Course Description: This course examines beliefs and practices regarding health and healing across cultures and provides an introduction to medical anthropology.

The first of six units explores medical anthropology historically and in relation to other subspecialties in anthropology and to allied fields. Our historical trajectory begins with anthropologists’ and other social scientists’ engagement with health and healing prior to the emergence of the subdiscipline of medical anthropology. After considering early anthropological work on human suffering and social responses, we look at the emergence of medical anthropology as a named specialization within the field of anthropology. We then read a book-length medical anthropological monograph on healing in Haiti, a religiously and medically pluralistic setting. Next, to gain knowledge about the scope of medical anthropology, we reflect on selected readings that illustrate the range of topics addressed and introduce the variety of concepts and theoretical approaches employed, including clinical, critical, feminist, biocultural, and medical ecological perspectives. To gain insight into what is distinctive about medical anthropology, we cross disciplines to read studies from other fields that focus on health and healing, including medicine, epidemiology, public health, cross-cultural psychology, and medical sociology.

The second unit is an interlude with no assigned readings during which students will write their mid-term essays. The instructor will report on her recent work on disasters and health and on her earlier work on health and healing among Akha highlanders of Northern Thailand.

In our third unit, we focus on ethics in medical anthropological research, examining such issues as decisions about what research questions to address and how, the risks and benefits of research studies to participants and to society at large, and the responsibilities of the researcher.

Western medicine is the focus of our fourth unit. Here we subject the familiar to critical scrutiny by considering cultural, political, economic, and historical factors that have shaped and continue to shape the development and practice of Western medicine.

We then concentrate on four in-depth case studies in the fifth unit. Each situates a specific health problem in historical, political, economic, and cultural context, and each examines the role of gender, race/ethnicity, and/or class in determining health status. Our case studies concern mental health among Native Americans, a cholera outbreak in a minority community in Venezuela, sexually transmitted infections and cervical cancer in urban Brazil, and HIV/AIDS in the United States. These case studies help us to reflect in greater depth on cultural constructions of health and healing, ethical issues, “pure” versus practical or applied
medical anthropology, research methodology, theoretical perspectives, and the interplay of local, national, and international forces and institutions in shaping health risks and individual and institutional responses to disease.

We close with a review of the course, reflecting on what we’ve learned from the readings, lectures, discussions, films, and guest presentations.

Readings: Students are expected to read all the assigned readings in advance of the class in which they will be discussed. Additional reading is also required. Each student may be required to read extra material in preparation for writing the short essay and the take-home final (see Requirements). Each student who chooses to do a final paper (rather than an exam) must do independent research for it (see Requirements). Assigned books are on reserve at Goldfarb Library. All assigned readings that are not in the required textbooks are available on-line, either on WebCT or on an electronic database. The Stable URL, the information necessary for obtaining readings on electronic databases, is provided below in the Course Outline and on WebCT.

Textbooks: The following books, listed in the order in which they are assigned, are available for purchase at the Brandeis Bookstore.


Requirements: Students are expected to read assigned materials thoroughly and thoughtfully in advance of the class in which they will be discussed. Evidence of critical reading and of comparison across readings should be apparent in class participation and written work.

There are four graded elements, described below, each worth a percentage of the final course grade (due dates are given in the Course Outline):

1. **Class participation (20%)**: This element includes attendance, engagement, participation, bringing in relevant newspaper clippings or reports on non-print media items, and possibly completing pop quizzes. To facilitate involvement in classroom exchanges, students will be divided into four “cults of affliction” or “health clubs” whose members will be responsible for contributing to class discussion on a rotating basis. Assignment of membership will be done during the second class session. Each teaching assistant will serve as mentor to members of two of the four “groups.” A superscripted number preceding various class sessions in the Course Outline indicates which group is responsible for helping to guide discussion that day. Members of each group are responsible on three occasions. Note that on each of the three days for which a member of a given group is responsible for helping to facilitate discussion, each member of that group must hand in her/his own discussion guide (see #2) on the readings. Note also that, regardless of group membership, all students are encouraged to participate actively in all classes.
For each of the three classes for which a group has responsibility, each member should do the following:

- Prepare to help facilitate classroom discussion by carefully reflecting on the assigned readings, including thinking about the following questions:
  - What, if anything, didn’t you understand? If you can, figure out what you didn’t understand and include that in your discussion guide. If you can’t track down an answer, simply describe what it is you didn’t understand.
  - What were the most important points in the readings?
  - What were the strengths of the readings – what was done well?
  - What were the weaknesses of the readings – what wasn’t done well or what was left out?
  - How do the readings link up with our other readings and classroom discussions? Note that this section should be longer as we progress in the semester and you have more material with which to compare the readings assigned for that day.
  - What else, if anything, is worthy of note?

