Anthropology 257 W

**Culture, Medicine and Health: an Introduction to Medical Anthropology**

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W/F 10-11:30am Office phone: 4699

Office Hours: T 4-5pm, W 11:30-1pm, TH 1-2pm email: rupton

**“Sickness is more than just an unfortunate brush with nature. It is more than something that ‘just happens’ to people. Sickness is something that humans do in uniquely original and creative ways. Illness is a form of bodily praxis, of bodily action” ~Nancy Scheper-Hughes**

**Course Description:**

What is sickness? What is health? How do these definitions vary across cultures and history? These are the kinds of questions that frame this course and that I expect you as class participants to engage with. I am interested for example, in knowing how you would explain to me how and why exactly some people appear ill or get defined as ill and others do not. What are the means through which we understand these processes? Is it luck of the draw? Poor genes? Discrimination? Or something else entirely? In the U.S. we tend to think that high blood pressure is a sign of illness, caused by stress or salt…in Germany, low blood pressure is understood in the same manner and is cause for concern. Why are there such differences? These and other topics are the focus of this class. Broadly, we will investigate how and why cultures explain what it means to be “well” or “unwell” in society. More specifically we will examine such topics as: western biomedical models of health, the body and gender, access to health care in different contexts, ethics, death, dying, birth and the politics of reproduction, drugs and how we think we “treat” illness or not…all of these will form the basis of our anthropological investigations.

**Course Expectations:**

I have much the same expectations for every class I teach. That is, I expect this course will be a challenge. It will be a challenge in the sense that it will suggest to you alternative ways of being and knowing. All of which….and I cannot emphasize this enough…are to be considered equally as “valid”. We are trying to be culturally relative in our study and understanding of medical practices and systems that might at first seem really, really different and difficult to grasp. This class will ideally offer you the opportunity to explore what we and other people think is “normal” and how that is valid, interesting and the means through which we can investigate those ideas. That is, engaging with many of these ideas, the challenges they present at times will be intriguing, unsettling and eye-opening. That process should be enjoyable even if what you are learning sounds completely bizarre. I expect you to learn to be critical. That does not mean “critical” in the negative sense, rather I expect that by the end of the semester you are able to look for and uncover the assumptions in any argument and can evaluate data from other contexts in sophisticated and culturally grounded terms. All knowledge is equally as “truthful” – an often difficult perspective, particularly in our own culture which is very much wedded to the biomedical model. You can expect that I am personally committed to teaching that philosophy and will provide opportunities, materials and my own theoretical and practical data to that end. Basically, I love to talk about how we tend to naturalize things in the US and how truths really vary world-wide. Talking about medicine and health is a particularly interesting way to do that. I welcome you own perspectives at all times, in various formats. Other things I ask of you:

* you will attend class
* you will attend class *prepared*
* you will feel free to come and talk to me if you are having difficulties or just want to talk more about particular ideas you have
* you will hand in all the assignments in a timely fashion-I will accept late papers but will mark them down accordingly in order to be fair to others
* you will feel free to voice your own insights and thoughtful opinions while simultaneously respecting the freedom and perspectives of others to do the same

**Course Evaluation:**

Everyone probably tells you this, but let’s be clear: according to the DePauw University handbook the grading system is as follows:

A, A-       grades reflect **“achievement of exceptionally high merit”**

B+, B, B- grades reflect “**achievement at a level superior to the basic level”**

C+, C, C- grades reflect **“basic achievement”**

D+, D, D- grades reflect **“achievement which falls short of satisfying the quantitative and qualitative**

**requirements yet warrants credit”**

What this means for this class is that work that satisfies instruction and basic material will receive grades which reflect that basic achievement-C grades.  In order to receive B grades, your work must demonstrate superior work in terms of your own critical insight, synthesis and communication skills. A grades reflect **exceptionally** high levels of achievement and reflect a high degree of intellectual rigor and carefully considered work.  While I will subtract points for errors or deficiencies I will happily add points for carefully written, imaginative thinking and communication.  Please let me know throughout the semester if you have any questions or if any aspect of your grade is unclear.  This is a dialectical enterprise-a discussion between you and I and the whole point is that we ***all*** get something out of it.   One last thing-your grade is based upon your own mastery of the material-it is not based on how you compared with others in the class.

**\***I urge you to **do two things this semester**: take advantage of the **Writing Center** – learning to craft a well written essay and communicate ideas in a persuasive manner are cornerstones of anthropology, your education at DePauw and life itself – they are here to help, use the center.  Secondly, make certain that you understand the **Academic Integrity Policy** here at the University.  If you are at all uncertain about what counts as plagiarism please ask – what we learn is grounded in the work of others but learning to interpret and communicate new ideas based upon that knowledge and in our own manner is essential.

