Possible questions for “Minds and Bodies” midterm

From Alex Gross, Catherine Forsa, Mary McCall

(1) Using some ideas from Robertson’s “Greed,” discuss why it is difficult to distinguish “need” from “want” and/or if a distinction is possible.

(2) What is anthropological theory/research? Using the works of Moore, Malinowski, Wolf, Desai, and Geertz (it doesn’t need to be all of these) what are the boundaries of this practice and how are these approaches different? What are the problematic assumptions surrounding them?

(3) In what ways has capitalism misconstrued or misguided the theories of anarchy and Marx’s communism?

(4) Adam Smith stressed the underlying human instinct of self-interest, whereas Robertson sees self-interest as a detached form of, or, perhaps, a euphemism for greed. Explain the concept of self-interest and relate it to Robertson’s discrepancy with the term.

(5) What problems does Wolf see in the label or use of the word “society”? What elements of Marx and/or Graeber are seen in his observations?

(6) Contrast Mauss’ method of anthropological study to that of Geertz’s and of the French intellectual tradition.

(7) Describe how assumptions became an enduring problem in the intellectual world, especially within anthropology. Use Moore’s arguments as well as another work of your choice.

(8) In what ways are feelings engrained in the anthropology. Refer to how Mauss, Malinoswki, and Geertz deal with this issue in their respective ethnographic works.

(9) How does the idea of a discipline conflict with the ideas of Robertson and Wolf?

(10) What does Searle say about the assumptions of the "mental" and "physical" and how can we apply his questioning of assumptions to other works we’ve read?

(11) How does Graeber describe the “anarchist decision”?

(12) How does Peters-Goldens’ ethnographies of the Ju’hoansi and the Trobriand’s fit with Wolf’s views?

(13) How does Robertson’s critique of Descartes compare to that of Searle’s?

(14) What would Marx say about greed in terms of capitalism? Would he agree with Robertson’s ideas?

(15) How do the ideologies of Gertz and Wolf differ and where do Robertson’s ideas of greed fit in?
From Michelle, Julian, Jenn, and Vivian

1. From Weismantel, Is the research about the Moche, or is it a self-discovery of how our culture perceives it?

2. Is this statement truly possible: When conducting field work, an anthropologist should not bring in any pre-conceived notion about the society to be studied? Or does the anthropologist keep his preconceived notions, upon which his interpretations about the society will be based?

3. How is Robertson able to connect the mind-body issue with the idea of the corporation?

4. What is Searle’s answer to the mind-body question? Why do philosophers feel it is still a problem worth thinking about?

5. How does the time during which a philosopher comes up with an idea affect the idea?

6. What are the three remaining problems with Searle’s solution to the mind/body problem?

7. Compare and contrast Moore and Malinowski’s theories of anthropology.

8. Give two examples of how different tribes deal with ambition.

9. Compare the economic systems of the two tribes described by Peters-Golden.

10. What’s the difference between the French and the English ideologies as specified by Mauss?

11. What’s the difference between thin and thick description as identified by Geertz?

12. What’s the difference between Mauss and Geertz’s style of anthropology?

13. Is self-interest really fundamental to all action?

14. Do you think capitalism is slavery?

15. How is Wolf a critique of Geertz?