

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY, ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT
ANTH 127a, Medicine, Body and Culture
Summer 2009, Session II

Class meets Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:15am-1:45pm, in Shiffman 120

Instructor: Julia Kirst

E-mail: jkirst@brandeis.edu.

Office hours by appointment. Please e-mail to set date and time.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to medical anthropology through lectures and participatory exercises exploring theoretical concepts and their application to ethnographic examples. The course is divided into four units. The first unit, *Foundations of Medical Anthropology*, discusses anthropology as a whole and anthropology applied to medical systems in particular. In unit 2, *Ethnomedicines*, we examine medical systems of cultures different from our own. In unit 3, *Biomedicine*, we apply a critical eye to the medical system we are accustomed to and therefore consider "the norm." Unit 4, *The Body, Cultural Politics and Science*, considers the impact of structural violence and cultural politics on conceptualizations of the body, as well the role of culture in the development of scientific knowledge about the body.

Readings

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

1. Merrill Singer and Hans Baer's Introducing Medical Anthropology: A Discipline in Action.
2. Peter Brown's Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology, first edition.

Journal articles and book chapters are available online through LATTE. Some are also available through JSTOR and online. 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.

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.

Requirements

- Class participation: 20%
- 1-2 page reaction essays: 4 x 5% = 20%
- "How would a medical anthropologist react?" presentations: 4 x 5% = 20%
- Mid summer term test (material 1st half): 20%
- Final summer term test (material 2nd half): 20%

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.

Please note that the readings are scheduled somewhat loosely to allow us to adapt their due dates, if necessary. Readings may be added or deleted if class discussion inspires new areas of inquiry.

Four 1-2-page reaction essays are brief essays to be delivered every Monday morning on one of the readings from the previous week. Reading responses are both analytic and personal in nature. They are *not* a summary of the reading. You should aim to focus and deepen a particular aspect of the reading you have chosen. Whenever possible, please attempt to make connections between the chosen reading and other materials from class. You may include personal experiences, but not at the expense of analytic writing. Early in the semester I will provide you with an example of a successful reading response. Each essay is worth 5% of the final grade, for a total of 20%.

Please deliver hard copies of all written work. Unless we have discussed it previously, no emailed papers will be accepted.

Four “How would a medical anthropologist react?” presentations

Each day, starting this Thursday, we will begin class with a controversial topic presented by one of the students. Each presentation will be about 20 minutes long. Sample topics are available from the instructor, but topics of your own choosing are welcome and encouraged. Students presentations will: 1) Present the facts of the case; 2) Explain the dilemma or the different positions people have taken in regard to this case; 3) Discuss your position on this matter, as if you were a medical anthropologist responding to a journalist’s request for comment. Each presentation is worth 5% of the final grade, for a total of 20%

The mid summer term and the final summer term test consist of five short essay questions each. Each question should be answered in two or three paragraphs. The questions are designed to allow you to demonstrate a combination of knowledge of class materials and ability to reflect critically on these materials, making connections between topics and readings whenever possible. Sample questions will be discussed before the tests. The best preparation for these tests is to keep up with the readings, attend class regularly and take time to ask questions or request an office hour meeting when the material is not clear. The mid summer term and the final summer term tests are each worth 20% of the final grade.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and need accommodation made for you in this course, please see me right away.

UNIT I: FOUNDATIONS OF MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Monday, July 6

In class reading:

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

Tuesday, July 7 & Thursday, July 9

- Peter Brown (PB), Chapter 1, *Medical Anthropology: An Introduction to the Fields* (Pp. 10-19).

- ❑ Merrill Singer & Hans Baer (S&B), Chapter 1, Why Have a Medical Anthropology? (Pp. 1-19 only), Chapter 2, What Medical Anthropologists Do? (Pp. 35-62) and Chapter 3, What is Health? Experiencing Illness, Knowing Disease (Pp. 63-73 only).

UNIT II: ETHNOMEDICINES

Monday, July 13

- ❑ S&B, Chapter 4, Ethnomedicine: The World of Treatment and Healing (Pp. 101-114 only).
- ❑ PB, Chapter 14, Claude Levi-Strauss, The Sorcerer and His Magic (Pp. 129-137).

Tuesday, July 14 & Thursday, July 16

- ❑ 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).
- ❑ PB, Chapter 18, Michael Brown, Dark Side of the Shaman (Pp. 170-173).

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

UNIT III: BIOMEDICINE

Monday, July 20

- ❑ S&B, Chapter 4, Ethnomedicine: The World of Treatment and Healing (Pp. 114-120 only).
- ❑ 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).

Tuesday, July 21

Mid summer term test

Thursday, July 23

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

Monday, July 27

- ❑ PB, Chapter 22, Arthur Rubel, The Epidemiology of a Folk Illness: Susto in Hispanic America, (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).

UNIT IV: THE BODY, CULTURAL POLITICS AND SCIENCE

Tuesday, July 28

- Sarah Lamb, 2000, White Saris and Sweet Mangoes: Aging, Gender, and Body in North India, Chapter 1, Personhoods (Pp. 27-41).
- PB, Chapter 23, Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock, The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology (Pp. 208-225)

Thursday, July 30

- S&B, Chapter 6, Health Disparity, Health Inequality (Pp. 151-180).
- PB, Chapter 11, Paul Farmer, Social Inequalities and Emerging Infectious Diseases (Pp. 98-107).
- PB, Chapter 40, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, Culture, Scarcity, and Maternal Thinking (Pp. 375-387).

Monday, August 3

- Fausto-Sterling, March/April 1993, The Five Sexes, *The Sciences* (Online)
- Fausto-Sterling, July/August 2000, The Five Sexes Revisited, *The Sciences* (Online)

Tuesday, August 4

- Byron J. Good, 1994, Medicine, Rationality and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective, Chapter 3, How Medicine Constructs its Objects (Pp: 65-87).
- Emily Martin, 1990, Toward and Anthropology of Immunology: The Body as Nation State, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 4(4): 410-426.

Thursday, August 6

Final summer term test

