communities with high levels of organophosphorus insecticide use and poisoning. **Methods:** With an ethnographic approach, we combined semi-structured interviews with community members ($n = 18$) and healthcare workers ($n = 9$), focus group discussions ($n = 5$), participatory mapping ($n = 3$), oral history interviews ($n = 7$), and ethnographic observations in three rural villages. A collaborative

thematic data analysis was performed alongside continuous discussions within the global, interdisciplinary research team. **Results:** Acute organophosphorus insecticide poisoning was not perceived as a major public health concern that would demand an urgent intervention in communities. Following COVID-19 vaccination interventions, findings showed a lack of trust related to new medical injection technologies. Consequently, finding people to handle auto-injectors who had the capacity and willingness to take responsibility and were trusted by the community is a major challenge. **Discussion:** Ethnographic research methods are important and relevant in planning and implementing community health interventions. They contribute to making health interventions more effective and sustainable by analyzing context-dependent and often intractable complex health problems. **Conclusions:** While our findings do not support introducing auto-injectors in the selected communities, it suggests placing them in the ambulances used to transport patients who have ingested pesticides. To further explore the need and feasibility of auto-injectors, similar situational, ethnographic analysis should be conducted in other parts of Sri Lanka and low-and middle-income countries with high numbers of acute organophosphorus insecticide poisoning and limited infrastructure facilities.

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Towards neo-structural socialism? Social profit and dependency in Venezuelan state enterprise.

Economy and Society, 54(3), 457–479. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2025.2565072>

Aaron Kappeler

This paper explores the social profit – a category derived from neo-structuralist economics – as a tool of planning in Venezuelan state enterprises. Drawing on fieldwork on an industrial farm in the western plains, it investigates the potential of this category for liberating Venezuela from its reliance on petrodollars, while facilitating endogenous development. As a metric for resource allocation and cost accounting, the social profit orients the productive and commercial activities of state enterprises towards the recycling of rentier surpluses, alongside provision of goods and services which can defray costs of operation. Yet, contrary to officially stated aims of building a socialist economy at the service of human needs, participant-observation in these sites reveals that the device does not fully negate the tensions associated with the realization of value and that struggles over wages and the intensity of labour continually surface in the enterprises.

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Nurture together: Trauma-informed and culturally safe perinatal support for migrant mothers.

Frontiers in Global Women's Health, Volume 7 - 2026

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fgwh.2026.1690896>

Anna Beesley and Lucy Lowe

British immigration policies are intended to create a “hostile environment” for “undesirable” migrants within the UK and a deterrence to anyone beyond its borders. The seeping of these policies into everyday life, including healthcare provision, for all migrants has been well documented. This article draws on ethnographic research with migrant women who have precarious immigration statuses in Glasgow, which explored interwoven experiences of maternal health, migration and motherhood. Building on this research, the authors co-developed “Nurture Together”, a participatory project with migrant women and Amma Birth Companions, which created trauma-informed and culturally safe peer support resources for infant feeding. Drawing on both projects, this paper highlights how the hostile environment and the subsequent isolation, discrimination, and fear of unfamiliar social and medical environments

can compound the trauma experienced by many women during and after migration to the UK. We emphasise the importance of communities of care for mothers who are not surrounded by their usual perinatal support networks.