Rutgers University

Department of Anthropology

Fall 2017

**Medical Anthropology**

070:307 (3 credits)

Tues 10:55-1:55pm

213 Hickman Hall

Instructor: Prof. Bridget Purcell

Contact: [bridget.purcell@rutgers.edu](mailto:bridget.purcell@rutgers.edu)

Office hours: Thursday, 4-5pm, or by appointment

208 D, Biological Sciences Building (32 Bishop Street)

**Course Description:** Medical Anthropology explores the themes of health and illness as they intersect with questions of history, culture, and power. It begins with the premise that there are diverse cultural systems for understanding and addressing bodily affliction. While Western biomedicine tends to treats all bodies in universal, pre-cultural terms, medical anthropology continually points to the differences in how bodies count: Who thrives; who falls ill and from what causes; who has access or lacks access to therapeutic knowledges and technologies.

The first half of the class focuses largely on experience, both individual and social. How are understandings of health and illness shaped by culture, gender, race, and class, as well as historical relations of inequality and violence? How do people find ways to creatively live with disease, care for themselves and others, construct meaningful narratives, and heal? In the second half of the course, we move from the intimate realm of experience to the wider historical and political-economic fields that condition and produce it. We will delve into the politics of scientific knowledge production, the historicity of disease categories, and the market forces that shape medical institutions, care-giving technologies, and public health policies. Students will emerge from this class able to think in comparative, cross-cultural terms about biomedicine and other therapeutic systems; to trace how social processes determine health and illness; and to interrogate their own culturally specific beliefs about bodily experience, truth and knowledge, and scientific authority.

**Assignments and Grading:** The success of this seminar relies on your commitment to complete all required readings, to participate actively in class discussions, and to creatively engage with course themes and concepts in your response papers and essays. Grading will be based on:

* **Attendance and participation (20%):** Your lively and thoughtful participation in class is both encouraged and expected. You should come to class prepared to discuss your understanding of the readings, to articulate the author’s key arguments, and to pose questions on points of particular interest or confusion. Please be aware that I take attendance very seriously; any absence that is not formally excused will impact your grade.
* **Weekly Reading Responses (20%):** These are short, critical reflections that demonstrate your close reading of course materials. I encourage you to use these responses to develop your own evolving questions, and to draw creative connections among readings and themes. Claims and arguments should be supported, with clear writing and organization. Your reports must be turned in at the beginning of class in hard copy, and should cover the materials assigned for that day (exceptions are weeks week 1 and 6, when no reading responses are due). Responses should be roughly one double-spaced page, or 400 words, in length.
* **Midterm Essay (25%):** Your midterm assignment (7-9 pages) is to write and analyze an “illness narrative.” This can be based on either a) ‎an interview you conduct with a family member or a friend (highly recommended), or b) an account found in a memoir or autobiography. Your paper should draw on course concepts in order to interpret and reflect on the narrative. The midterm is due, in hard copy, at the beginning of class Week 7, October 17. Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day (A to A-, A- to B+, and so on).
* **Final Paper (35%):** The final essay (8-10 pages) is an opportunity for you to explore in depth a medical problem or policy of your choosing, interpreting it with reference to course themes and discussions. This will require a bit of outside research. A short (one paragraph) paper proposal and a bibliography with at least 5 sources (5%) are due in class Week 12, November 28. This will give us time before the semester’s end to tweak your topic and narrow your sources. I also encourage you to visit with me during my office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss your ideas. The final paper (30%) is due on xxxx. Late papers will be penalized one third of a letter grade per day (A to A-, A- to B+, and so on).

**Course Materials:** The following books are available for purchase at Barnes & Noble. They have also been placed on reserve at Alexander Library. All other readings can be found on Sakai, under Resources.

Required:

Fadiman, Anne. 2012. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. Noonday Press.

Biehl, João. 2013. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jain, Lochlann. 2013. *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us*. University of California Press.

Recommended:

Wendland, Claire. 2010. *A Heart for the Work*: *Journeys through an African Medical School*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 6-35, 119-223.

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend:* Intro, Ch. 1, Ch 3, 9, Conclusion. University of California Press.

**Please note:** This is an internet and laptop-free class. Please turn off or silence all electronic devices before entering the classroom.

Week 1 (9/5)

**Introduction and Overview**

Silberman, Steve. 2009. “Placebos Are Getting More Effective: Drugmakers Are Desperate to Know Why.” *Wired* 17 (9).

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1967. “The Sorcerer and His Magic.” *Structural Anthropology*. Anchor Books, pp. 167-185.

Recommended (background reading):

Hahn, Robert A. and Marcia C. Inhorn. 2009. “Introduction.” *Anthropology and Public Health: Bridging Differences in Culture and Society*. Oxford University Press, pp. 1-31.

