COURSE DESCRIPTION

As an introduction to the broad and expanding field of medical anthropology, this course examines the intersections of culture and medicine from a variety of theoretical approaches. We will study different conceptualizations of the body, health, healing, illness/disease and personhood, and we will trace the different methods anthropologists deploy in understanding these conceptualizations. With a strong emphasis on global processes, transnational institutions and the role of the state in people’s everyday lives, readings will address how biology and
politics—or biopolitics—converge in a myriad of ways to shape human experience in our current moment.

Among the topics covered in class are: the ethics of biomedicine and medical expertise; social suffering and structural violence; religion and embodiment; organ donation and transplantation; sex, gender and reproductive technologies; race, class and the politics of AIDS; global health and human rights; the state, pharmaceuticals and legal healthcare regimes; the effects of Doctors Without Borders around the world, the rise of humanitarian psychiatry and global mental health.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

This is a heavy reading course emphasizing critical discussion and participatory learning, regardless of class size. Students’ primary tasks are to seriously engage with the readings each week, present ideas in a clear and intellectually generous manner and complete writing assignments on time. Class attendance is mandatory. Consistent and valuable contribution to class discussion will raise your grade; poor attendance or not participating will lower it.

Each time we meet you must come to class with three written questions related to the readings for that day. These questions will serve as a guide for discussion; please be prepared to share your questions out loud should you be asked to do so. You will turn these in at the end of class.

Reflection papers/Précis: you will be responsible for writing 5 short précis/reflection papers on weekly readings of your choice throughout the course. About 2 single-spaced or 4 double-spaced pages in length, these short papers should summarize all key points of the readings in a clear and concise manner and analyze the texts’ broader implications in the field of medical anthropology. You may integrate course films in these papers but you may not write a précis solely on a film. Papers must also include your personal scholarly reflections or reactions to the work. Be creative and take intellectual risks—this is your time to think through the texts and develop your authorial voice. However, your reflections must be supported by concrete examples or quotations from the texts. Précis will be graded with a check ✔ (full credit), check plus ✔+ (outstanding) or check minus ✔- (unsatisfactory).

Finally, you will produce a theoretically informed ethnographic final research paper on a topic of your choice. You will be required to conduct an interview, focus group session or participant observation for these papers. We will speak extensively and often about the process of writing these papers; a written abstract will be due (date TBA) towards the second half of the course. You will be asked to present your topic in class.

Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- 5 Précis/Reflection Papers: 50% (each paper = 10%)
- Final Research Paper: 30%
CLASSROOM AND EMAIL ETIQUETTE

An overall goal of this course is to provide you with the space and time necessary to cultivate better classroom discussion skills. This means you will be interacting with your classmates (and not only your professor) during each class either by raising questions, responding to questions or articulating your perspective on the readings. You must engage your classmates in a respectful and generous manner. The classroom is a safe space. All points of view will be heard and everyone will be respected in class.

You may email me at Rsweis@bates.edu. Emails should contain a proper greeting and closing. Avoid using overly informal language in your emails. The language you use in an academic message should be different from what you would use in a text message or IM chat.

You may enjoy your coffee, water or other (non-alcoholic) beverage in class. We meet in the middle of the day and we all have super busy, hectic schedules. Feel free to eat in class if you need to. But if you do, please be discrete about it and try not to disrupt class discussion or draw attention to yourself. And if you’d like, you may bring enough for the entire class to enjoy.

THANK YOU FOR TURNING YOUR MOBILE PHONES COMPLETELY OFF IN CLASS

IMPORTANT

The syllabus is a fluid document, subject to change based on your collective needs/interests. You will be notified in advanced if this happens.

Late final papers will be graded down unless an extension has been granted.

All students are responsible for reading and understanding the Bates College Statement on Academic Honesty.

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please also request the Dean of Students to send a statement verifying your disability and specifying the accommodations you will need.

COURSE READINGS

Required Books

Fadiman, The Spirit Catches You And You Fall Down
Kleinman, The Illness Narratives
Skloot, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
Montoya, Making the Mexican Diabetic
Brotherton, Revolutionary Medicine
Hamdy, Our Bodies Belong to God
Dumit, Drugs for Life
Ticktin, Casualties of Care

Reserved Readings

Ehrenreich and English, For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts’ Advice to Women
Farmer, Aids and Accusation
Farmer, Infections and Inequalities
Fassin and Rechtman, The Empire of Trauma
Inhorn, Local Babies, Global Science
Kleinman, Rethinking Psychiatry
Lock and Gordon ed., Biomedicine Examined
Reverby, Examining Tuskegee
Saussy ed., Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader
Sontag, Illness as Metaphor and Aids and Its Metaphors
Steinem, Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellion
Ze’evi, Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 WELCOME TO MEDICINE AND CULTURE

Wednesday September 5
Course Introduction

What is Medical Anthropology?

