

# INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Fall 2004

Professor Sandra Teresa Hyde  
Anthropology 227A

T/R 8:35-9:55

Stewart Biology S1/4

## Course Description:

What is medical anthropology? How do anthropologists investigate and respond to the study of pain, illness, suffering, and healing in specific contexts? How do seemingly local and global cultural processes shape natural aspects of our bodies, such as illness, sex, and death? This undergraduate course is designed to introduce students to a broad range of medical anthropology topics, theoretical approaches and research techniques by examining case studies on chronic illness, urban violence, sorcery, modern pandemics, environmental degradation, and the global food crisis. The course will examine how experiences such as pain, misfortune, and ecstasy are produced and understood. Within these discussions, our focus will be comparative, treating illness, misfortune, and healing in a number of societies from rural China, Africa and Haiti, to the urban United States and Canada. We will consider the impact of systemic inequalities and population sciences on health and illness globally, through studies of urban poverty, advances in bioscience, international responses to HIV/AIDS, and emerging infectious diseases.

The course is designed to emphasize the major theoretical approaches in medical anthropology through examining case studies. At the end of the course, students should be able to distinguish several major theoretical approaches in medical anthropology by identifying its key proponents, give an example of a case study, and identify and define key concepts.

## Course Format:

The course is divided into six modules and each module will include a combination of lectures, readings, videos, and weekly discussion sections. It is important that you come to class prepared to take detailed notes. While lecture notes will not be available on the web, all power point presentations will be available on the Web-CT site for the course. Participation in one-hour weekly discussion section is REQUIRED from the third week of the semester, September 14<sup>th</sup> until November 15<sup>th</sup>. These sessions are where you are encouraged to question, argue, debate, and learn the material from the lectures and the assigned readings. Sign-up for sections are online and should be done when you register for the course. Students whose schedules do not permit them to participate in sectionals will be asked to drop the course.

## Course Requirements:

<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>Take home exam, handed out Thursday October 19th and returned in-class on Tuesday October 21st</b>	<b>Return to Teaching Assistant</b>
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<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>December 6-21</b>	<b>Room &amp; date to be assigned</b>
<b>Paper</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>Tuesday November 23</b>	<b>Return to Teaching Assistan</b>
<b>Participation in section</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>Attend (on a weekly basis) a One hour discussion group</b>	<b>Assessed by Teaching Assistan</b>

(1) Paper:

One short analysis paper (6 pages, typewritten, and double-spaced) is also required. The paper asks students to analyze a specific medical issue discussed in the popular press (some examples are new reproductive technologies, HIV/AIDS, organ transplants, the uses of biotechnology, medical error, obesity etc.). Students will be required to do archival research and attach a newspaper article to their paper.

(2) Exams:

There will be two exams and both are comprehensive -- the final exam will cover material from the entire semester. The first exam will be a take-home, handed out in class on Thursday Oct. 14 and due no later than Tuesday Oct. 19 at the beginning of class. The mid-term will be qualitative and ask students to analyze and evaluate materials covered in the first part of the course. The final exam will be multiple-choice and scheduled at the designated time for 227 (please see the McGill web site for the exact information).

Student Responsibilities:

In order to conduct a class of this size, I ask that students take responsibility for the following. While late papers and exams are sometimes inevitable, we mark down heavily for such events. Every day your paper or exam is late you will be penalized at 25% of your grade for that assignment. Acceptable excuses for late papers/exams are: a death certificate or funeral notice for a death in the family, a doctor's note stating you were too ill to complete the assignment, not just that you had laryngitis. Students are also required by academic law to adhere to the rules and regulations regarding cheating and plagiarism as outlined under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity> for more information). Plagiarism in particular is a very serious offense, see <http://www.library.mcgill.ca/refshelf/plagiarism.htm> if you are unsure what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it.

Required Texts:

All four books are available at Paragraph Books located at 2220, McGill College Avenue or for information [www.paragraphebooks.com](http://www.paragraphebooks.com). One course-pack (CP) prepared by Eastman Systems is available only at the McGill campus bookstore.

1. Naomi Adelson, *Being Alive Well: Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2000.
2. Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996.
3. Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You, You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. 1998.
4. Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*. New York: Harper Collins, 2002.
5. Coursepack prepared by Eastman Publishing © 2004.

## MODULE ONE -- AN INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY:

### HISTORY AND SCOPE

Just what is medical anthropology? What sorts of topics, theories, and methods do medical anthropologists use in their work. We begin this course with “proto-medical anthropology”, the rationality debate, and just what knowledge in magic and sorcery means. How does belief function as an analytic category in medical anthropology? Lectures will cover the early work in medical anthropology on medical systems as functional, adaptive systems of knowledge and practice, and then move to contemporary case studies.

Session 1 September 2

First class - logistics and introduce teaching assistants, clarify add/drop process, and introduce syllabus.

