

MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology 240

Fall 2001

Prof. Lynn Morgan

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Office hours: W 1:30-3:30

and by appointment

"Surely one of the great findings of medical anthropology is that disease is universally experienced as an intrusion of the Other, of 'nature,' of what is most real, into life, but that 'nature' as revealed by sickness is culturally particular -- a spirit here, disordered humors there, a chemical imbalance elsewhere."

-- Byron Good

Course description: Medical anthropologists study the relationships among culture, social relations, the environment, and disease and healing. This course examines the cultural dimensions of illness and the medicalization of social problems in the United States as well as in non-Western societies. We will learn about approaches used by medical anthropologists to study disease etiology, the experience of suffering, and the provision of health services, including ecological, critical, phenomenological, and applied approaches. Biocultural aspects of disease are examined through case studies of the relationship between malaria and sickle cell anemia in West Africa, and cannibalism and nervous system disorders (*kuru*, in Papua New Guinea, and BSE in Europe). We will examine anthropological critiques of Western biomedicine and explore how many so-called "biological facts" (such as the "genetic blueprint," or "premenstrual syndrome") are culturally constructed and mediated. We will tackle ethical and policy issues through readings about infant death in Brazil and disease and healing among Hmong (Laotian) peoples living in the United States.

Prerequisites: Anthropology 105 (or another introductory cultural anthropology course) is a prerequisite for admission to this class. No exceptions.

Required texts are available at the Odyssey Bookshop. Books and **recommended** (i.e., not required) readings will be on reserve in Williston Library. Additional readings are collected in a reading packet available for purchase from the department secretary on the 1st floor of Merrill House. Please pick up your reading packet within the first two weeks of the semester.

Exploring Medical Anthropology, by Donald Joralemon (1999)

The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, by Anne Fadiman (1997)

The Body Silent, by Robert Murphy (1987)

Death Without Weeping, by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992)

Evaluation: Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to complete reading assignments on time and to participate in class discussions. There will be one 5-6 page self-ethnography of an illness you or someone close to you has experienced (worth 25% of your final grade), two short reading response essays (each worth 20%), and a take-home final exam (worth 35%).

Lateness policy: Assignments are due on the assigned day. It isn't fair to your classmates if you turn papers in late; obviously everyone could do better if she had more time. If you have a serious problem meeting a deadline, talk with me beforehand. Otherwise, late assignments will be marked down one full letter grade if turned in by 5 p.m. on the assigned day, and one additional grade for each day late.

Topics and readings

9/10 What is medical anthropology?

9/12 Defining "health" and "disease": historical and biocultural analysis

· Joralemon, Chapter 1

- Brown, Peter J., Ronald L. Barrett, and Mark B. Padilla. 1998. Medical anthropology: An Introduction to the fields. IN Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology. Peter J. Brown, ed., pp. 10-19. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- The Spirit Catches You, Chapters 1-3

Assignment: Write a 1-2 paragraph response to the following question: What does Anne Fadiman mean to communicate to the reader through the story of “fish soup”? Your answer should be typed, and double-spaced. It is due in class on September 17. It will be graded on a “pass/fail” basis.

9/17 Epidemiology: terms and definitions

- Cast of characters. 1999. Natural History magazine.
- Joralemon, Chapter 2
- Spirit, chapters 4-6

9/19 Theories in medical anthropology: introduction

- Joralemon, chapters 3-4
- Spirit, chapters 7-9

9/24 Evolutionary and ecological perspectives in medical anthropology: malaria

- Cohen, Mark Nathan. 1989. Behavior and health. IN Health and the Rise of Civilization. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Desowitz, Robert S. 1981. Chapter 4 in New Guinea Tapeworms and Jewish Grandmothers. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Spirit, chapters 10-11

- 9/26 Guest speaker: Prof. Alan Goodman, speaking on race and disease risk.
- Goodman, Alan H. 1997. Bred in the bone? *The Sciences* (March/April):20-25.
 - Spirit, chapters 12-13
- 10/1 Guest speaker: Dr. Mary Ryan Thorup, speaking on how to measure the efficacy of a Tibetan treatment
- Ryan, Mary. 1997. Efficacy of Tibetan medicine. *Social Science & Medicine* 44(4):535-39.
 - Spirit, Chapters 14-15
- 10/3 Case studies in ecological anthropology: *kuru* and BSE
- Lanchester, John. 1996. A new kind of contagion. *The New Yorker* 72 (December 2): 70-76+.
 - Spirit, Chapters 16-17
- 10/8 Mid-semester break
- Spirit, finish the book
- 10/10 Discussion of The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: “The life or the soul?”
- The Body Silent, Prologue and Chapter 1
 - **First reading response essay due**
- 10/15 Cartesian dualism and the mind-body problem
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Margaret M. Lock. 1987. The mindful body: A prolegomenon to future work in medical anthropology. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1(1):6-41.

- Body Silent, Chapters 2-3

10/17 Belief systems and ethnomedical perspectives in medical anthropology

- Body Silent, Chapter 4
- Steinglass, Matthew. 2001. It takes a village healer: Anthropologists believe traditional medicine can remedy Africa's AIDS crisis. *Lingua Franca* (April):28-39.

