

Culture and Health

An Introduction to Medical Anthropology

ANTH 300
FALL 2014
Brown University

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:00-1:50pm
Barus and Holley 166

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Office: Lyman Hall 017
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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:30-3:30pm and Thursday 4:00-5:00pm

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the field of Medical Anthropology. Course lectures, readings, films, and discussions will explore the social contexts of health, disease, medicine, and the body. As a class, we will draw from a toolkit of anthropological theories and methods to critically approach generally taken-for-granted categories of health and illness. We will ask such questions as: What counts as a “normal” or “healthy” body, and how does this differ across cultural or historical contexts? How do different medical systems determine the criteria for death and who has the authority to decide? Is there more than one definition of disease? What are the stakes of labeling diseases and ascribing causality? In what ways are medical treatments and technologies culturally specific? How do social inequalities and commercial markets influence health outcomes?

The course will emphasize the overall social, political, and economic contexts in which health behavior and health systems are shaped, and within which they must be understood. Topics examined in the class will include disease, disability, sex and gender, genetics, reproduction, organ transplantation, addiction and homelessness, bioethics, inequality, drug research, and death.

Course Structure

The course meets Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Mondays will generally be for lectures to clarify the main goals and questions of the readings with discussion and question periods. Wednesdays are for more in-depth critical analysis of the reading assignments. Beginning Week 3, Fridays will be for discussion section (which might be held on another day of the week, depending on your schedule). Students will be expected to complete the assigned readings **prior to** lectures and discussion sections.

Course Requirements

A. Attendance and Participation - 15%

Regular attendance at lectures, completion of reading assignments before each class, and participation in class discussions sections are essential to the design of the course. Your active participation in section will be evaluated in terms of the quality of your engagement, not the quantity. It should be evident that you have done the reading and are thinking critically and creatively about the materials.

Attendance in discussion sections is mandatory. You are **permitted one absence from section**. More than one absence without a note from the dean or a doctor will negatively impact your participation grade.

B. Response Papers - 50%

Each student is required to submit **six response papers** (approximately **3 double-spaced typed pages** with one-inch margins) during the course of the semester starting in Week 3.

These papers are *intellectual* responses to particular reading assignments. Response papers are not meant to be summaries of the reading – rather, they are opportunities for students to engage meaningfully with the readings in writing. Papers should be clearly focused and demonstrate an understanding of and critical engagement with the concepts, critiques, or arguments presented in one or more of the readings from the week. A paper that examines a single issue or question will be more successful than one that covers a range of ideas. A note on anthropological writing: generally anthropologists are *descriptive* rather than prescriptive in their analyses. This means that instead of trying to outline targeted solutions to a problem like a public health paper might, anthropologists are more invested in first understanding and describing the social and political contexts that shape or contribute to the problem. Anthropologists generally do this by focusing on individual experiences and how these experiences are embedded within larger cultural, political, and economic systems. We will discuss this in greater detail in class, but I encourage you to be attentive to the particular approach anthropologists take to issues of health in your own writing.

Response papers are due in section during the week you are discussing the readings or book. **At least two papers of the six papers must be completed by or before Friday October 17th.** The lowest paper grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

C. Final Paper - 35%

The final paper will require some original research, which will be combined with concepts and methods from course readings. It will be 6-8 pages long (double-spaced, one-inch margins). Detailed instructions will be passed out later in the semester.

Grading Breakdown

Class participation	15%
Response papers	50% (10% each, the lowest grade of will be dropped)
Final Paper	35%

Writing Resources

I encourage you to use the Writing Center for help with your response papers and your final paper. It is an excellent and completely free resource that benefits all writers. You can have an hour-long one-on-one appointment with a highly qualified graduate student who will give you feedback on structure, grammar, and argument in your essay.

You can request an appointment online [here](#) or email writing_center@brown.edu. At the end of the semester, make an appointment early because it books up quickly.

Communication

I only check my email twice daily and with a class this size, I receive many emails. Please bear this in mind when you email me and be patient about response time. I will ideally reply to all emails within 12 hours, but sometimes it may take up to 24 hours.

Required Texts:

All books for the course can be purchased at the Brown Bookstore **except** *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, which must be purchased online. Books will also be on reserve at the Rockefeller Library or Sciences Library.

- Anne Fadiman. 2012. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*.
- Alice Domurat Dreger. 2005. *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of the Normal*
- Seth Holmes. 2013. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*.
- Rebecca Skloot. 2010. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. ***This book is not available at the bookstore. Please purchase online by 10/8.***
- Margaret Lock. 2001. *Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death*.
- Paul Farmer. 2003. *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*.

