How to Think Like an Anthropologist

Matthew Engelke

What is anthropology? What can it tell us about the world? Why, in short, does it matter? For well over a century, cultural anthropologists have circled the globe, from Papua New Guinea to suburban England and from China to California, uncovering surprising facts and insights about how humans organize their lives and articulate their values. In the process, anthropology has done more than any other discipline to reveal what culture means—and why it matters.

MATTHEW ENGELKE is professor of anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

“How to Think Like an Anthropologist is a terrific introduction to the field. Beautifully written, winningly told, and provocative, the book captures the basic feature of the discipline: that anthropology is a way of seeing and thinking. Anthropology invites you to see yourself as someone else might see you. In this way, it is the most world-changing of fields.”

—T. H. Luhrmann, author of When God Talks Back

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“Sims’s book is rich in conceptual tools for analyzing school reform movements. It offers a brilliant explanation for their persistent failures.”
—Jean Lave, University of California, Berkeley

**Disruptive Fixation**

In New York City in 2009, a new kind of public school opened its doors to its inaugural class of middle schoolers. Conceived by a team of game designers and progressive educational reformers, it promised to reinvent the classroom for the digital age. Ethnographer Christo Sims documented the life of the school from its planning stages to the graduation of its first eighth-grade class. *Disruptive Fixation* is his account of how this “school for digital kids” reverted to a more conventional type of schooling with rote learning, an emphasis on discipline, and traditional hierarchies of authority.

**CHRISTO SIMS** is assistant professor of communication and a founding member of the Studio for Ethnographic Design at the University of California, San Diego.

“Opening windows onto spheres of life and clinical care that few have examined, Song’s stunning work will be influential for years to come.”
—Matthew Kohrman, Stanford University

**Biomedical Odysseys**

Thousands of people from more than eighty countries have traveled to China since 2001 to undergo fetal cell transplantation. Galvanized by the potential of stem and fetal cells to regenerate damaged neurons and restore lost bodily functions, people grappling with paralysis and neurodegenerative disorders have ignored the warnings of doctors and scientists back home in order to stake their futures on a Chinese experiment. *Biomedical Odysseys* looks at why and how these individuals have entrusted their lives to Chinese neurosurgeons operating on the forefront of experimental medicine, in a world where technologies and risks move faster than laws can keep pace.

**PRISCILLA SONG** is assistant professor of anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis.
“An incisive, illuminating look at the technopolitics of water in South Africa.”
—James Ferguson, author of *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*

**Democracy’s Infrastructure**

In the past decade, South Africa’s “miracle transition” has been interrupted by waves of protests in relation to basic services such as water and electricity. Less visibly, the postapartheid period has witnessed widespread illicit acts involving infrastructure, including the nonpayment of service charges, the bypassing of metering devices, and illegal connections to services. *Democracy’s Infrastructure* shows how such administrative links to the state became a central political terrain during the antiapartheid struggle and how this terrain persists in the postapartheid present.

**ANTINA VON SCHNITZLER** is an anthropologist and assistant professor in the Graduate Program in International Affairs at The New School.

“Joanne Randa Nucho brilliantly captures the everyday acts that continually reinvent sectarianism and she challenges the assumption that sectarian communities are old and natural.”
—Suad Joseph, University of California, Davis

**Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon**

What causes violent conflicts around the Middle East? All too often, the answer is sectarianism—popularly viewed as a timeless and intractable force that leads religious groups to conflict. In *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon*, Joanne Randa Nucho shows how wrong this perspective can be. Through in-depth research with local governments, NGOs, and political parties in Beirut, she demonstrates how sectarianism is actually recalibrated on a daily basis through the provision of essential services and infrastructures, such as electricity, medical care, credit, and the planning of bridges and roads.

**JOANNE RANDA NUCHO** is a Mellon-Chau postdoctoral fellow in anthropology at Pomona College.
“Dow’s magnificent work sets a new course for the future of reproductive studies and the social study of ethics, kinship, and the environment.”
—Sarah Franklin, University of Cambridge

Making a Good Life

Making a Good Life takes a timely look at the ideas and values that inform how people think about reproduction and assisted reproductive technologies. In an era of heightened scrutiny about parenting and reproduction, fears about environmental degradation, and the rise of the biotechnology industry, Katharine Dow delves into the reproductive ethics of those who do not have a personal stake in assisted reproductive technologies, but who are building lives inspired and influenced by environmentalism and concerns about the natural world’s future.