\*\*This is course is designated a **W course**. Many of you may already have a W, and are worried. I can only be truthful, there is a lot of writing expected in here, but it will (hopefully) be both challenging and rewarding. And frankly…its good for you….your writing will always get better, the more you practice. Budget your time carefully and if you feel overwhelmed, let me know. Remember this very key element to success – there is no problem that cannot be solved, please do come see me if you need any help or need clarification as we move throughout the course.

Points will be assigned as follows:

Exam # 1 50 points

Exam #2 80 points

Exam #3 (final) 100 points

Paper #1 50 points

Paper #2 80 points

Paper #3 100 points

Participation 70 points

Physician’s Log 70 points

Total: 600 points

\*Note on Participation: You will notice that class participation is a significant portion of the final grade-this means that participating in and attending class are really important-you cannot participate if you are not here and simply sitting in a chair for the whole semester is not sufficient for a strong participation grade!

**Required Readings:**

The Woman in the Body, Emily Martin

Women in Pain, Kaja Finkler

Kuru Sorcery, Shirley Lindenbaum

Letting Them Die, Catherine Campbell

Local Babies, Global Science, Marcia Inhorn

Dark Remedy, Rock Brynner and Trent Stephens

**Course Schedule of Events:**

1. **Defining our Terms and Perspectives**

W Aug 24 **Introduction to the course**

F Aug 26 Defining some terms

Read: chps. 1-3 in Martin/ **Write: a one page answer to the question, “what makes someone healthy, what makes someone sick?”**

W Aug 31 **Biomedicine as a cultural system**

Read: Martin (finish), “The Egg and The Sperm: How Science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles”, Martin

F Sept 2

Read:, “The Surgeon as Hero”, Katz; “Learning Medicine: The construction of Medical Knowledge at Harvard Medical School” Good and Good

W Sept 7

Read: “Ethnomedicine”, Rubel and Hass; “Embodied Knowledge: Thinking with the Body in Critical Medical Anthropology” Scheper-Hughes

1. **Gender, Health and Reproduction**

F Sept 9 **Crafting Personhood**

Read: “Making Sense of Missed Conceptions”, Franklin, “Constructing Amniocentesis”, Rapp

W Sept 14 **Food and Sex**

Read: “Staying Clean: Notes on Mazatec Ritual Celibacy and Sexual Orientation”, Duke; “Cultural Schemas of Celibacy”, de Munck

F Sept 16

Read: “Like a Natural Woman: Celibacy and the Embodied Self in Anorexia Nervosa”, Lester; “The Sweetness of Fat”, Sobo

W Sept 21 **The ‘Problem’ of Sexuality**

Read: “A Critical Historical Analysis of the Medical Construction of Lesbianism”, Stevens and Hall; “Nymphomania: The Historical Construction of Female Sexuality”, Groneman

**DUE: Paper #1**

1. **Conflicting Medical Systems**

F Sept 23

Read: Finkler, Women in Pain, (parts I and II)

W Sept 28

Read: Finkler, finish

F Sept 30

**EXAM #1 occurs in class**

W Oct 5

Read: Lindenbaum (first ½ ); “Everybody’s Got a Little Mental Illness”, Estroff

F Oct 7

Read: Lindenbaum, finish; “Cold Worms and Hysteria”, Klepp

1. **Ethics and Responsibility – Death & Quarantine**

W Oct 12

Read: “Accidental Death”, Lock; other articles here that will be **TBA**

F Oct 14

Read: “Cruel and Unusual: Drug-Resistant Tuberculoisis as Punishment”, Farmer; “Pestilence and Restraint: Guantanamo, AIDS and the Logic of Quarantine” Farmer

**[Fall Break – October 15 – 23 ☺]**

W Oct 26

Read: Campbell, Letting Them Die, (part I)

**DUE: Paper #2**

F Oct 28

Read: Campbell, (parts II & III)

W Nov 2

Read: Campbell (part IV and whatever parts you have left to finish!)

1. **Public Health and Policies of Intervention**

F Nov 4

Read: Inhorn (1st third)

W Nov 9

Read: Inhorn (2nd third)

F Nov 11

Read: finish Inhorn, read Upton article, “Promising the Permanent Condom”

W Nov 16

**EXAM #2**

F Nov 18 [no class this day – AAA meetings in Montreal]

**VI.**  **Applying Medical Anthropology-Technologies of the Future and Changes of the Past**

W Nov 30

Read: Brynner & Stephens, Dark Remedy, chps. 1-7

F Dec 2

Read: Brynner & Stephens, finish

W Dec 7

Read: **TBA**

**DUE: Paper #3**

F Dec 9

Last day of class! Meet at Professor Upton’s house.

**Final Exam [EXAM #3] will occur on Tuesday December 13th from 8:30-11:30am.**

**\*\*\*The Physcian’s Log: a document that documents your own progress and thinking about the inter-relationship between Culture, Medicine and Health in Cross Cultural Perspective……it will be explained in a separate handout in class. It will be due at one point during the semester and as a final product. It is worth considerable points and I will give you a separate handout which explains this exercise more fully.**