Why do cultures change in the directions they do, and not in others? What are the connections between our everyday lifestyles and worldviews, on the one hand, and social institutions and hierarchies on the other? Are these connections universal? Are they ‘natural’? Is it ‘human nature’ for people to be basically selfish, or to cooperate? Through cross-cultural cases from around the world, this course explores the relationship between culture and power, and the ways anthropologists have studied this relationship for about a century, including: defining power and ‘politics’ cross-culturally, hierarchy, inequality, bands, tribes, the ‘state/non-state’ distinction, institutionalizations of power, authority, informal power and daily life, identity, gender, adaptation, cooperation, coercion, prestige, colonialism, capitalism, bureaucracy, and the state. Approaching such topics cross-culturally and in historical and evolutionary perspectives furnishes us with more powerful tools for modeling human behavior than if we focus solely on our own society.