Week 2 (9/12)

**Culture and Illness Experience**

Fadiman, Anne. 2012. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (with a New Afterward). Noonday Press.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Margaret Lock. 1987. “The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1 (1): 6-41.

Recommended:

Lock, Margaret and Vinh-Kim Nyugen. 2010. “Local Biologies and Human Difference.” In *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 83-109.

Week 3 (9/19)

**Biomedicine as a Cultural System**

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

Good, Byron. 1994. “How Medicine Constructs Its Objects.” In *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 65-87.

Wendland, Claire. 2010. *A Heart for the Work*: *Journeys through an African Medical School*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 6-35, 119-223.

Recommended:

Lock, Margaret and Vinh-Kim Nyugen. 2010. “The Normal Body.” In *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 32-56.

Gawande, Atul. 2002. “Education of a Knife.” *Complications: A Surgeon’s Notes on an Imperfect Science*. New York: Metropolitan Books, pp.11-34.

Week 4 (9/26)

**Narrating the Self: Experience, Meaning, Time**

*Midterm assignment distributed in class*

Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition*. Basic Books, pp. 3-55.

Mattingly, Cheryl. 1994. “The Concept of Therapeutic ‘Emplotment’.” *Social Science and Medicine* 38(6):811-822.

Varma, Saiba. 2016. "Love in the Time of Occupation: Reveries, Longing and Intoxication in Kashmir." *American Ethnologist* 43(1), pp. 50-62.

Recommended:

Mulla, Sameena. 2014. “Making Time: Temporalities of Law, Healing, and Sexual Violence.” In *The Violence of Care*. NYU Press, pp. 57-75.

Film: *Living with Dying* (PBS)

Week 5 (10/3)

**The Self Undone: Love, Loss, Madness**

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1976. “The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events.” *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande.* Clarendon Press, pp. 18-32.

Didion, Joan. 2006. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. Knopf. pp. 1-33.

Garcia, Angela. 2008. “The Elegiac Addict: History, Chronicity, and the Melancholic Subject.” *Cultural Anthropology* 23(4), pp. 718-746.

Ralph, Laurence. 2015. “Becoming Aggrieved: An Alternative Framework of Care in Black Chicago.” *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Sciences* 1(2), 2015. pp. 31-41.

Recommended:

Freud, Sigmund. “Mourning and Melancholia” in James Strachey (Ed), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol XIV. pp. 243-258.

Rosaldo, Renato. “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage.” *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Beacon Press, 1989. pp. 1-24.

Week 6 (10/10)

**Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment**

Biehl, João. 2013. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. University of California Press.

Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, pp. 18-39, 74-94.

Recommended:

Das, Veena. 2009. “Mental Illness and the Urban Poor: Psychiatric Institutions and the Singularity of Lives” in Saurabh Dube (Ed), *Enchantments of Modernity*: *Empire, Nation, Globalization*. Abe Books.

Week 7 (10/17)

**\*\*Midterm papers due in class\*\***

No readings or responses; in-class film and discussion

Week 8 (10/24)

**The Historicity of Disease Entities**

Fleck, Ludwik. 1979. “How the Modern Concept of Syphilis Originated.” *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-19.

Rosenberg, Charles. 2002. “The Tyranny of Diagnosis: Specific Entities and Individual Experience.” *Milbank Quarterly* 80(2): 237-260.

Metzl, Jonathan. 2009. *The* *Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*. Preface and Part IV. Beacon Press, pp. ix-xxi, 75-128.

Film: *Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt*. 1989

Week 9 (10/31)

**Markets for Health:**

**Consumerism, Care, and Complementary Medicine**

Mol, Annemarie. 2006. *The Logic of Care: Health and the Problem of Patient Choice*. Routledge. pp. 1-32.

Dumit, Joseph. 2012. *Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define our Health*. Duke University Press. Selections.

Eisenber DM, Davis RB, Ettner SL, Appel S, Wilkey S, Van Rompay M, and Kessler RC. 1998. “Trends in Alternative Medicine Use in the United States, 1990-1997: Results of a Follow-up National Survey.” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 280, pp. 1569-1575.

Barnes PM, Bloom B, Nahin RL. 2008. “Complementary and Alternative Medicine Use Among Adults and Children: United States, 2007.” *National Health Statistics Reports* no. 12. National Center for Health Statistics. pp. 1-24.

Ruggie, Mary. 2005. “Mainstreaming Complementary Therapies: New Directions in Health Care.” *Health Affairs* 24(4), pp. 980-990.

Week 10 (11/7)

**Getting a Hold of Ourselves: Technology and Subjectivity**

*Final assignment distributed in class*

Hacking, Ian. 2006. “Making Up People.” *London Review of Books* 28(16), pp. 1-10.

