

(part1_pol&econ_questions)

Previous questions since 2000

Part 1 Economic Anthropology

To what extent can the production, circulation, ownership and consumption of goods in different societies be analysed in terms of universally applicable economic concepts?

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Either (a) What can social anthropological studies of exchange contribute to our understanding of 'the market'?

Or (b) 'It is wrong to polarize the gift economy as if it were antithetical to commodity exchange.' (Gell) Discuss.

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Is it the case that in all societies there is an inevitable transition from gift to commodity economies?

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Either (a) 'The deep tendency to create social ties through the exchange of gifts is a universal feature of all primitive societies.' (Malinowski) Does this make them different from 'advanced' societies?

Or (b) What are the major differences between gift and commodity economies?

Compare the workings of one of the following in two societies or civilizations: production of wealth, property, markets, class, consumption.

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Why have anthropologists found it useful to contrast gift and commodity exchange?

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Drawing on ethnographic examples, discuss the ways in which social anthropologists have attempted to challenge the universality of the notion of 'the market'.

Political anthropology

Can there be orderly social life without the state? How is it achieved?

Is identity based on natural differences? Examine in relation to (various, including nationality).

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Either (a) Do societies without states lack mechanisms for the maintenance of order?
Or (b) Does the study of politics have to use the State as the starting point?

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How can societies operate without the state?

Discuss one or more approaches to the study of : bureaucracy, nationalism, violence.

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Do societies without the state lack mechanisms for the maintenance of order?

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‘Ordered anarchy’ is a contradiction in terms. Discuss.

Video Classes

Compare the ways in which anthropological understanding can be conveyed by using textual and visual (film, photography) media.

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What is the value of visual media in anthropological work?

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With reference to specific examples, discuss the major strengths and weaknesses of film as a means of constructing knowledge of other societies.

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‘A picture is worth a thousand words’. How does this claim apply, if at all, to film as a tool of ethnographic inquiry?