

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
Anthropology Department

ANTH 127a
Medicine, Body and Culture
Summer 2008, Session I

Class meets Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:25am-1:45pm, in Brown 115

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Office hours by appointment

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to medical anthropology, covering a range of topics using theoretical and ethnographic sources. The course is divided into four units. We begin with *Foundations of Medical Anthropology*, where we explore the complexity of concepts such as health, illness and disease across cultures. Next we look more closely at the concept of *Ethnomedicines* and examine what is unique to biomedicine when compared to other medical systems. In a case study, we learn about the story of Lia Lee, a Hmong child whose medical treatment in a US hospital makes the reader keenly aware of the drama that can ensue when two different medical systems collide. The third unit is *Ways of Knowing*, a unit focused on the production of scientific knowledge as cultural activity. We take a closer look at the culture of medicine, medical training, and investigate views of the body in these contexts. In the fourth unit, *Global Health and Inequalities*, we consider several case studies and what they tell us about access to health care in a structurally unequal world system. Our main case study in this final unit is an ethnographic account of HIV/AIDS in Haiti.

Readings

Three books are required for this course. They are available at the Brandeis bookstore and have also been put on reserve in the library. Assigned in this order, the titles are:

1. Merrill Singer and Hans Baer's Introducing Medical Anthropology: A Discipline in Action.
2. Anne Fadiman's The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures.
3. Paul Farmer's Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues.

Journal articles and book chapters are available online through LATTE. I strongly recommend that you print these articles and chapters and bring them to class, as we will often refer to specific passages in class. When several readings are required for one class, we may choose to divide the readings among different members of the class who will then present what they read to those who did not.

Unless arrangements have been made with the instructor, please do not bring your laptop to class, as they can easily distract you and your colleagues during class, thus preventing you from participating fully.

Requirements

- Class participation: 20%
- One-page reading responses: 2 @ 10% = 20%
- In class quizzes = 10%
- Mid-term: 20%
- Final exam: 30%

Class Participation includes 1. attendance; 2. timely completion of reading assignments by the date listed in the syllabus; 3. thoughtful contribution to class discussions and occasional small group presentations. Class participation is worth 20% of the final grade.

Attendance is an important part of the class and of your grade. If you anticipate having to miss a class, please e-mail me ahead of time to let me know. You may request an excused absence, if applicable.

Two 1-page reading responses. These are brief reaction essays in which you will reflect critically on a particular reading of your choosing within the unit on which we are working at the time of your writing. Reading responses are both analytic and personal in nature. They are *not* a summary of the reading. While there is no need to develop a full argument, you should aim to focus and deepen a particular aspect of the reading you have chosen. Early in the semester I will provide you with an example of a successful reading response. Please aim not to exceed one page. You can play with spacing and margins. The font should not be smaller than 11-point, however. Rewrites, if requested, will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Each essay is worth 10% of the final grade, for a total of 20%.

Please deliver hard-copies of all written work. Unless explicit permission has been granted by the instructor due to special circumstances, no emailed papers will be accepted.

All work is due at class time on the day determined in the syllabus. Unless special arrangements have been made with the professor at least 48 hours in advance of the due date, written work submitted after the due date and time will be lowered by one third of a grade for each day (or fraction of a day) late, except in cases of documented illness or emergency.

In class quizzes are brief written responses to a question posed at the beginning of a class. The question is directly based on the readings for that day. In class quizzes are not only a way to encourage you to stay on top of the readings, it is also an opportunity to reflect on the content of the day's readings before we actually begin discussing it. In class quizzes are worth a total of 10% of the final grade.

The mid-term consists of five short essay questions, to be answered during the first half of a regular class period on a date to be announced. Seven questions will be available in the exam, of which you will answer five of your choosing. Each of your answers will consist of a couple of short paragraphs.