Session 2 Introduction to Medical Anthropology? September 7

Ø “Medical Anthropology: An Introduction to the Fields” Peter Brown, et al. in Peter Brown (ed.), *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*. Toronto: Mayfield pp. 10-19, 1998. CP

Ø “The New Field of Medical Anthropology” chapter one in *Medical Anthropology* by George Foster and Barbara Anderson, New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978. pp. 1-10. CP

Session 3 Rationality and “Belief” in Medical Anthropology September 9

Ø *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*, by E.E. Evans Pritchard, Introduction pp. 8-12, and then pp. 63-83. CP

#### **Recommended:**

Ø Allan Young, “A description of how ideology shapes knowledge” in S. Lindenbaum & M. Lock, *Knowledge, power, & practice* (pp. 108-128) CP

Guest Speaker: Professor Allan Young

Session 4 Anthropological Perspectives on Biomedicine? September 14

Ø “Tenacious Assumptions in Western Medicine”, Deborah Gordon in *Biomedicine Examined*, Margaret Lock and Deborah Gordon (eds.), Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988. pp. 19-56. CP

Session 5 Western Biomedicine and Biotechnology September 16

Ø Mary-Jo Delvecchio Good, “The Biotechnical Embrace,” *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 25(4): 395-410, 2001. CP

Ø Byron J. Good, *Rationality, Medicine and Experience*. Cambridge University Press, 1994. pp. 65-87. CP

## MODULE TWO -- CULTURES OF MEDICINE

How do different medical systems define health and illness, and how do they treat categories of disease? What happens when western medicine confronts folk understandings of illness in such a way that the two completely clash? We will begin this module by discussing illness and misfortune among Hmong immigrants in the United States in order to see what happens when different medical explanatory models and practices clash with one another. The purpose is to understand how biomedicine is a powerful cultural belief system that is global in its scope, creates disease categories, and produces authoritative knowledge.

Session 6 Comparative Systems: The Hmong September 21

Ø *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*, by Anne Fadiman . New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. 1998. First selection. Chapters 1-5 pp. 3-59. CP

Session 7 Comparative Systems: Hmong Conceptions of Illness and Health September 23

Ø Continue reading *The Spirit Catches You*. Second selection. Chapters 6-7, pp. 60-92. CP

Session 8 Shamanism Confronts Western Biomedicine September 28

Ø Continue reading *The Spirit Catches You*. Third selection. Chapters 8-9, pp. 93-118, & Chapters 17-19, pp. 250-290. CP

VIDEO: *Between Two Worlds: The Hmong Shaman in America*

## MODULE THREE – BODIES, GENDERS, AND SCIENCE

Here we begin to explore just how bodies are treated and how the mind and body are treated in studies conducted by different disciplines. We will move from ethnographic work on gender that focuses on how differently gendered bodies are perceived and treated in two different settings. Is gender biological or is it cultural, or a combination of the two. We will explore some examples where gender is not defined as a binary opposition, such as the Hawaiian Islands, as well as the assignment of a gender to intersexed infants in United States. We will end with looking at suffering and the body, and the current global inequalities that lead people to sell their body parts.

Session 9 Anthropology of the Body September 30

Ø “A Critical- Interpretive Approach in Medical Anthropology: Rituals and Routines of Discipline and Dissent,” Margaret Lock and Nancy Scheper-Hughes In *Medical Anthropology: Contemporary Theory and Method*. Carolyn F. Sargent and Thomas m. Johnson (eds.) Westport: Praeger, 1996. pp. 41-.70 CP

Session 10 Third Genders October 5

**VIDEO:** *Ke Kulana He Mahu* – Remembering a Sense of Place. (65 mins.)

Session 11 Social and Biological Constructions of Gender October 7

Ø “Chapter 3 -- Of Gender and Genitals: The Use and Abuse of the Modern Intersexual – Confronting the Intersex Infant: The Doctors,” in Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*, New York: Basic Books, 2002. pp. 45-77.

Ø “The Medical Construction of Gender: Case Management of Intersexed Infants,” Suzanne J. Kessler, in *Women, Science and Technology* by Mary Wyer et al (eds.) New York: Routledge, 2001. pp. 161-174. CP

Session 12 Organ Donation and Medicalized Bodies October 12

Ø “Human Body Parts as Therapeutic Tools: Contradictory Discourses and Transformed Subjectivities,” by Margaret Lock, *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 12, No. 10, December 2002. pp. 1406-1418. CP

Ø “Inventing a New Death and Making it Believable,” by Margaret Lock, *Anthropology and Medicine*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2002.  
pp. 97-115. CP

Guest Speaker: Professor Margaret Lock

Session 13 Bioethics and the Geopolitics of Organ Transplants October 14

Ø “Keeping an Eye on the Global Traffic in Human Organs,” Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Lancet* Vol. 361: 1645-48, 2003.