KATHARINE DOW is a research associate in the Reproductive Sociology Research Group at the University of Cambridge.

“Digital Keywords is fascinating, erudite, informative, and delightful. This is a cabinet of present-day wonders to which I’m sure I’ll return many times.”
—Todd Gitlin, Columbia University

Digital Keywords

In the age of search, keywords increasingly organize research, teaching, and even thought itself. Inspired by Raymond Williams’s 1976 classic Keywords, the timely collection Digital Keywords gathers pointed, provocative short essays on more than two dozen keywords by leading and rising digital media scholars from the areas of anthropology, digital humanities, history, political science, philosophy, religious studies, rhetoric, science and technology studies, and sociology. Digital Keywords examines and critiques the rich lexicon animating the emerging field of digital studies.

BENJAMIN PETERS is assistant professor of communication at the University of Tulsa and affiliated faculty at the Information Society Project at Yale Law School.
“Boyd shows here in compelling style how our possession of culture . . . explains the highs, lows, and contradictions in our behaviors.”
—Mark Pagel, author of Wired for Culture

A Different Kind of Animal

Human beings are a very different kind of animal. We have evolved to become the most dominant species on Earth. We have a larger geographical range and process more energy than any other creature alive. This astonishing transformation is usually explained in terms of cognitive ability—people are just smarter than all the rest. But in this compelling book, Robert Boyd argues that culture—our ability to learn from each other—has been the essential ingredient of our remarkable success.

ROBERT BOYD is Origins Professor in the School of Human Evolution and Social Change at Arizona State University. His books include How Humans Evolved, Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution, and The Origin and Evolution of Cultures. He lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

“Peter Ungar offers a compelling account of how the interaction of teeth, diet and environment has shaped human evolution.”
—Louise Humphrey, Nature

Evolution’s Bite

Whether we realize it or not, we carry in our mouths the legacy of our evolution. In Evolution’s Bite, noted paleoanthropologist Peter Ungar brings together for the first time cutting-edge advances in understanding human evolution and climate change with new approaches to uncovering dietary clues from fossil teeth to present a remarkable investigation into the ways that teeth—their shape, chemistry, and wear—reveal how we came to be.

PETER S. UNGAR is Distinguished Professor and director of the Environmental Dynamics Program at the University of Arkansas. He is the author of Teeth: A Very Short Introduction and Mammal Teeth: Origin, Evolution, and Diversity and the editor of Evolution of the Human Diet: The Known, the Unknown, and the Unknowable. He lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas.
Kevin Laland’s ambitious new book is, to my mind, the best account yet…. [R]ichly rewarding.
—Steven Rose, Times Higher Education

The Social Origins of Language

The origins of human language remain hotly debated. Despite growing appreciation of cognitive and neural continuity between humans and other animals, an evolutionary account of human language—in its modern form—remains as elusive as ever. The Social Origins of Language provides a novel perspective on this question and charts a new path toward its resolution.

Robert M. Seyfarth is professor of psychology and Dorothy L. Cheney is professor of biology at the University of Pennsylvania. They are the coauthors of How Monkeys See the World: Inside the Mind of Another Species and Baboon Metaphysics: The Evolution of a Social Mind.

Darwin’s Unfinished Symphony

Humans possess an extraordinary capacity for cultural production, from the arts and language to science and technology. How did the human mind—and the uniquely human ability to devise and transmit culture—evolve from its roots in animal behavior? Darwin’s Unfinished Symphony presents a captivating new theory of human cognitive evolution. This compelling and accessible book reveals how culture is not just the magnificent end product of an evolutionary process that produced a species unlike all others—it is also the key driving force behind that process.

Kevin N. Laland is professor of behavioral and evolutionary biology at the University of St Andrews. His books include Social Learning: An Introduction to Mechanisms, Methods, and Models and Niche Construction: The Neglected Process in Evolution (both Princeton).
The Iranian Metaphysicals

What do the occult sciences, séances with the souls of the dead, and appeals to saintly powers have to do with rationality? Since the late nineteenth century, modernizing intellectuals, religious leaders, and statesmen in Iran have attempted to curtail many such practices as “superstitious,” instead encouraging the development of rational religious sensibilities and dispositions. However, far from diminishing the diverse methods through which Iranians engage with the immaterial realm, these rationalizing processes have multiplied the possibilities for metaphysical experimentation.