10/22 Case studies in ethnomedicine: *susto*, hot/cold theories of disease, *empacho*, *colerín*, evil eye

- Harwood, Alan. 1998. The hot-cold theory of disease: Implications for the treatment of Puerto Rican patients. IN *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*. Peter J. Brown, ed., pp. 251-58. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.
- Body Silent, Chapter 5
- **Film:** Fire on the Rim, Part IV (on *susto*, 15 minutes)

10/24 Studies in religious healing

- Joralemon, Chapter 5
- Danforth, Loring. 1989. Chapter II: The interpretation of religious healing. IN *Firewalking and Religious Healing*, pp. 50-63. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Body Silent, Chapter 6

Required evening lecture 10/24, Prof. Stefan Timmermans speaking about suicide

10/29 Case study: Audrey Santo and the Apostolate of the Silent Soul

- Barry, Ellen. 1998. The strange case of Audrey Santo. Boston Phoenix, Dec. 25-Jan. 1.
- Irving, Mark. 1998. The science of miracles. The Guardian (London), July 27.
- Look at the following two articles on the web: The Bishop's Statement and Report on the Miraculous Claims surrounding Audrey Santo, at <<http://www.worcesterdiocese.org/>>, and "Miracles or deception? The pathetic case of Audrey Santo," by Joe Nickell, at <http://www.csicop.org/si/9909/santo.html>

10/31 Discussion (continued) of Audrey Santo case

- **Recommended:** Pigg, Stacy Leigh. 1996. The credible and the credulous: The question of "villagers' beliefs" in Nepal. Cultural Anthropology 11(2):160-201.

11/5 Spirit possession: the case of *santería*

- Murphy, Joseph M. 1988. *Santería: An African Religion in America*, pp. 7-48. Boston: Beacon Press.
- **Film:** *Yo Soy Hechicero (I am a Sorcerer)* (48 minutes)

11/7 The goals of healing: "There's no cure for life"

- Finish The Body Silent
- **Self-ethnography of an illness due**

11/12 Critical medical anthropology: refocusing upstream

- McKinlay, John B. 1-page excerpt from "A case for refocusing upstream: The political economy of illness."
- Singer, Merrill. 1990. Reinventing medical anthropology: Toward a critical realignment. *Social Science & Medicine* 30(2):179-187.

- Death Without Weeping (DWW), Introduction and Chapter 1

11/14 Case studies in structural violence: The Tuskegee syphilis experiment and AIDS among poor women in the US

- Jones, James. The Tuskegee syphilis experiment.
- DWW, Chapter 2
- **Recommended:** Connors, Margaret. Sex, drugs, and structural violence: Unraveling the epidemic among poor women in the United States. IN Women, Poverty, and AIDS. Paul Farmer, Margaret Connors, and Janie Simmons, eds., pp. 91-123. Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press.

11/19 Case studies in structural violence: Smoking and the political economy of health

- Nichter, Mark and Elizabeth Cartwright. 1998. Saving the children for the tobacco industry. IN Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology. Peter J. Brown, ed., pp. 422-33. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.
- DWW, Chapters 3-4
- **Recommended:** “Curbing the Epidemic,” available online at: <http://www.globalink.org/tobacco/wb/>

11/21 Thanksgiving break

- DWW, Chapter 5

11/26 Foucault’s biopolitical subjects

- Kaw, Eugenia. 1994. “Opening” faces: The politics of cosmetic surgery and Asian American women. IN Many Mirrors: Body Image and Social Relations. Nicole Sault, ed., pp. 241-65. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

- Ong, Aihwa. 1995. Making the biopolitical subject: Cambodian immigrants, refugee medicine and cultural citizenship in California. *Social Science & Medicine* 40(9):1243-57.

- DWW, Chapter 6

11/28 **Film** (to be announced)

- DWW, Chapter 7

12/3 Illness as metaphor

- Gottlieb, Alma. 1993. American premenstrual syndrome: A mute voice. IN *Talking About People*. William A. Haviland and Robert J. Gordon, eds., pp. 54-59. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.

- DWW, Chapter 8

- **Second reading response essay due**

12/5 The somaticization of social distress

- Taussig, Michael. 1980. Reification and the consciousness of the patient. *Social Science & Medicine* 14B:3-13.

- DWW, Chapter 9 (the remainder of the book is optional)

12/10 Is health a right or a privilege?

- McKnight, John. 1994. Politicizing health care. IN *The Sociology of Health and Illness*, 4th edition. Peter Conrad and Rochelle Kern, eds., pp. 437-41. New York: St. Martin's Press.

12/12 Politics and health, at home and abroad

- Joralemon, Chapter 6

Academic journals of interest to medical anthropologists (selected)

Medical Anthropology Quarterly

Medical Anthropology

Social Science & Medicine

Journal of Health & Social Behavior

Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry

American Anthropologist

Women and Health

Human Organization

International Journal of Health Services

Ethos

American Ethnologist

Journal of Public Health Policy

Current Anthropology

American Journal of Public Health

Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law