

Readings in Contemporary Anthropological Theory

Introduction

Welcome to Readings in Contemporary Anthropological Theory, a comprehensive exploration of contemporary anthropological theory. This book is designed to provide readers with a clear and concise overview of the major theoretical perspectives that have shaped the discipline of anthropology.

In this book, we will examine the history and development of anthropological theory, from its origins in the Enlightenment to its current postmodern incarnations. We will also explore the major themes that have occupied anthropologists over the years, including culture and society, kinship and family, gender and sexuality, politics and power, economics

and inequality, religion and ritual, health and illness, environment and sustainability, and globalization.

One of the key goals of this book is to demonstrate the diversity of anthropological thought. Anthropology is a vast and ever-changing field, and there is no single "correct" theory. Instead, there are a variety of different perspectives that can be used to understand human behavior and society.

We hope that this book will provide readers with a solid foundation in anthropological theory. Whether you are a student, a researcher, or simply someone who is interested in learning more about human culture and society, we believe that you will find this book to be a valuable resource.

Anthropology is the study of humanity. It is a social science that seeks to understand the human condition by examining the diversity of human cultures and societies. Anthropologists study a wide range of topics, including kinship, marriage, religion, politics,

economics, and the arts. They work in all parts of the world, from remote villages to urban centers.

Anthropology is a relatively young discipline, but it has a long and rich history. The first anthropologists were European explorers who encountered new and unfamiliar cultures in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. These explorers wrote detailed accounts of the people they met and their customs. Their work laid the foundation for the modern discipline of anthropology.

In the 19th century, anthropology began to emerge as a separate academic discipline. Anthropologists began to develop their own theories and methods for studying human culture and society. They also began to specialize in different areas of anthropology, such as cultural anthropology, social anthropology, and physical anthropology.

Today, anthropology is a well-established academic discipline. Anthropologists work in universities, museums, and research institutions around the world.

They continue to study the diversity of human cultures and societies, and they play an important role in understanding the human condition.

Book Description

Readings in Contemporary Anthropological Theory is a comprehensive exploration of contemporary anthropological theory. This book provides readers with a clear and concise overview of the major theoretical perspectives that have shaped the discipline of anthropology.

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Readings in Contemporary Anthropological Theory is written in a clear and concise style, and it is accessible to readers of all levels. The book is also extensively illustrated with photographs, charts, and graphs.

Readings in Contemporary Anthropological Theory

is the perfect introduction to anthropological theory. It is also an essential resource for anyone who wants to stay up-to-date on the latest developments in the field.

Chapter 1: The History and Development of Anthropological Theory

The origins of anthropology

Anthropology is the study of humanity. It is a social science that seeks to understand the human condition by examining the diversity of human cultures and societies. Anthropologists study a wide range of topics, including kinship, marriage, religion, politics, economics, and the arts. They work in all parts of the world, from remote villages to urban centers.

The origins of anthropology can be traced back to the Enlightenment, a period of intellectual and scientific inquiry that took place in Europe in the 18th century. During this time, European thinkers began to develop new ways of understanding the world and humanity's place in it. They were particularly interested in the diversity of human cultures and societies.

One of the key figures in the development of anthropology was Franz Boas. Boas was a German-American anthropologist who conducted extensive fieldwork among Native American tribes in the United States. He was one of the first anthropologists to argue that all cultures are equally valid and that there is no such thing as a "primitive" culture.

Boas's work had a profound impact on the development of anthropology. He helped to establish anthropology as a scientific discipline and to shift the focus of anthropological research from the study of "primitive" cultures to the study of all human cultures.

In the 20th century, anthropology continued to grow and develop as a discipline. Anthropologists began to use new methods and theories to study human culture and society. They also began to specialize in different areas of anthropology, such as cultural anthropology, social anthropology, and physical anthropology.

Today, anthropology is a well-established academic discipline. Anthropologists work in universities, museums, and research institutions around the world. They continue to study the diversity of human cultures and societies, and they play an important role in understanding the human condition.

Chapter 1: The History and Development of Anthropological Theory

The major schools of anthropological thought

Anthropology is a diverse field with a variety of different theoretical perspectives. Some of the major schools of anthropological thought include:

- **Cultural anthropology** focuses on the study of culture, which is the shared beliefs, values, and practices of a group of people. Cultural anthropologists study how culture shapes human behavior and how it is transmitted from one generation to the next.
- **Social anthropology** focuses on the study of social organization, including kinship, marriage, and political systems. Social anthropologists

study how social institutions shape human behavior and how they vary from one society to another.

- **Physical anthropology** focuses on the study of human biology and evolution. Physical anthropologists study the human body, its variation, and its relationship to the environment.
- **Archaeology** focuses on the study of human history and prehistory through the excavation and analysis of material remains. Archaeologists study how humans have lived in the past and how they have changed over time.
- **Linguistic anthropology** focuses on the study of language and its relationship to culture and society. Linguistic anthropologists study how language shapes human thought and how it is used to communicate.

These are just a few of the many different schools of anthropological thought. Anthropology is a constantly evolving field, and new theoretical perspectives are constantly being developed.

One of the key debates in anthropology is the relationship between culture and biology. Some anthropologists argue that culture is the primary determinant of human behavior, while others argue that biology plays a more important role. This debate has been going on for decades, and there is still no clear consensus.

Another key debate in anthropology is the relationship between the individual and society. Some anthropologists argue that individuals are the primary agents of change, while others argue that society is more important. This debate is also ongoing, and there is no clear consensus.

Despite these debates, anthropology is a valuable field of study that can help us to understand ourselves and

the world around us. Anthropologists have conducted research on a wide range of topics, from the origins of human society to the impact of globalization. Their work has helped us to understand the diversity of human cultures and societies, and it has also helped us to develop new insights into our own behavior.

Chapter 1: The History and Development of Anthropological Theory

The impact of colonialism on anthropological theory

Anthropology emerged as a discipline in the 19th century, during a period of European colonialism. Colonialism had a profound impact on the development of anthropological theory, both in terms of the methods and theories that anthropologists used, and in terms of the subjects that they studied.

One of the most significant ways that colonialism influenced anthropology was by providing anthropologists with access to new and unfamiliar cultures. Prior to colonialism, Europeans had limited contact with people from other parts of the world. However, colonialism brought Europeans into close

contact with a wide range of different cultures, which allowed anthropologists to study these cultures firsthand.

This new access to different cultures led to a number of new developments in anthropological theory. For example, anthropologists began to develop new methods for studying culture, such as participant observation and ethnographic research. They also began to develop new theories about culture, such as the theory of cultural relativism.

Cultural relativism is the idea that all cultures are equally valid and that there is no one "correct" way to live. This idea was revolutionary at the time, as it challenged the prevailing view that European culture was superior to all other cultures.

In addition to providing anthropologists with access to new cultures, colonialism also influenced the subjects that they studied. Prior to colonialism, anthropologists were primarily interested in studying "primitive"

cultures. However, colonialism brought anthropologists into contact with more complex and developed cultures, which led them to begin studying these cultures as well.

The study of complex cultures led to a number of new developments in anthropological theory. For example, anthropologists began to develop new theories about social stratification, political organization, and economic systems. They also began to develop new methods for studying these complex cultures, such as historical research and archival research.

The impact of colonialism on anthropology was profound. Colonialism provided anthropologists with access to new and unfamiliar cultures, which led to a number of new developments in anthropological theory. Colonialism also influenced the subjects that anthropologists studied, leading them to begin studying more complex and developed cultures.

This extract presents the opening three sections of the first chapter.

Discover the complete 10 chapters and 50 sections by purchasing the book, now available in various formats.

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