Delving into frequently neglected aspects of Iranian spirituality, politics, and intellectual inquiry, The Iranian Metaphysicals challenges widely held assumptions about Islam, rationality, and the relationship between science and religion.

Alireza Doostdar is assistant professor of Islamic Studies and the anthropology of religion at the University of Chicago.

Keeping It Halal

This book provides a uniquely personal look at the social worlds of a group of young male friends as they navigate the complexities of growing up Muslim in America. Drawing on three and a half years of intensive fieldwork in and around a large urban mosque, John O’Brien offers a compelling portrait of typical Muslim American teenage boys concerned with typical teenage issues—girlfriends, school, parents, being cool—yet who are also expected to be good, practicing Muslims who don’t date before marriage, who avoid vulgar popular culture, and who never miss their prayers.

John O’Brien is assistant professor of sociology at New York University Abu Dhabi.
For Love of the Prophet

For some, the idea of an Islamic state serves to fulfill aspirations for cultural sovereignty and new forms of ethical political practice. For others, it violates the proper domains of both religion and politics. Yet, while there has been much discussion of the idea and ideals of the Islamic state, its possibilities and impossibilities, surprisingly little has been written about how this political formation is lived. For Love of the Prophet looks at the Republic of Sudan’s twenty-five-year experiment with Islamic statehood. Focusing not on state institutions, but rather on the daily life that goes on in their shadows, Noah Salomon’s careful ethnography examines the lasting effects of state Islamization on Sudanese society through a study of the individuals and organizations working in its midst.

NOAH SALOMON is assistant professor of religion at Carleton College.
“This elegant book is an invaluable resource and much-needed gold standard for future scholarship on Muslims and Islam in liberal societies.”
—Maleiha Malik, King’s College London

On British Islam

On British Islam examines the history and everyday workings of Islamic institutions in Britain, with a focus on shari’a councils. These councils concern themselves with religious matters, especially divorce. They have a higher profile in Britain than in other Western nations. Why? Taking a historical and ethnographic look at British Islam, John Bowen examines how Muslims have created distinctive religious institutions in Britain and how shari’a councils interpret and apply Islamic law in a secular British context.

JOHN R. BOWEN is the Dunbar-Van Cleve Professor in Arts & Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis. His books include A New Anthropology of Islam and Blaming Islam.

Creativity Class

The last three decades have seen a massive expansion of China’s visual culture industries, from architecture and graphic design to fine art and fashion. Creativity Class is the first book to explore how Chinese art students develop, embody, and promote their own personalities and styles as they move from art school entrance test preparation, to art school, to work in the country’s burgeoning culture industries. Lily Chumley shows the connections between this creative explosion and the Chinese government’s explicit goal of cultivating creative human capital in a new “market socialist” economy where value is produced through innovation.

LILY CHUMLEY is an assistant professor in the Department of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University.
“A tour de force of research that tells us how the right inserts itself into the fabric of everyday life.”
—Mabel Berezin, author of *Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times*

**The Extreme Gone Mainstream**

The past decade has witnessed a steady increase in far right politics, social movements, and extremist violence in Europe. Scholars and policymakers have struggled to understand the causes and dynamics that have made the far right so appealing to so many people. In this book, Cynthia Miller-Idriss examines how extremist ideologies have entered mainstream German culture through commercialized products and clothing laced with extremist, anti-Semitic, racist, and nationalist coded symbols and references.

**CYNTHIA MILLER-IDRISS** is associate professor of education and sociology and director of the International Training and Education Program at American University. Her books include *Blood and Culture: Youth, Right-Wing Extremism, and National Belonging in Contemporary Germany.*

“...a brave and haunting ethnography of right-wing extremists in Germany that exposes the struggle between licit and illicit modes of nationalism in the soul of liberal democracy. This is a must-read book at a time when Europe is fighting its nationalist demons once again.”
—Dominic Boyer, Rice University

**The Management of Hate**

Since German reunification in 1990, there has been widespread concern about marginalized young people who, faced with bleak prospects for their future, have embraced increasingly violent forms of racist nationalism that glorify the country’s Nazi past. *The Management of Hate*, Nitzan Shoshan’s riveting account of the year and a half he spent with these young right-wing extremists in East Berlin, reveals how they contest contemporary notions of national identity and defy the clichés that others use to represent them.

