Introduction to Medical Anthropology
Spring 2002

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Office Hrs: M, W 5:30 - 6:30 and by appointment

Class meeting times:
M, W 9:00 - 10:20 am
Dance Bldg
Basement Rm 128

Overview
Medical Anthropology arguably formed around the middle of the 20th century and was a fairly unique contribution by the Americans to the international exercise of anthropology which had its origins in European colonialism (particularly British and French).

With American social upheaval, anthropology as a discipline joined the push to ‘question authority’ and to critically analyze its own practices. Indelibly inked by the hand of third world development, the ethnography was often the by product of ‘improvement’ projects aimed to “help those less fortunate”. But the post-war era brought a lens of self-reflexiveness through which the ethnography was to be transformed. No longer was the ethnocentrism of the anthropologist tolerated so easily. In the case of medical anthropology, the shift was clear. One could no longer simply attempt to understand diabetes in Kenya or Down’s Syndrome in Thailand. The application of Euro-Western biomedical categories onto places and peoples outside this small fraction of the globe, was no longer logical or appropriate. Instead, health and well-being or ill health and sickness, as they are defined differently around the world have become a focus for the medical anthropologist.

And those biomedical categories within the Euro-Western regions, for so long taken for granted, have become increasingly scrutinized.

Therefore, this course will be organized into several overlapping conceptual foci. One critically analyzes Western biomedical categories, aiming to understand the prejudices and biases which inform them. Another discusses larger health issues. In this second section, we consider global categories of disease which illuminate the undeniable link between social and individual ills. We also examine the health-related controversies produced in the aftermath of man-made catastrophes. The third attempts to understand how curing individuals may also contribute to "curing" societies. Yet curing takes many forms. We end with some attention to the idea of bioethics.

Goals
This course is about READING,
UNDERSTANDING and
EXPRESSING.

Therefore, we will read different kinds of authors, with different tempos, different levels of complexity, and different approaches to their subjects within the context of medical anthropology.

READ
You will be expected to do the readings, if need be rereading will be emphasized.
UNDERSTAND
Focus on understanding the larger arguments put forth by the authors. This is not a course about memorizing definitions or formulas so make sure to take the time to read, reread, and reread again your assignments if you don’t know what the author is saying. You don’t have to know the piece verbatim but you should be able to relate its argument. Taking extra time to reread the piece a second or even third time will allow you to follow where the author is going and conceptualize the path as a whole.

EXPRESS
Understanding a reading on your own is only part of the learning process. What good is all that information crammed into one person’s mind if it is not shared with others? Discussing with others helps us all to form clearer ideas and explore differing opinions about a reading. Therefore you will be expected to participate in class on a regular basis. To facilitate this, we will have regular presentations and reviews of all discussions.

Grading
You will be graded on the following scale:

A) Attendance/Participation 20%

B) Presentations (1-2 pgs ea)
   [ 1) summarize one set of readings, 2) review one day’s discussion, 3) present your Final Paper proposal at midsemester] 30%

C) Ethnography Project and its presentation (2-4 pgs) 20%

D) Final Paper (8-10 pgs) 30%

Attendance will be taken and your participation will be recorded at each course meeting.

Presentations will consist of three different types. 1) You will be expected to summarize one set of reading and present it to the class. This should be a one to two page summary and you will be expected to provide copies of your summary and read this or otherwise verbally present your argument to the group, budgeting ten to fifteen minutes to do so. We will set up a schedule of these presentations in the first few weeks of the course. 2) You will be expected to summarize the discussion of one class meeting. This should also be a one to two page summary which will be handed out and presented to the class. This will provide a review of the previous class’s discussion and allow us to extend the highlights of that discussion further in the following class, time permitting. And 3) at the halfway point in the semester, you will be expected to discuss the proposal of your Final Paper with the group, again budgeting ten to fifteen for your presentation. We will schedule proposal presentations in the first few weeks of the course.

Projects will be to explore health/illness paradigms. This will be a brief ethnographic exercise which will involve interviewing and an analysis of findings (these are the foundations of anthropology): You will be expected to gather demographic information on ten interviewees, formulate ten questions relating to some health or illness category you want to explore, administer those questions to your interviewees, record the answers given, then summarize your project. This should be a two to four page summary which will be presented to the group. We will schedule these presentations toward the end of the semester. You are encouraged to use this exercise to inform your Final Paper.
The Final Paper is due on the last day of the course. Since we will be discussing paper proposals midway through the semester and will be doing mini-ethnographic exercises which will inform the Final Papers, the Papers are intended to summarize your work for the semester. Papers should be ten to twelve pages long and again should concern the exploration of a particular health/illness category. Though course readings should provide a cornerstone to your research, outside readings are necessary as well. But importance will be placed on the coherence and logic of an argument in your paper rather than a long list of bibliographic references. Papers should be paginated, stapled, and have a cover page with paper title, your name, course title, instructor name, and semester. Papers should be 12 pt font, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. If you are unable to make use of a computer, your handwriting must be easily legible, and page lengths appropriately adjusted.