A study guide will be provided one week before the exam. The content of the exam is based closely on the class contents covered up to the date of the mid-term. The best preparation for the mid-term is to keep up with the readings and attend class regularly. The mid-term is worth 20% of the final grade.

The final exam is similar to the mid-term, except that you will answer seven out of ten possible questions and have a period of three hours available to complete the exam. Otherwise the format is the same, and a study guide will be provided a week in advance. The final exam is worth 30% of the final grade.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have reasonable accommodation made for you in this course, please see the instructor as soon as possible.

UNIT I: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Monday, June 2

Introduction to Medical Anthropology

- ❑ Merrill Singer & Hans Baer, 2007. Introducing Medical Anthropology: A Discipline in Action. Chapter 1: Why Have a Medical Anthropology? (Pp. 1-19 only) and Chapter 2: What Medical Anthropologists Do? (Pp. 35-62).

In class reading:

- ❑ Horace Miner, 1956. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema" *American Anthropologist* 58:503-507.

Tuesday, June 3

Disease, Illness, Sickness

- ❑ Merrill Singer & Hans Baer, 2007. Introducing Medical Anthropology: A Discipline in Action. Chapter 3: What is Health? Experiencing Illness, Knowing Disease (Pp. 63-73 only).
- ❑ Robert Hahn, 1995. Sickness and Healing: An Anthropological Perspective. Introduction (Pp. 1-7 only). Chapter 1: The Universe of Sickness (Pp. 13-31 only).

Recommended:

- ❑ Arthur Kleinman, 1988. The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing & the Human Condition. Preface (xi-xv). Chapter 1: The Meaning of Symptoms and Disorders (Pp. 1-8 only).
- ❑ Allan Young, 1982. The Anthropologies of Illness and Sickness. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11:257-85.

UNIT II: ETHNOMEDICINES

Thursday, June 5

Ethnomedicines

- ❑ Merrill Singer & Hans Baer, 2007. Introducing Medical Anthropology: A Discipline in Action. Chapter 4: Ethnomedicine: The World of Treatment and Healing (Pp: 101-114 only).
- ❑ Claude Levi-Strauss, 1998 [?] The Sorcerer and His Magic. Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology, Peter Brown, ed. (Pp: 129-137).
- ❑ Begin Fadiman.

Recommended:

- ❑ Victor Turner, 1967. The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual. Chapter X: A Ndembu Doctor in Practice (Pp: 359-393).
- ❑ Richard B. Lee, 2003 [1983]. The Dobe Ju/'hoansi, 3rd edition. Chapter 9: Coping with Life: Religion, World View, and Healing (Pp: 125-140).
- ❑ Arthur Rubel and Michael R. Hass, 1996. Ethnomedicine. Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method (revised edition), Carolyn F. Sargent and Thomas M. Johnson, eds. (Pp: 113-130).

Monday, June 9

Biomedicine, Medicalization

- ❑ Arthur Kleinman, 1995. Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine. Chapter 2: What is Specific to Biomedicine? (Pp: 21-40).
- ❑ Lorna A. Rhodes, 1996. Studying Biomedicine as a Cultural System. Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method, Carolyn F. Sargent and Thomas M. Johnson, eds. (Pp: 165-180).
- ❑ Continue Fadiman.

Recommended:

- ❑ Peter Conrad, 2005. The Shifting Engines of Medicalization. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 46(March): 3-14.

**** First reading response** due at the beginning of class.

Tuesday, June 10

Medical systems in conflict I: shamanism and biomedicine case study.

Required:

- ❑ Anne Fadiman, 1997. The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures.

Film "The Split Horn: Life of a Shaman in America" (58 min.)

Thursday, June 12

Medical systems in conflict II: culture bound syndromes case studies.

