

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology 275

Syllabus, Fall 2001

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Anthropology 275 introduces the field of medical anthropology to undergraduates. The primary objective of the course is to think about health problems in terms of **ecological**, **evolutionary**, and **cultural** systems rather than in disease-oriented, clinical frameworks. A second goal is to learn to *compare* various societies in terms of their patterns of health and disease, their ecological systems, and beliefs about (and management of) illness. Thirdly, this course emphasizes the value of anthropological methods, including observational, qualitative, and ethnographic approaches, in the study of health.

BOOKS - available at the University Bookstore

1. Required: McElroy and Townsend, *Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective*, 3rd edition, Westview Press, 1996. (Do not purchase 2nd edition, 1989.)
2. Required: Dettwyler, *Dancing Skeletons: Life and Death in West Africa*. Waveland Press, 1994
3. Optional: Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997
4. Workbook. Workbook materials, with glossaries, case examples, and exercises to accompany each chapter of the text, will be on the course website and can be printed out. Students may also purchase a set of workbook materials at *Making Copies* in the Commons. These exercises should be studied along with assigned text and lecture materials.

ON-LINE WORKBOOK LINKS

Select here for chapter exercises:

[chapter one](#)

chapter 2	chapter 3	chapter 4A	chapter 4B	chapter 4C		
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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Two objective exams (multiple choice), each worth 10 % of the grade.
2. Two short papers (about 3 pp. each) on course material, each worth 10% of grade; questions will be distributed and will also be on the course website.
3. One final exam, in essay format, worth 20%; and
4. One research paper, worth 40 %, about 8-10 typed, double-spaced pages. The research should be in one of two formats:
 - a) a report on independent research on a topic related to medical anthropology (see recommended topics in the text on pp. 375-77); or
 - b) library and on-line research on the health problems of a specific cultural population. For example, the Fadiman book on Hmong refugees (optional purchase at bookstore) would be appropriate as an introduction to communication barriers affecting refugees. Other suitable books will be on reserve at the UGL.

BONUS WORK

A set of *bonus exercises* appears at the end of each workbook chapter. These exercises are not required, but up to 5 sets may be done for extra credit. Answers that demonstrate good understanding of the material in a unit can earn a maximum of 1.5 points (or a fraction of a point, depending on quality) toward the final grade, up to a maximum of 7.5 additional points for the semester. Bonus work can be handed in at any time. For credit it must be handed in *no later than December 7*. Bonus work can be handwritten or typed.

POLICY ON ABSENCES

The best strategy for success in this course is regular attendance. Students who register for this class are committing themselves to be in class 11:00 to 12:20 every Tuesday and Thursday. Do not schedule medical and dental appointments, car repairs, volunteer work, out-of-town trips, or other activities at this time. If you miss class due to illness, ask a T.A. or the instructor for help.

Exam dates and due dates for papers are listed in this syllabus. Put these dates on your calendar.

The only acceptable excuse for missing an exam or submitting a paper late is illness or injury or a death in the family. Before a makeup or extension can be arranged, you *must* bring medical documentation of the reason for your absence from an exam, signed by a doctor, nurse, or other responsible party. If a family member has died, bring in a published obituary, or if seriously ill or injured, bring in medical documentation.

INCOMPLETES

Incompletes are not normally given in this class. Plan to finish your report on time and to make up any missed exams before the end of the semester. Students who have missed a large portion of classes and exams due to serious illness or injury may request an incomplete, which is normally made up by auditing the class the following year (fall semester only) and doing all assigned work.

LOST ASSIGNMENTS

Because assignments submitted outside of class can get lost, or can be turned in at the wrong office, the policy for this class is that all work must be personally handed to the instructor or to the teaching assistant on or before the due date and checked off with your initials.

VIDEOS, SLIDES, OVERHEADS, AND OTHER TEACHING MATERIALS

Instruction in this class is augmented with a variety of audiovisual materials. Students are responsible for taking notes on these materials and incorporating them into papers and exam answers.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Aug. 28 **Introduction**. Read introduction, pp. xxi-xxiv., text (McElroy/Townsend)

Aug. 30 **Medical ecology**. Read chapt. 1, text; review workbook chapter 1

Sept. 4, 6 **Methods in medical anthropology**. Read chapt. 2, text; review workbook chapter 2

Sept. 11 **Ethnography and applied medical anthropology**. Read chapt. 1, 2, Dettwyler

Sept. 13 **Ecology and adaptation**. Read chapt. 3, text; review workbook chapter 3

Sept. 18 No class, Rosh Hashanah

Sept. 20 **Maladaptation and health**. Read chapt. 3, 4, Dettwyler

Sept. 25 **FIRST EXAM** (multiple choice)

Sept. 27 No class, Yom Kippur

Oct. 2, 4 **Human demography**. Read chapt. 4, text; chapt. 5, Dettwyler

Oct. 9 **Evolution of human reproduction**. Review workbook chapter 4-A

Oct. 11, 16 **Disease change in cultural evolution**. Review workbook chapters 4-B, 4-C

Oct. 16 Paper # 1 due; also submit half-page description of choice of research topic

Oct. 18, 23 **Ecology and nutrition**. Read chapt. 5, text; Review workbook chapter 5

Oct. 25 **Nutrition in the life cycle**. Read chapt. 6, text; Review workbook chapter 6;

read chapt. 6, 7, Dettwyler.

Oct. 30 SECOND EXAM (multiple choice)

Nov. 1 **Stress and disease; Culture-bound syndromes.** Read chapt. 7, text; review workbook chapter 7

Nov. 6 **Healing roles.** Read chapt. 8, 9, Dettwyler; review workbook chapter 8-A

Nov. 8,13 **Culture contact and stress.** Read chapt. 8, text; Review workbook chapter 8-B

Nov. 15 **refugees and health care.** Read chapt. 10-14 of Dettwyler;

Paper #2 due; also submit half-page progress report on project

Nov. 20 No lecture, but instructor will be available at classroom to discuss research papers

Nov. 22 Thanksgiving

Nov. 27, 29 **modernization and health;** read chapt. 9, text; review workbook exercises 9A and B

Dec. 4 Hand in research papers at class time; class review for final exam

Dec. 6 Research papers accepted at class time, 5 % penalty for lateness; class review for final exam; bonus work accepted

Dec. 7 (Friday) Last day to submit bonus work at Dr. McElroy's office; last day to submit research papers with 10% penalty for lateness.

Dec. ? FINAL EXAM, ESSAY FORMAT

date, time, and place to be announced on final exam schedule on wings.buffalo.edu