

Applied Medical Anthropology - ANTH 353

Meeting time/place: Mondays, 1-4 p.m. in Beach Hall, room 404

Course overview

This course, designed for graduate students in anthropology and related health and social sciences, will critically examine medical anthropology in use in approaching and solving human health-related problems globally, within the United States, and in Connecticut. Emphasis will be on history of medical anthropology within the broader context of applied anthropology, theoretical models and debates, anthropological approaches to understanding health, challenges of application, anthropology and health policy, ethical considerations in applied research and application, and specific roles of anthropologists in applied health initiatives.

Assignments and Evaluation

Your grade in this course will be based on preparation for and participation in class discussions (25%), a midterm oral presentation (35%), and a term paper (40%).

There will be no examinations.

Class Participation:

As a seminar, prepared participation is a core feature of the course. Students will be evaluated for their familiarity with required readings, their leadership on individually assigned readings, and their general class participation.

Oral Presentation: Each student will prepare 20 minute (plus time for questions & answers from instructor and other students) PowerPoint for oral presentation in class for mid-March on a relevant topic of their choice (approved in advance by the instructor). This should follow the format of a professional conference presentation (and perhaps will become one). The topic of this presentation should be an area of debate or uncertain in applied medical anthropology (e.g., cultural relativism vs. application; the debates over clinic medical anthropology, genital surgeries) in which alternative and perhaps conflict perspectives exist that can be compared and contrasted (e.g., theories in conflict, alternative approaches, ethical uncertainties, including differing perspectives between medical anthropologies and other disciplines like epidemiology)

Term Paper: A final paper, 18-20 pages in length (typed, double spaced, spell checked) will be the basis for 40% of the course grade. Each student will select a topic (approved in advance by the instructor) within applied medical anthropology for research (e.g., perhaps a particular health issue like dengue, AIDS, or nutrition that has been addressed by several medical anthropologists and others; a particular methodological approach and its implications, e.g., rapid ethnography & public health responses; a theoretical debate in medical anthropology, etc.). Topic selection should reflect your interests in anthropology, prior or existing work you are doing, and

possible thesis/dissertation topics. Papers are due on April 23.

Instructor

Merrill Singer, PhD

Office hours/location: aTBA

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Books:

1. Life Exposed: Biological Citizenship After Chernobyl, Adriana Petryna, Princeton University Press, 2003
2. The Face of Social Suffering. Merrill Singer, Waveland Press, 2006.
3. You Owe Yourself a Drunk, James Spradley, Waveland Press, 2002.
4. Medical Anthropology and the World System, Hans Baer, Merrill Singer, and Ida Susser, AltaMira Press, 2003

Other readings will be distributed, be available online, or made available through email

Course Schedule: Discussion Topics & Reading

1) January 22

Course Introduction & Scheduling

Course overview and mechanics

Introductions: instructor and students

Discussion of topical interests (and possible presentation and term paper topics)

The Hispanic Health Council: A 28 Year Experiment in Applied Medical Anthropology

2) January 29

Applied Anthropology: History, Orientation, Issues

1) Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Merrill Singer, and John van Willigin.

Reclaiming Applied Anthropology: Its Past, Present, and Future.

American Anthropologist 108(1):178-190, 2006.

2) Merrill Singer. *Applied Anthropology*. In A New History of

Anthropology, Herika Kulick, Ed. Blackwell Press, 2007.

3) James Spradley You Owe Yourself a Drunk

3) February 5

Medical Anthropology: Development, Theoretical Frameworks & Application

1) Medical Anthropology & the World System, Chapter 1, 2

2) *Arachu Castro and Paul Farmer. Medical Anthropology in the United States. In*

Ann McElroy and Patricia Townsend Interdisciplinary Research in Health Problems. Chapter 2, Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective. 4th Edition.

4) February 12

Issues in Global Health: Health Impacts of Neoliberalism

1) *Seminar on Cuban Health System: Its Evolution, Accomplishments and Challenges*

http://www.medanthro.net/docs/castro_cuba.pdf

2) Medical Anthropology & the World System, Chapter

3) Cecil Helman. *Medical Anthropology & Global Health*. Chapter 13 in Culture, Health and Illness, 4th ed.

5) February 19

Health Disparities

1) Medical Anthropology & the World System, Chapters 4, 9

2) Catherine Panter-Brick *STREET CHILDREN, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND PUBLIC HEALTH: A Critique and Future Directions*

<http://www.medanthro.net/print/docs/ARA%202002%20pdf.pdf>

3) Latino Health Disparities in Connecticut. Hispanic Health Council

6) February 26

Syndemics

1) Merrill Singer and Scott Clair. *Syndemics and Public Health: Reconceptualizing Disease in Bio-Social Context*. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 17(4): 423-441, 2003.

2) Merrill Singer, Pamela Erickson, et al. *Syndemics, Sex and the City: Understanding Sexually Transmitted Disease in Social and Cultural Context*. Social Science and Medicine. 63(8):2010-2021, 2006

3) Nicholas Freudenberg, *Syndemics & TB in New York*, *American Journal of Public Health* 2006

4) CDC Syndemics Network Website

7) March 5

SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS

8) March 12

STUDENT CLASS PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSION

9) March 19

Applied Medical Anthropology & Biomedicine

1) Arachu Castro et al. *Iatrogenic Epidemic: How Health Care Professionals Contribute to the High Proportion of Cesarean Sections in Mexico*

http://www.medanthro.net/docs/castro_mexicocity.pdf

2) Lorena Barberia, Arachu Castro Paul Farmer et al.

<http://www.medanthro>

3) Medical Anthropology & The World System, Chapter 11

10) March 26

Commodification & Health

1) Chapters 1, 3, 4, 9 in Killer Commodities: A Critical Anthropological Examination of Corporate Production of Harm.

11) April 2

The War Machine: Violence, Health & Medical Anthropology

- 1) James Mercy. Assaultive Violence and War. Chapter 17 in Social Justice & Health.
- 2) Merrill Singer Desperate Measures: A Syndemic Approach to the Anthropology of Health in a Violent City. In Global Health in the Time of Violence.
- 3) Whitehead, Neil. "Cultures, Conflicts, and Poetics of Violent Practice." In Violence. Neil Whitehead, ed.,
- 4) Nordstrom, Carol. "The Tomorrow of Violence. In Violence. Neil Whitehead, ed.,

12) April 9

Drug Abuse in Developed & Developing Nations

- 1) Merrill Singer The Face of Social Suffering
- 2) Medical Anthropology & the World System, Chapters 6, 7, 8

13) April 16

Environment & Health

- 1) Adriana Petryna Life Exposed: Biological Citizenship After Chernobyl
- 2) Medical Anthropology & the World System, Chapter 3
- 3) Colin Butler and Anthony McMichael. Environmental Health. Chapter 18 in Social Injustice and Public Health.
- 4) 2) Nancy Krieger. Researching Critical Questions on Social Justice and Public Health: An Ecosocial Perspective. Chapter 26 in Social Injustice and Public Health

14) April 23

Concluding Issues, Term Papers Due

- 1) Medical Anthropology & the World System, Chapter 12