

MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

anthropology 45

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fall 2008
M/W 2-3:20

office hours
Tu/W 3:30-5

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)

- Kuriyama, Shigehisa. 2002. *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine*. New York: Zone Books
- Farmer, Paul. 1999. *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Campbell, Catherine. 2003. *Letting Them Die: Why HIV/Aids Prevention Programmes Fail*. Oxford: International African Institute
- Rapp, Rayna. 1999. *Testing Women, Testing the Fetus: The Social Impact of Amniocentesis in America*. New York: Routledge
- Biehl, Jiao. 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press

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

film: *State of Denial* (2003)

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"

recommended: Alix Spiegel, "The Dictionary of Disorder: How One Man Revolutionized 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