CULTURE

- Culture is an attempt to name and begin to explain diversity in ways of life
- Classically, culture stands against all biological, environmental, social, economic, technological or other material determinism
- Anthropologists have come to argue against the idea that culture is clearly bounded and relatively stable

Boas
- Founder of cultural American anthropology
- Goes against economic, biological and social determinism
- He argues for the the dominant role of culture in human life, as culture mediates all human behavior, what we think as human beings, what we perceive as being right or wrong
- Proposes environmental determinism
  - People's culture is determined by their environment
  - He tried to demonstrate the importance of environment in making who we are, as not only biology is responsible for that
  - He uses the example of Inuit people, whom, living in a similar environment have a different culture than people living elsewhere
  ➔ Leads to historical particularism: each culture is rather an accidental assemblage of cultural traits, a result of its own particular historical development
  ➔ Clifford has a similar statement, that cultures are produced historically
- Humans are not rational beings, but emotional, attached to culture not by reason but by emotional bond (Durkheim as well)
- Culture is not a product of the fusion of the individual minds into a larger entity, but separately installed within each one prior to their association
- Thus, culture is a historical phenomenon, with changeable and unstable boundaries, that doesn't have a core or essence

Geertz, The interpretation of cultures and Writing culture
- Culture is a self-contained 'super-organic' reality with forces and purposes of its own that consists of socially established structures of meaning
- Culture becomes public because meaning is public as well
- Methodological individualism; gr. VERSTEHEN
  ➔ a systematic interpretive process in which an outside observer of a culture attempts to relate to it and understand others

Clifford, Writing culture
- Anthropologists are always caught up in the invention, and not the proper representation of cultures, creating texts in the contexts of power, resistance and innovation
- Literary processes affect the way in which cultural phenomena are registered
- The very notion of literary approach to anthropology is seriously misleading
- Good ethnographies are 'true fictions'; but even the best ethnographic texts are 'controlled' by the power and history in ways the ethnographer cannot control
- Ethnographic work enact power relations, because it presents partial truths