Anthropology of Knowledge

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In this public talk, I will trace a genealogy of anthropological debates on the nature of knowledge, including its relationships to magic, science, religion, and rationality, from nineteenth-century evolutionary studies to contemporary laboratory ethnographies. Drawing on my own research into the scientific search for the origins of pandemics such as COVID-19, the talk will show how recent anthropological research has grappled with incorporating historicity and temporality into the project of cultural translation.

In Workshop I, we will examine and compare how anthropologists treat knowledge and rationality in 1) the classical culture paradigm; and 2) contemporary works that challenge the epistemological closure and anthropocentrism of cultural accounts of knowledge.

In Workshop II, we will explore how recent anthropologists are experimenting with reintroducing historical time and temporality into their accounts of knowledge and culture. For the sake of demonstration, the workshop will focus on the concept of “survival” and its capacity to draw new links between past and present.