The aim of this course is to introduce the ways that medical anthropologists understand illness, suffering, and healing as taking shape amidst a complex interplay of biological, psychological, social, environmental, and political-economic processes. The course is designed to engage a broad range of medical anthropology topics, theoretical approaches, and research techniques by examining case studies concerned with such issues as chronic illness and social suffering, ritual and religious forms of healing, illness and inequality, medicalization, the global AIDS crisis, the social life of new medical technologies, and the politics of global health and humanitarian intervention. A basic premise of the course is that an understanding of illness, health, and the body requires an understanding of the contexts in which they are experienced, contexts contingently shaped by interwoven processes of local, national, and global significance. Particular emphasis will thus be placed on ethnographic approaches to the lived context in which illness and other forms of suffering are experienced, narrated, and addressed. Our focus will be comparative, treating illness, suffering, and healing in a range of societies and settings – from Haiti to China, from urban Brazil to rural Nepal, from the townships of South Africa to genetic labs in the United States.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (available at Amherst Books)**


Reader (A course packet of photocopied articles will be available for purchase from Collective Copies)
**COURSE WORK**

Your evaluation in the course will be based on three short papers (each worth 20% of your final grade), a final research paper (worth 30%), and participation (worth 10%). One of the short papers will consist of an analysis of an illness narrative that you gather. The final research paper will give you the opportunity to explore in some depth a topic of particular interest to you. Attendance is mandatory and students are expected to complete reading assignments on time and to participate in class discussions.

Attendance is particularly important in that the course will not be relying on a textbook but a number of cases, ethnographic examples, or dialogues that will be framed in my introductory lectures in the classroom. Moreover, the classroom is a place for us to struggle with ideas together, openly. The classroom also offers a setting for you to get group feedback on ideas that you may incorporate into your papers, so it is certainly to your benefit to work them out collectively before you hand them into me. The evaluation of participation will be based on both your attendance and involvement in class discussion.

Assignments are due on the assigned day. It isn’t fair to your classmates if you turn papers in late; obviously everyone could do better if she or he had more time. If you have a serious problem meeting a deadline, talk with me beforehand. Otherwise, late assignments will be marked down one full letter grade if turned in by 5pm on the day following their due date, and one additional grade for each subsequent day.

Needless to say, plagiarism of any sort is not allowed. If you have any questions about what is or is not considered plagiarism, see:

https://www.amherst.edu/campuslife/deanstudents/acadhonesty/plagiarism

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**week 1**

9/3 course introduction

**week 2**

9/8 theodicies / why me?

E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events”

9/10 meaning and difference

Byron Good, “Medical Anthropology and the Problem of Belief”
Stacy Pigg, “The Credible and the Credulous: The Question of ‘Villagers’ Beliefs’ in Nepal”
PART 1. MEDICINE & BODIES

week 3

9/15  the effects of meaning
Daniel Moerman, “Meaningful Dimension of Medical Care”
Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Effectiveness of Symbols”

recommended: Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock, “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology”

9/17  the body in medicine
Shigehisa Kuriyama, The Expressiveness of the Body, preface, chapters 1-2

week 4

9/22  the body in medicine
Shigehisa Kuriyama, The Expressiveness of the Body, chapters 3-4, epilogue

9/24  seeing bodies medically
Byron Good, “How Medicine Constructs its Objects”
Jean Comaroff, “The Diseased Heart of Africa: Medicine, Colonialism, and the Black Body”

recommended: Lorna Rhodes, “Studying Biomedicine as a Cultural System”

PART 2. ILLNESS & AFFLICTION

week 5

9/29  ethnography and the call of stories
Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description,” from The Interpretation of Cultures
Robert Coles, “Stories and Theories”

10/1  illness experience
Arthur Kleinman, “The Meaning of Symptoms and Disorders” (pp. 3-8), “The Personal and Social Meaning of Illness” (pp. 31-55), “The Vulnerability of Pain and the Pain of Vulnerability” (pp. 56-74), from The Illness Narratives

week 6

10/6  illness and narrative
Gay Becker, “Order and Chaos”
Cheryl Mattingly, “The Checkers Game”

10/8  bodies and stories
Arthur Frank, “When Bodies Need Voices,” from The Wounded Storyteller
Veena Das, “Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain”
week 7
10/13  NO CLASS, MID-SEMESTER BREAK
10/15  critical approaches to suffering
       Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Nervoso,” from Death Without Weeping

PART 3. INEQUALITY & INTERVENTION

week 8
10/20  inequality and structural violence
       Paul Farmer, Infections and Inequalities, introduction, chapters 1-3, 5 (through p157)
10/22  inequality and structural violence
       Paul Farmer, Infections and Inequalities, chapters 7, 9, 10

week 9
10/27  international & global health interventions
       Catherine Campbell, Letting Them Die, introduction and parts I & II
10/29  international & global health interventions
       Catherine Campbell, Letting Them Die, parts III & IV, conclusion

PART 4. NEW MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES

week 10
11/3  making medical facts, pharmaceutically
       David Healy “The Dilemmas Posed by New and Fashionable Treatments”
       Jonathan Kahn, “How a Drug Becomes ‘Ethnic’: Law, Commerce, and the Production of
       Racial Categories in Medicine”
       Psychiatry.” The New Yorker, 1/3/05
11/5  new reproductive technologies
       Rayna Rapp, Testing Women, Testing the Fetus, chapters 1-5

week 11
11/10 new reproductive technologies
       Rayna Rapp, Testing Women, Testing the Fetus, chapters 6, 9-11
11/12 making medical facts, making community
Carl Elliott, “Amputees by Choice”
Vinh-Kim Nguyen, “Antiretroviral Globalism, Biopolitics, and Therapeutic Citizenship”

PART 5. POLITICS OF LIFE

week 12

11/17 biopolitics & governmentality
Michel Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life,” from The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, pp133-145
Michel Foucault, “The Birth of Biopolitics,” from Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, Rabinow, ed.

11/19 zones of social abandonment
Biehl, Vita, Introduction & Part 1
» Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Associations (AAA), 11/19-11/23, NO CLASS «

11/25 & 11/27 THANKSGIVING BREAK

week 14

12/1 zones of social abandonment
Biehl, Vita, Parts 2-4

12/3 zones of social abandonment
Biehl, Vita, Parts 5-6, Conclusion, Postscript

week 15

12/8 medical humanitarianism
Bashford, “Global Biopolitics and the History of World Health”
Pandolfi, “Contract of Mutual (In)Difference: Governance and Humanitarian Apparatus in Albania and Kosovo”

12/10 review & wrap up