- Write up your answers to the above questions as a discussion guide (see No. 2 below). Bulleted format is fine.

It is possible that one or both of the teaching assistants will hold occasional discussion sections on topics of particular interest to class members. Attendance will not be required, but taking part will count towards class participation.

Through WebCT, members of the class can participate in an on-line discussion group. Everyone is invited to post information, questions, and commentary relevant to the course and to respond to one another’s postings. Participation in this virtual discussion will be counted towards class participation.

2. **Discussion guides (25% for three):** The three 1-3-page discussion guides are described above (No. 1). Each is to be handed in at the end of the class period for which it was prepared.

3. **Short essay (25%):** The assignment for a mid-term 5-6-page essay will be handed out two weeks in advance of the due date.

4. **Final research paper (including abstract and preliminary bibliography) OR take-home final examination (30%):**

**Research paper:** Each student who selects this option will write a research paper on a health-related topic of her/his choosing (10-12 text pages [plus references] for undergraduates and 15-20 text pages [plus references] for graduate students). Due to the time required to obtain research permission from the University’s Institutional Review Board, it is unlikely that any student will be able to do research with human subjects for their final paper. In preparation for writing the research paper, each student will write an abstract (maximum 1 page plus bibliography) describing the proposed topic and its importance. A preliminary bibliography of at least 5 potential sources must be appended to the abstract (maximum 1 web-based source for preliminary bibliography). In March, after her/his paper abstract has been approved, each student must meet with the instructor to discuss the topic and analysis plans. Sign-up sheets will be passed around during class. Students are also encouraged to consult once or many times with a teaching assistant or the instructor as they research and write their papers. A student who opts to do the research paper may decide to switch to the final take-home examination.

**Content:** Students are encouraged to choose paper topics about a society or societies outside the United States. Your chosen topic must fall within the scope of medical anthropology. The final paper is not a descriptive report; it must be analytical. In your analysis,
you must make use of analytical concepts and/or theoretical perspectives from at least three assigned readings. Use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ is permitted, but opinions must be founded on research and supported with data.

**Sources:** A library session will be held at which attendance is required. A Reference Librarian will provide guidance in locating appropriate sources for research papers. Each student’s use of print and other sources in her/his research paper should demonstrate competence in locating and mining relevant sources. Remember to draw on the assigned readings not only by harnessing at least three to your analysis to fulfill the requirement, but also by checking their bibliographies for sources relevant to your paper topic. Frequently, students consult books but not journal articles or vice versa. Please avoid that pitfall. It is a rare topic that does not benefit from consulting both books and articles. Remember that journal articles tend to get into print faster than books. It is important to read all sources critically, paying attention to the reliability of the information and the solidity of the analysis, but this need is especially acute for web-based sources. Unlike scholarly publications, whether books or articles, most web-based sources are not subject to a review process. Web-based sources must be documented with a full citation that includes the html address. As noted above, only one web-based source can be included in the paper abstract. There is, however, no limit on how many web-based sources can be used in the paper itself, but a research paper based exclusively on web-based sources is not acceptable. Note that an article from a print journal that is accessed on-line through JSTOR or another electronic database does not count as a web-based source, which is something that is only available on the web.

**Final examination:** Each student who selects this option will do a take-home essay examination based on the course readings, films, discussions, guest presentations, etc. The likely format is to answer 2 of 3 questions, with each response being 5-6 pages. As for the mid-term essay, it is possible that the take-home final will involve additional reading. If so, this reading will be made available along with the exam questions. As in the final paper, students will be required to utilize a specified number of required readings in their arguments. Students will have two weeks to complete the take-home exam. Completed essays will be due at the same time as the final research papers.

**Style and Formatting:** Any standard style for textual citations, footnotes or endnotes and for references or bibliographic entries is acceptable. For example, you can follow the style guidelines of the Modern Language Association (MLA) or the American Anthropological Association (AAA). What style you choose is not important, but consistent use of your chosen style is. All written work must be typewritten with 1-inch margins, double-spacing, and 12-point font. Right justification is not acceptable, as it makes the text difficult to read (maybe not to students’ eyes, but certainly to my aging ones).