**NITZAN SHOSHAN** is assistant professor at the Center for Sociological Studies at the Colegio de México in Mexico City.
“[A] modern parable of post-industrial survival and environmental renewal.” — Peter D Smith, The Guardian

**The Mushroom at the End of the World**

*The Mushroom at the End of the World* is an original examination of the relationship between capitalist destruction and collaborative survival within multispecies landscapes, the prerequisite for continuing life on earth.

**ANNA LOWENHAUPT TSING** is professor of anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a Niels Bohr Professor at Aarhus University in Denmark.

2017. 352 pages. 29 halftones.
Pa: 978-0-691-17832-5 $19.95 | £14.95
Winner of the 2016 Victor Turner Prize in Ethnographic Writing, Society for Humanistic Anthropology
Winner of the 2016 Gregory Bateson Prize, The Society for Cultural Anthropology

“Masterfully interweaves insights from philosophy and the natural and social sciences.”
—Max Hayward, Times Literary Supplement

**Ethical Life**

*Ethical Life* takes readers from inner city America to Samoa and the Inuit Arctic to reveal how we are creatures of our biology as well as our history—and how our ethical lives are contingent on both.

**WEBB KEANE** is the George Herbert Mead Collegiate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Michigan. He is the author of *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*.

2017. 304 pages.
Pa: 978-0-691-17626-0 $22.95 | £18.95

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—Irene Grendzier, The Nation

**Citizen and Subject**

In this acclaimed book, Mahmood Mamdani offers a provocative reinterpretation of late-colonial Africa and how its legacy continues to hamper democracy in the post-independence era.

**MAHMOOD MAMDANI** is the Herbert Lehman Professor of Government in the Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Department at Columbia University.

April 2018. 368 pages.
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—Tim Flannery, New York Review of Books

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SPENCER WELLS is an entrepreneur and an adjunct professor at the University of Texas. He is the author of Deep Ancestry and Pandora’s Seed.

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—Michael Shermer, Wall Street Journal

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RICHARD G. BRIBIESCAS is professor of anthropology and ecology and evolutionary biology at Yale University, where he also serves as deputy provost for faculty development and diversity.

May 2018. 192 pages. 10 b/w illus.
Pa: 978-0-691-18091-5 $17.95 | £14.95

“[De Waal’s] work . . . has helped lift Darwin’s conjectures about the evolution of morality to a new level.”
—Jonathan Weiner, Scientific American

Primates and Philosophers
In Primates and Philosophers, renowned primatologist Frans de Waal explores the biological foundations of one of humanity’s most cherished traits: morality.

FRANS DE WAAL is the C. H. Candler Professor of Psychology at Emory University and director of the Living Links Center at the Yerkes National Primate Center in Atlanta.

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Princeton Science Library
“El Shakry provides a wonderful resource for thinking about the particularities of psychoanalysis in Egypt and its complex relationship with Islam.”
—Ranjana Khanna, Duke University

The Arabic Freud

El Shakry provides the first in-depth examination of psychoanalysis in Egypt and reveals how a new science of psychology was inextricably linked to Islam and mysticism.

OMNIA EL SHAKRY is professor of history at the University of California, Davis. She is the author of The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt.

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—James Romm, Wall Street Journal

Three Stones Make a Wall

Taking readers from the pioneering digs of the eighteenth century to the exciting new discoveries being made today, Three Stones Make a Wall is a lively and essential introduction to the story of archaeology.

ERIC H. CLINE is professor of classics and anthropology and director of the Capitol Archaeological Institute at George Washington University. His many books include 1177 B.C.: The Year Civilization Collapsed (Princeton).

2017. 480 pages. 54 line illus. 2 maps.
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—Adam Hochschild, author of Spain in Our Hearts

Protestants Abroad

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DAVID A. HOLLINGER is the Preston Hotchkis Professor of American History Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley.

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