Lacan, Jacques. 1976. “A Lacanian Psychosis.” In Stuart Schneiderman (Ed) *Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan*. Yale University Press, pp. 19-41.

Biehl, João. 2007. “Experimental Subjects.” *Will to Live: AIDS Therapies and the Politics of Survival*. Princeton University Press, pp. 239-279.

Schüll, Natasha. 2006. “Machines, Medication, Modulation: Circuits of Dependency and Self-care in Las Vegas.” *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 30(2):223-247.

Film: *The Medicated Child* by Marcela Gaviria (PBS/Frontline)

Recommended:

Foucault, Michel. 1979. “Panopticism” in *Discipline and Punish*. Vintage, pp. 195-228.

Week 11 (11/14)

**Governing Bodies: Biopower**

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France*. pp. 239-263.

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend:* Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, 9, and Conclusion. University of California Press. pp. 1-46; 79-115; 271-320.

Film: *Let the Fire Burn*. Dir. Jason Osder. Zeitgeist Films, 2013.

Recommended:

Metzl, Jonathan and Helena Hansen. 2014. “Structural Competency: Theorizing a New Medical Engagement with Stigma and Inequality.” *Social Science and Medicine* 103:126-136.

Hansen, Helena, Philippe Bourgois, and E. Drucker. 2014. “Pathologizing Poverty: New Forms of Disability, Diagnosis and Stigma under Welfare Reform.” *Social Science and Medicine* 103:126-33.

\*\*Thanksgiving – no class 11/21\*\*

Week 12 (11/28)

**Global In/justice**

*Final paper proposals due in class*

Farmer, Paul. 2004. “On Suffering and Structural Violence.” In *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 29-50.

Farmer, Paul. 2010. “An Anthropology of Structural Violence.” In *Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 350-375.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2006. “Consuming Differences: Post-Human Ethics, Global (In)justice, and the Transplant Trade in Organs. In *A Death* Retold. K Wailoo, J Livingston, and P Guarnaccia (Eds). University of North Carolina Press, pp. 205-234.

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

Films: *Tales from the Organ Trade* by Ric Bienstock (HBO)

Recommended:

Redfield, Peter. 2006. “A Less Modest Witness: Collective Advocacy and Motivated Truth in a Medical Humanitarian Movement.” *American Ethologist* 33(1), pp. 3-26.

Week 13 (12/5)

**Emergencies and Interventions**

Fassin, Didier. 2010. “Heart of Humanness: The Moral Economy of Humanitarian Intervention” in Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (Eds) *Contemporary States of Emergency.* Zone Books, pp. 269-293.

Petryna, Adriana. 2004. “Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations.” *Osiris* 2(19), pp. 250-265.

Ticktin, Miriam. 2006. “Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France.” *American Ethnologist* 33(1), pp. 33-49.

Recommended:

Petryna, Adriana. 2013. “The Right of Recovery.” *Current Anthropology* 54(S7), pp. S67-S76.

Ticktin, Miriam. 2011. “The Gendered Human of Humanitarianism: Medicalising and Politicizing Sexual Violence.” *Gender and History* 23(2), pp. 250-265.

Nguyen, Vin-Kim. 2011. “Trial communities: HIV and therapeutic citizenship in West Africa.” In *Evidence, ethos and experiment: the anthropology and history of medical research in Africa*. Paul Wenzel Geissler and Catherine Molyneux, eds. Berghahn Books, pp. 429–444.

Week 14 (12/12)

**Keeping on**

Jain, Lochlann. 2013. *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us*. University of California Press.

**Appendix A**

Learning Goals

**DEPARTMENT LEARNING GOALS**

* Students gain knowledge that will allow them to identify, explain, and historically contextualize the primary objectives, fundamental concepts, modes of analysis, and central questions in their major field and demonstrate proficiency in their use of this knowledge
* Students are able to demonstrate proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills
* Students are able to demonstrate proficiency using current methods in their major fields, including library research
* Students are able to express themselves knowledgably and proficiently in writing about central issues in their major field
* Students are able to express themselves knowledgably and proficiently in speaking about central issues in their major field

**COURSE SPECIFIC LEARNING GOALS**

* To gain a working knowledge of key theories and concepts in Medical Anthropology
* To practice applying that knowledge through ethnographic fieldwork and reflection
* To gain familiarity with issues in local and global health contexts
* To develop students’ proficiency in speaking critically and effectively about health, illness, and healing
* To develop students’ ability to write cogent and persuasive arguments for an anthropology audience
* To encourage students to integrate an anthropological approach to health and healthcare into their everyday lives

**Appendix B**

Additional Course Policies

[forthcoming – this is where I will put information that should go without saying – and also include links to absence reporting, academic integrity, etc.]

**Grading Scale**

**Absence reporting**

**Academic Integrity**

**Classroom Etiquette**

**Accommodations**