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Anthropology

Lecture Essay – George R. Lucas

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“The Ethics of Military Anthropology”

George R. Lucas works at the Stockdale Center at the U.S. Naval Academy in Maryland, and his main research involves the use of anthropological studies *for* the military and *by* the military. In his lecture he talked about anthropologists who are used in the military to give information to troops regarding local societies, cultures, and customs in the areas where they are fighting. Right now these military anthropologists are being used mainly in Afghanistan and Iraq.

George Lucas discussed the ethical dilemma of being a military anthropologist in his lecture. Human Terrain System is a project that employs anthropologists to write, teach and practice new military policy. These anthropologists provide cultural education in language and regional studies prior to troops being sent out. They also make a point to stress the need for military organizations within countries of battle that help the local population deal with the effects of war. These “military anthropologists” raise a lot of speculation and criticism because of what seems to be their conflicting morals. When faced with war, at times they must decide whether to act in accordance with their anthropological teachings and their responsibility towards the people and their culture, or to act in accordance with military teachings which may not always be compatible with their morals.

It is sometimes perceived that the anthropologists are only placed in the military to make the U.S.’s cause look more virtuous, but Lucas stresses that, in the military, priority must be given to the population’s security, and to the security of the areas of infiltration. Priority should not be given to solely taking out the enemy (which would create a Machiavellian mind-set). This requires organizations to facilitate in the rehabilitation of insurgents and to grant them amnesty, as well as improve the local police force, and implant special forces within the local military forces. Essentially the military forces need to now also know the “human terrain” or the cultures of the population better.