- Philippe Bourgois and Jeffrey Schonberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend*.
- Clem Martini and Olivier Martini. 2010. *Bitter Medicine: A Graphic Memoir of Mental Illness*.

All other course materials will be available through **canvas** (canvas.brown.edu) or on **OCRA (online course reserves)**. Most readings will be on canvas. For films, check OCRA. The OCRA password is icebucket.

Readings and Class Schedule

****Please note that the schedule is tentative and subject to change, depending on our collective progress in the course.****

WEEK ONE

Wednesday September 3

Introduction and Overview

Friday September 5

Health and Medicine in Cultural Perspective

Julavits, Heidi. 2014. "Diagnose This: How to Be Your Own Best Doctor." *Harpers Magazine* April, pp. 25-35.

Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing & the Human Condition*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-30.

Kleinman, Arthur. 1995. "What is Specific to Biomedicine?" *Writing at the Margin: Discourse between Anthropology and Medicine*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 21-40.

Recommended:

Rosenberg, Charles. 2002. "Tyranny of Diagnosis: Specific Entities and Individual Experience." *Milbank Quarterly* 80(2): 237-60.

WEEK TWO

Monday September 8 The Social Life of Medicine

Waxler, Nancy. 1998. "Learning to Be a Leper: A Case Study in the Social Construction of Illness." *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*. Ed. Peter J. Brown. pp.147-157.

Langwick, Stacey. 2007. "Devils, Parasites, and Fierce Needles: Healing and the Politics of Translation in Southern Tanzania." *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 32(1): 88-117.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Nervoso." In *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* Pp. 167-215

Recommended:

Kleinman, Arthur and Adriana Petryna. 2002. "Health: Anthropological Aspects." *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. London: Elsevier Science Ltd, pp. 6495-6499.

Wednesday September 10 Health and Cultural Difference

Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. (first half)

Friday September 12 The Culture of Biomedicine and "Culture" in Biomedicine

Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. (second half)

WEEK THREE

First Week of Discussion Sections

Monday September 15 Normal and Abnormal

Watch in class: *The Girl with Eight Limbs* and *My Gimpy Life*

Alice Domurat Dreger, *One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of the Normal*
(read entire book)

Wednesday September 19 Sex, Gender, and Medical Authority

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. "Dueling Dualisms" (1-29) and "Of Gender and Genitals: The Use and Abuse of the Modern Intersexual" (45-77). In *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.

WEEK FOUR

Monday September 22 Health and the Politics of Food Production

Watch film excerpts in class: *Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?*

Bodley, John "Malnutrition and the Evolution of Food Systems," *Anthropology and Contemporary Human Problems*, 5th edition pp.127-155

Bodley, John "Commercial Factory Food Systems," *Anthropology and Contemporary Human Problems*, 5th edition pp.157-182

Wednesday September 24 Public Health and the Politics of Food

Watch in class: excerpts from *The Biggest Loser*

Brewis, Alexandra. 2011. "Introduction: The Problem of Obesity" (1-10), "The Distribution of Risk" (48-83), and "Big Body Symbolism" (99-124). *Obesity: Cultural and Biocultural Perspectives*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

WEEK FIVE

Monday September 29

The Embodiment of Inequality in Migrant Farmworkers

Holmes, Seth. 2013. "Foreword," Chapters 1, 2, and 3. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wednesday October 1

Holmes, Seth. 2013. Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

WEEK SIX

Monday October 6

Race and Medicine

Film (watch at home): *Deadly Deception* by Denise DiAnni (NOVA, USA 1993)

Brandt, Allan. 1978. "Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study," *Hastings Center Report* 8, pp. 21-29.

Rouse, Carolyn. 2009. "Introduction" and "Chapter 1: Race and Uncertainty." *Uncertain Suffering: Racial Health Care Disparities and Sickle Cell Disease*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wednesday October 8

The Ethics of Biotechnological Research and Development

Skloot, Rebecca. 2010. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. New York: Broadway Paperbacks. Pp. 1-152

WEEK SEVEN

Monday October 13
NO CLASS – FALL WEEKEND

Wednesday October 15

Skloot, Rebecca. 2010. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. New York: Broadway Paperbacks. Pp. 152-305

Skloot, Rebecca. 2013. "[The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, the Sequel.](#)" *NYTimes* March 23

****By this Friday, you should have turned in at least 2 writing responses****

WEEK EIGHT

Monday October 20
Treating Risk as a Disease in the US

Film (Watch clips in class): *In the Family: How Much Do You Sacrifice to Survive?*

Lock, Margaret. 1998. "Breast Cancer: Reading the Omens." *Anthropology Today* 14(4): 7-16.