**VIDEO:** A Choice for K'aila: May Parents Refuse a Transplant for Their Child? CBS, 1990 (25 mins.)

## MODULE FOUR -- PERSPECTIVES ON INDIGENOUS MEDICINE AND HEALTH

This module begins by bringing medical anthropology back to home to Quebec and focuses on the First Nations of Canada and the Cree of Quebec. We begin by looking at how the Cree define health in relationship to the environment and the health of the land. After discussing Naomi Adelson’s ethnography on the Cree, we discuss a film about Cree struggles in Quebec for land rights, self-determination and the battles over a hydroelectric plant. We will then move on to medical pluralism and take China as our case study for understanding the integration of western and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Session 14 Cree Conceptions of Health and Healing October 19

Ø *Being Alive Well: Health and the Politics of Cree Well-Being*, by Naomi Adelson, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. Chapter 1-3 pp. 1-59

**Guest Speaker:** Naomi Adelson

\*\*\*\*Take-Home Midterm handed out at the end of class on Thursday\*\*\*\*

Session 15 Cree Conceptions of Health and Healing: Activism October 21

Ø Continue reading *Being Alive Well*, Chapters 4-5 pp. 60-116.

VIDEO: *Power: One River Two Nations*. (76mins, CFB).

\*\*\*\* Take-Home Midterm due back at the beginning of class on Tuesday\*\*\*\*

Session 16 China Embraces Medical Pluralism October 26

Ø “The Social Cause of Epilepsy: Chronic Illness as Social Experience in Interior China,” Arthur Kleinman et.al. in *Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. pp. 147-172.

Ø “Medicines and Modernities in Socialist China: Medical Pluralism, the State, and Na-xi Identities in the Lijiang Basin,” Sydney White in *Healing Powers and Modernity: Traditional Medicine, Shamanism, and Science in Asian Societies*, London: Bergin and Garvey, 2001. pp. 170-193.

Session 17 Case Study: A Chinese Traditional Medical Doctor October 28

FILM: “To Taste One Hundred Herbs: Gods, Ancestors, and Medicine in a Chinese Village”, from Carma Hinton’s trilogy *One Village in China*, 1987.

## MODULE FIVE -- CRITICAL MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In this module, we will examine how local and global forces affect health and well being, and what is called the political economy approach in medical anthropology. We will begin with international public health campaigns around the HIV/AIDS pandemic and how these campaigns are understood from several different perspectives -- the biological, the political, and gender – by focusing on case studies in Africa and China. We will then shift to a major ethnography on drug culture in inner city New York.

Session 18 HIV/AIDS and Social Inequality: Condoms in Southwest China November 2

Ø “Social Inequalities and Emerging Infectious Diseases, Paul Farmer, in Peter Brown (ed.), *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*. Toronto: Mayfield pp. 98-107. CP

Ø “Selling Sex and Sidestepping the State: Prostitutes, Condoms and HIV/AIDS Prevention in Southwest China”, by Sandra Teresa Hyde, *East Asia*, Winter 2000. Pp. 108-136. CP

Session 19 HIV/AIDS and Ecology: Activism in West Africa November 4

Ø “Antiretroviral Globalism, Biopolitics and the Therapeutic Citizenship,” by Vinh Kim Nguyen, in Aihwa Ong (ed.) *Global Assemblages*. pp. 124-145. CP

Guest Speaker: Dr. Vinh-Kim Nguyen

Session 20 Structural Violence, Health and the Inner City November 9

Ø “The Medicalization of Homelessness and the Theater of Repression”, by Arline Mathieu, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, June 1993 Vol. 7(2), pp. 170-184. CP

Ø *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, by Philippe Bourgois. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First selection. Pp.1-47 chapter 1, skim 2.

Session 21 The Political Economy of Health: Part One November 11

Ø Continue reading *In Search of Respect*. Second selection. Pp. 77-113 chapter 3, skim 4.

Session 22 The Political Economy of Health: Part Two November 16

Ø Continue reading *In Search of Respect*. Third selection. Pp. 174-212 chapter 5, skim 6-7, chapters 8, 9 & epilogues pp. 287-351.

November 18 – No class due to the American Anthropology Meetings  
Last week for sections.

## MODULE SIX -- THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

This module continues with the political economy approach but shifts our focus to the developed world, and one of the most pressing contemporary public health concerns, the epidemic of obesity. We will begin with global food production and distribution in North America. As we are almost all complicit in the fast food market, this module ends with an exploration of the production and consumption side of the politics of food from the perspective of the consumer. We

finish the course with the video *Supersize Me*, which is one person's account of what happens to his body when he resorts to a diet based exclusively on fast food.

Session 23 Consumption and Health Inequalities November 23

Ø *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, by Eric Schlosser, New York: Perennial, 2002.  
(Chapters 1,5,6,7, **skip 2-4**)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Papers due in-class to Teaching Assistant

Session 24 The Global Food Crisis and the Epidemic of Obesity November 25

Ø *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, by Eric Schlosser, New York: Perennial, 2002.  
(Chapters 8, 9, 10 & epilogue)

VIDEO: *Supersize Me*.

Session 25 November 30

Final Exam Review

The FINAL EXAM will be at the regularly scheduled time (December 6-21) and will be announced on the McGill website with the exact location, date and time. Per McGill University regulations there will be no advance exams so please plan your Christmas holiday accordingly.