***News report: Makeshift clinics and the Arab Spring (Egypt and Syria)

Week 2 WESTERN BIOMEDICINE & THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Monday September 10
The Birth of the Clinic, Michel Foucault, “Preface” and “A Political Consciousness”

“Tenacious Assumptions in Western Biomedicine,” Deborah Gordon in Biomedicine Examined, ed. Lock and Gordon
Wednesday September 12
“Witches, Healers, and Gentleman Doctors,” Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English in For her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts’ Advice to Women

***Recommended: Watch an episode of the Emmy Award-winning TV show The Doctors! on NBC, or online at http://www.thedoctorstv.com/

Week 3

Monday September 17
The Spirit Catches You And You Fall Down, Anne Fadiman, Preface-Chapter 10

Wednesday September 19
The Spirit Catches You And You Fall Down, Anne Fadiman, Chapters 11-19

Week 4 SOCIAL SUFFERING & EXPERIENCE OF ILLNESS

Monday September 24
The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition, Arthur Kleinman, Preface-Chapter 4

Wednesday September 26
The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition, Arthur Kleinman, Chapters 7, 10, 11

*** Recommended: Watch an episode of the TV reality series NY Med. Showing this Fall on ABC Tuesdays 10pm or online at http://nymedshow.com/

Week 5 STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Monday October 1
“Aids and Racism” and “Aids and Empire,” Paul Farmer in Aids and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame

“Introduction” and “Emerging Infectious Diseases,” Paul Farmer in Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues

“Bad Blood, Spoiled Milk: Body fluids as Moral Barometers in Rural Haiti,” Paul Farmer in Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader edited by Saussy

Wednesday October 3
In-class film: Salud!
Week 6  MEDICAL ETHICS

Monday October 8
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, Rebecca Skloot, Part 1-2

Wednesday October 10
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, Rebecca Skloot, Part 3-Afterward

Week 7

Monday October 15
“Introduction: Race, Medical Uncertainty and American Culture,” Susan Reverby in Examining Tuskegee: The Infamous Syphilis Study and Its Legacy (In preparation for in-class film The Deadly Deception)

In-class film: The Deadly Deception (Tuskegee), 56 minutes

Wednesday October 17
***NO CLASS ENJOY YOUR BREAK***

Week 8

Monday October 22
***Youtube Clip: Michael Montoya

Making the Mexican Diabetic: Race, Science and the Genetics of Inequality, Michael Montoya, Preface-Chapter 4

Wednesday October 24
Making the Mexican Diabetic: Race, Science and the Genetics of Inequality, Michael Montoya, Chapter 5-Epilogue

Week 9  SEX, SCIENCE AND REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Monday October 29

“If Men Can Menstruate,” Gloria Steinem in Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellion

Wednesday October 31
“Knowledge” and “Religion,” Marcia Inhorn in *Local Babies, Global Science: Gender, Religion and In Vitro Fertilization in Egypt*

“The Body Sexual: Medicine and Physiognomy,” Dror Ze’evi in *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*

**Week 10 **ORGANS, PHARMACEUTICALS AND THE STATE

*Monday November 5*


*** News report: *Obamacare*

*Wednesday November 7*

Revolutionary Medicine: Health and the Body in Post-Soviet Cuba, P. Sean Brotherton, Part 3-Coda

**Week 11**

*Monday November 12*

Our Bodies Belong to God: Organ Transplants, Islam and the Struggle for Human Dignity in Egypt, Sherine Hamdy, Preface-Chapter 4

*Wednesday November 14*

Our Bodies Belong to God: Organ Transplants, Islam and the Struggle for Human Dignity in Egypt, Sherine Hamdy, Chapter 5-Epilogue

**Week 12 *****NO CLASS ENJOY YOUR BREAK***

**Week 13** MEDICAL HUMANITARIANISM & HUMANITARIAN PSYCHIATRY

*Monday November 26*


*Wednesday November 28*

“What is a Psychiatric Diagnosis?” Arthur Kleinman in *Rethinking Psychiatry*

“Humanitarian Psychiatry” and “Palestine,” Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman in *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry Into The Condition of Victimhood*
Week 14  COURSE RECAP: THEORY & METHOD

Monday December 3
Final Paper Workshop: Peer Review, Presentations

Wednesday December 5
Final Paper Workshop: Peer Review, Presentations

FINAL PAPER DUE DECEMBER 14
5:00PM IN MY MAILBOX

SUGGESTED READINGS

“Global Mental Health and Its Discontents,” Doerte Bemme and Nicole D'souza, Science, Medicine, and Anthropology, 2012

Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment, João Biehl

Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity, Joseph Dumit

Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define our Health, Joseph Dumit

Discipline and Punish, Michel Foucault

The Wretched of the Earth, Franz Fanon

When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa, Didier Fassin

The Racial Economy of Science, edited by Sandra Harding

Recovering the Nation’s Body: Cultural Memory, Medicine, and the Politics of Redemption, Linda F. Hogle


Shamans, Mystics and Doctors, Sudhir Kakar

Making Sex: Body and Gender From The Greeks To Freud, Thomas Laqueur
Beyond the Body Proper, edited by Margaret Lock and Judith Farquhar

An Anthropology of Biomedicine, Margaret Lock and Vinh-Kim Nguyen

The Republic of Therapy, Vinh-Kim Nguyen


Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl, Adriana Petryna

Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande, E.E. Evans-Pritchard

Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis, Robert Procter

The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century, Nikolas Rose


Aids and Its Metaphors and Illness as Metaphor, Susan Sontag

Causalities of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France, Miriam Ticktin

Africa as a Living Laboratory, Helen Tilley

Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness, Megan Vaughan

Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative, Priscilla Wald

Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to Present, Harriet Washington

SUGGESTED FILMS

Brilliant Soil, Mexico, 93 minutes

The Business of Being Born, U.S., 87 minutes

The Constant Gardener, 129 minutes

Contagion, 106 minutes

Doctors of Two Worlds, Bolivia, 55 minutes
Journeys with Tibetan Medicine, 76 minutes

Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of the Startle Reflex, Malaysia, 38 minutes

N!ai, The Story of a !Kung Woman, 59 minutes

Salud! Cuba, 93 minutes

Sicko, 123 minutes

The Spirit Possession of Alejandro Mamani, Bolivia, 28 minutes