Dumit, Joseph. 2012. "Introduction" and Chapter 3: "Having to Grow Medicine." In *Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define Our Health*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Recommended:

Fosket, Jennifer Ruth. 2010. "Breast Cancer Risk as Disease: Biomedicalizing Risk." *Biomedicalization: Technoscience, Health, and Illness in the U.S.*, edited by A. E. Clark, L. Mamo, J. R. Fosket, J. R. Fishman and J. K. Shim. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pp. 331-352

Wednesday October 22
Cancer as an Emerging Epidemic in Botswana

Film: *Donka*

Livingston, Julie. 2012. Chapter 1: "The Other Cancer Ward," Chapter 3: "Creating and Embedding Cancer in Botswana's Oncology Ward," and Interlude: "Amputation Day at Princess Marina Hospital." *Improvising Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

WEEK NINE

Monday October 27

Technology, Culture, and the Redefinition of Death

Lock, Margaret. 2001. *Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Selections)

Wednesday October 29

Lock, Margaret. 2001. *Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Selections)

WEEK TEN

Monday November 3

The Politics of Health and the Differential Valuation of Life

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2000. "The Global Traffic in Human Organs." *Current Anthropology* 41(2): 191-224.

Hamdy, Sherine. 2008. "When the State and Your Kidneys Fail: Political Etiologies in an Egyptian Dialysis Ward." 35(4): 553-569.

Petryna, Adriana. 2005. "Ethical Variability: Drug Development and Globalizing Clinical Trials." *American Ethnologist* 32(2): 183-197.

Wednesday November 5

Project (RED)TM and Pink Ribbons ©: Disease as a Brand

Film (watch at home, will view clips in class): *Pink Ribbons, Inc.*

Richey, Lisa Ann and Stefano Ponte. 2008. "Better (Red)TM than Dead? Celebrities, Consumption, and International Aid." *Third World Quarterly* 29(4): 711-729.

King, Samantha. "A Dream Cause: Breast Cancer, Corporate Philanthropy, and the Market for Generosity." In *Pink Ribbons, Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

WEEK ELEVEN

Monday November 10 Global Inequality as Pathogen

Paul Farmer. 2005. "Preface," Chapter 1 "On Suffering and Structural Violence," and Chapter 4 "A Plague on All Our Houses?" *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wednesday November 12

Paul Farmer. 2005. Chapter 5 "Health, Healing, and Social Justice," Chapter 6 "Listening for Prophetic Voices," and Chapter 9 "Rethinking Health and Human Rights." *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

WEEK TWELVE

Monday November 17 The Politics of Reproduction

Film: (In-Class Viewing) [Fateneh](#)

Kanaanah, Rhoda Ann. 2002. "Introduction" and "Babies and Boundaries." In *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wednesday November 19 Health in the Context of Political Conflict

*Guest Lecture: Sa'ed Atshan

Merrill Synger and G. Derrick Hodge 2010 "Introduction: The Myriad Impacts of the War Machine on Global Health" In *The War Machine and Global Health*, pp. 1-30.

Hills, Elaine and Dahlia Wasfi, 2010 "The Causes and Human Costs of Targeting Iraq," In *The War Machine and Global Health*, Edited by Synger and Hodge, pp. 119-156.

WEEK THIRTEEN

Monday November 24 Addiction, Homelessness, and Health

Philippe Bourgois and Jeffrey Schonberg. 2009. "Introduction" and Chapters 1, 2, and 3. *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wednesday November 26

NO CLASS – HAVE A GREAT THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY!!

*****No Sections This Week****

WEEK FOURTEEN

Monday December 1 Applied Medical Anthropology

Philippe Bourgois and Jeffrey Schonberg. 2009. Chapters 5, 7, 9, and Conclusion. *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wednesday December 3 Medicine and the Arts

Clem Martini and Olivier Martini, 2010 *Bitter Medicine: A Graphic Memoir of Mental Illness*

****Last week of sections****

WEEK FIFTEEN (Reading Period)

Monday December 8

Final Paper Workshops with Section Leaders

Wednesday December 10

No class – work on final papers

Friday December 12

Final Papers Due by 4pm
Deposit a hard copy in a box outside of my office (017) in Lyman Hall.