**Hard Copy Requirement:** Written work will only be accepted in hard copy. Emailed or faxed versions will not be accepted.

**Assessment:** Grades for written work will be based on content and effectiveness of communication. Spelling, grammar, organization, and clarity of expression are elements in the effectiveness of communication.

**Late work:** Unexcused late work will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade.

**Accommodation:** 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.
Course Outline (subject to revision):

Introduction
Class 1: Tuesday, January 16: Overview of the course

Unit 1: Introduction to Medical Anthropology
1. Precursors and the Emergence of the Subdiscipline
Class 2: Friday, January 19
ASSIGNED: Membership in healing societies/health clubs.

2. Topical Scope
1Class 3, Tuesday, January 23

3. Healing in Haiti
Class 4, Friday, January 26
Film: Misterios
Begin reading Paul Brodwin, Medicine and Morality in Haiti
Class 5, Tuesday, January 30
Paul Brodwin, Medicine and Morality in Haiti (entire book)

4. Theoretical Approaches
2Class 6: Friday, February 2
Class 7: Tuesday, February 6

CIRCULATED: List on which to indicate tentative topic for final research paper (note that this does not commit you either to a topic or to the research paper option); the list of tentative topics will help the research librarian prepare for our library session.

4. Allied Fields

4Class 8: Friday, February 9

Class 9: Tuesday, February 13: Library Session
Readings: None

1Class 10: Friday, February 16

ASSIGNMENT: Essay topic and (possibly) reading handed out.
MID-TERM RECESS: No classes Monday, February 19 – Friday, February 23

Unit 2: Research Reports
Class 11: Tuesday, **February 27**: Discussion of health issues related to disasters
Readings: None

Class 12: Friday, **March 2**: Slide show on health and healing among Akha highlanders of Northern Thailand
Readings: None
**DUE**: Essay due at the beginning of class.

Unit 3: Ethics in Medical Anthropology
Class 13: Tuesday, **March 6**


**WebCT**


[http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0745-5194%28199612%292%3A10%3A4%3C455%3ATCDGOFC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0745-5194%28199612%292%3A10%3A4%3C455%3ATCDGOFC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-D)


- **Film Showing and Discussion of “The Deadly Deception”** (Attendance not required)
- **Film Showing and Discussion of “Moolade”** (Attendance not required)

Extra Evening Class: Wednesday, **March 7**
Location and time to be announced.

Extra Evening Class: Monday, **March 12**
Location and time to be announced.

Unit 4: Western Medicine

Class 14, Tuesday, **March 13**


**DUE**: Prospectus for final research paper due by 4PM in my mailbox (Brown 228).
Unit 5: Case Studies

1. Mental Health among Native Americans
   1Class 15, Friday, March 16
   O'Neill, pp. 1-109 (plus endnotes)
   CIRCULATED: Sign-up for appointments with instructor to discuss final paper.

2Class 16, Friday, March 20
   O'Neill, pp. 110-216 (plus endnotes)

2. Cholera in Venezuela
   Class 17: Friday, March 23
   Readings: None (but start Briggs & Mantini-Briggs)

3Class 18: Tuesday, March 27
   Briggs with Mantini-Briggs, pp. 1-162 (plus endnotes)

4Class 19: Friday, March 30
   Briggs with Mantini-Briggs, pp. 163-331 (plus endnotes)

PASSEOVER AND SPRING RECESS: No class Monday, April 2 – Tuesday, April 10

3. Sexually Transmitted Infections and Cervical Cancer in Brazil
   Class 20: Friday, April 13
   Gregg, pp. 1-88 (plus Appendix One, pp. 160-162)

Class 21: Tuesday: April 17
   Gregg, pp. 89-159 (plus Appendices Two-Four, pp. 163-173)

4. HIV/AIDS in the United States
   Class 22: Friday, April 20: Showing of the film “Treating Me”
   Levenson, pp. 3-145 (plus endnotes)
   ASSIGNMENT: Final take-home exam and (possibly) associated reading handed out.

Class 23: Tuesday, April 24
   Levenson, pp. 146-276 (plus endnotes)

Conclusion
Class 24: Friday, April 27: Review and synthesis (lead by CAs)

DUE: Research paper OR take-home essay examination due Tuesday, May 9 by 4PM in
my mailbox (Brown 228).