- ❑ Arthur Rubel, 1998 [1964]. The Epidemiology of a Folk Illness: Susto in Hispanic America. Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology, Peter Brown, ed. (Pp: 196-206).
- ❑ Gananath Obeyesekere, 1985. Depression, Buddhism, and the Work of Culture in Sri Lanka. Culture and Depression: Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder, Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good, eds. (Pp:134-152).
- ❑ Margaret Lock, 1993. Encounters with Aging. Chapter 1: The Turn of Life: Unstable Meanings (Pp: 3-30).

Monday, June 16

**** Mid term.**

UNIT III: WAYS OF KNOWING

After the mid-term: Introduction to Science as Cultural Activity.

Tuesday, June 17

Knowing the Body

- ❑ Byron J. Good, 1994. Medicine, Rationality and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective. Chapter 3: How Medicine Constructs its Objects (Pp: 65-87).
- ❑ Carolyn Sargent and Grace Bascope, 1996. Ways of Knowing about Birth in Three Cultures. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 10(2):213-236.

Recommended:

- ❑ Michael Foucault, 1994 [1973] The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception. Chapter 1: Space and Classes (Pp: 3-21) and Chapter 7: Seeing and Knowing (Pp: 107-123).

Thursday, June 19

Theorizing the Body

- ❑ Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 1996. A Critical-Interpretive Approach in Medical Anthropology: Rituals and Routines of Discipline and Dissent. Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method (revised edition). Carolyn Sargent and Thomas Johnson, eds. (Pp: 41-70).
- ❑ Begin Farmer, if you haven't yet.

Recommended:

- ❑ Michael Foucault, 1995 [1977]. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. Part I, Chapter 1: The Body of the Condemned (Pp: 3-31), Part 3, Chapter 1: Docile Bodies (Pp: 135-169) and Chapter 3: Panopticism (Pp: 195-228).

Monday, June 23

Contexts of scientific knowledge about the body

- ❑ Emily Martin, 1990. Toward and Anthropology of Immunology: The Body as Nation State. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 4(4): 410-426.
- ❑ Sarah Lamb, 2000. White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India. Chapter 1: Personhoods (Pp: 27-41).
- ❑ Anne Fausto-Sterling, 2000. Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality. Chapter 2: "That Sexe Which Prevaileth" (Pp: 30-44).

Recommended:

- ❑ Sarah Franklin. 1995. Science as Culture, Cultures of Science. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:163-184.

**** Second reading response** due at the beginning of class.

Tuesday, June 24

Knowing "Other" Bodies, "Other" Psyches

- ❑ Jean Comaroff, 1993. The Diseased Heart of Africa: Medicine, Colonialism, and the Black Body. Knowledge, Power, and Practice: The Anthropology of Medicine and Everyday Life, Shirley Lindenbaum and Margaret Lock, eds. (Pp: 305-329).
- ❑ Charles L. Briggs with Clara Mantini-Briggs, 2003. Stories in the Time of Cholera: Racial Profiling During a Medical Nightmare. Chapter 9: Culture Equals Cholera (Pp: 199-223).
- ❑ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 1985. Culture, Scarcity & Maternal Thinking. *Ethos* 13(4):291-317.
- ❑ Continue Farmer.

UNIT IV: GLOBAL HEALTH AND INEQUALITIES

Thursday, June 26

Structural Violence

- ❑ Merrill Singer & Hans Baer, 2007. Introducing Medical Anthropology: A Discipline in Action. Chapter 6: Health Disparity, Health Inequality (Pp: 151-180).
- ❑ Paul Farmer, 1999. Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues. Preface to the Paperback Edition (xi-xxviii), Introduction (1-17) and Chapter 1: The Vitality of Practice (Pp: 18-36).

If time allows, film "Yesterday" (96 minutes).

Monday, June 30

The case of Haiti.

- ❑ Paul Farmer, 1999. Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues. Pages to be determined.

Tuesday, July 1

Access to HIV/AIDS health care.

- ❑ Paul Farmer, 1999. Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues. Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues. Pages to be determined.

Film "Brazil: Winning Against AIDS" (26 min.)

Wednesday, July 2

**** Final Exam.**