Absences: More than four absences will constitute failure of the course.

Ethics: Plagiarism will constitute failure of the course. Further disciplinary action may also be taken.

Classroom Etiquette: Be on time. No cell phones, beepers, food. Please bring the assigned readings to class.

Office Hours: You are expected to come to office hours at least three times. Once to discuss your paper proposal well before midsemester, once to discuss your ethnography project, and once more to discuss the progress of your Final Paper well before the end of the semester. It is important to communicate your plans with me.

Schedule of Readings:

Mon, Jan 20    No class - holiday
Wed, Jan 22    First class meeting. Check roster, go over syllabus, fill out Student Data Sheet
Mon, Jan 27    Introduction and Sign up for presentations
                Chaps 1, 2

Section 1: A Critical Review of the Foundations of Euro-Western Biomedicine

Wed, Jan 29    Biomedicine works in many cases, but what is missing?
                Journal of Health Services 24: 25-44

                Science.” In The “Racial” Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future, ed. S Harding,

                York: Basic Books
                Chaps 1, 5, 6
Mon, Feb 3  Medical Education in the US – The Case of Reproductive Health
Parts 1, 2 (pgs 1-68)

Wed, Feb 5  Martin, cont'd - Gender Ideology, Part 3 (pgs 69-178)

Mon, Feb 10  The Constant Negotiation of Categories – Genetic Screening in America
Chaps 3, 4, 7

Wed, Feb 12  Rapp, cont'd – Ambiguity in the Lab and the Burdens of Knowledge, Chaps 8, 9

Mon, Feb 17  A Clash of Ideologies: American Epilepsy or Hmong Shamanism
Preface, Chaps 1-5

Wed, Feb 19  Fadiman, cont'd - Miscommunication and Its Results, Chaps 7,11,17,18,19

Mon, Feb 24  Presentation of Final Paper Proposals

Wed, Feb 26  Presentation of Final Paper Proposals

Section 2: Social Ills, Global Diseases, and Catastrophic Transformations

Mon, Mar 3  Nervos and Pharmaceutical Dependency in Brazil
Chap 5

Wed, Mar 5  Scheper-Hughes, Hunger and Silence, cont’d – Chap 6

Mon, Mar 10  AIDS, Risk, and Poverty in Contemporary Haiti
Parts 3, 4

Wed, Mar 12  Farmer, cont'd – Accusations and Isms in Historical Context
Farmer 1992, Part 5


Mon, Mar 17 – no class, Spring Break

Wed, Mar 19 – no class, Spring Break
Mon, Mar 24 Catastrophe and The Controversy of Pain - Bhopal
Chaps 6, 7

Wed, Mar 26 The Normalization of Catastrophe
Chaps 1, 5

Section 3: Curing the Ills that Plague Us – Or Not?

Mon, Mar 31 Historical perspectives of Central African Healing
Chaps 5, 7, 11

Wed, Apr 2 Contemporary Uganda: Colonial influences, mythical proportions

White, Luise 1995 "They could make their victims dull": Genders and Genres, Fantasies and Cures in Colonial Southern Uganda" American Historical Review, Volume 100, Number 5, pp 1379-1403

Whyte, Susan Reynolds 1982 "Penicillin, Battery Acid and Sacrifice" in Social Science and Medicine, Volume 16, pp 2055-2064

Mon, Apr 7 South Asia: Development, Smallpox eradication and Shamanism
Pigg, Stacey Leigh 1995 "Acronyms and Effacement: Traditional Medical Practitioners (TMP) in International Health Development" in Social Science and Medicine, Volume 41, Number 1, pp 47-68


Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt 1988 "Healing Boundaries in South Kalimantan" in Social Science and Medicine, Volume 27, Number 8, pp 829-839

Wed, Apr 9 The Master Plan – Nazism and Social Cleansing


Mon, Apr 14  Native American 'herbal' remedies, presentation sign-ups
   all articles: Medical Anthropology Quarterly, Volume 14, Number 4

Wed, Apr 16 – no class, holiday

Mon, Apr 21  Presentation of Ethnographic Projects
Wed, Apr 23  Presentation of Ethnographic Projects
Mon, Apr 28  Contemporary Chinese Public Health
   readings TBA

Wed, Apr 30  Biomedicine and Democracy in the ‘Developing’ World

   Chaps 1, 2

Mon, May 5  Adams cont’d – Revolution, Chap 4

Wed, May 7  Adams cont’d – Corruption continued?, Chap 7

Mon, May 12  Bioethics and the Social Sciences


Wed, May 14  Review
   Last day of class, papers should be turned in during class.
   No papers will be accepted after 5pm on this day.