

Anthropology 205 B: Medical Anthropology Theory
Winter 2021
Wednesdays, 10 am-1 pm

Ian Whitmarsh
ian.whitmarsh@ucsf.edu

Rachel Niehuus
rachel.niehuus@gmail.com

This course looks at current trajectories in medical anthropology theory. By reading texts that have informed these trajectories, both within anthropology and in related fields, we will attempt a rich approach to where theory in medical anthropology has been and where it might be going. This will entail moving outside of the clinic and the lab to the formation of subjectivities, the religious/secular distinction, and the way institutions makes violence and health inextricable. We will attend to key moments in structuralist and poststructuralist approaches—e.g., Foucault on disciplinarity and life; Lacan on subject formations; critical race theory on the figure of man—that have helped shape contemporary approaches. We will look to the ways anthropologists have taken up, played with, or fought with these intellectual currents through ethnographic work in ‘the field.’ How is truth produced: what configurations are needed to give authority to particular conceptualizations of life, ethics, personhood? How are people constituted for care and violence? How have anthropologists explored the constitution of trauma and memory? How do we define the good, the human, and the inhuman? How do institutions enact discipline and nurturance in the same moment? This exploration will include interrogating current critical moves in medical anthropology, including the critique of humanitarianism, the way violence signifies, and the law as site of subjectivity. In the course as a whole, we follow trajectories in medical anthropology that offer new insights into institutional configurations, cultural meaning, and subject positions in today’s ethnographic moment.

Requirements:

In addition to regular attendance and participation every week, students will rotate leading a discussion about the week’s readings in pairs. A weekly précis on the readings will be due before each class. One paper on the readings will be required, no more than 15 pgs. Each précis and the final paper are to be emailed to Rachel and Ian by 7pm the night before the class where we discuss those readings.

Required Books:

Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*
Sigmund Freud. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*
Aisha Beliso-de Jesús. *Electric Santería*

Week 1 January 20
Thinking (and feeling) with things

Latour, Bruno. "From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik."

Levi-Strauss, Claude 1966 (Engl. trans.). *The Savage Mind*. Chapter 3 The Systems of Transformation. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (75-108)

Beliso-de Jesús, Aisha. *Electric Santería*. Introduction and Chapter 1

Recommended:

Nancy, Jean Luc 2001. "The Two Secrets of the Fetish." *Diacritics* 31(2): 3-8

Pietz, William. essays on the fetish

Mauss, Marcel. 1990 *The Gift*. Halls, W.D. trans. New York: Routledge.

Boon, James A. 1999 "Rerun (1980s)" in his *Verging on Extra-Vagance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (230-248)

Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*

Spyer, Patricia. 1997. "The Eroticism of Debt: Pearl Divers, Traders, and Sea Wives in the Aru Islands, Eastern Indonesia." *American Ethnologist* 24(3): 515-538.

Schwenkel, Christina. 2013. "Post/Socialist Affect: Ruination and Reconstruction of the Nation in Urban Vietnam." *Cultural Anthropology* 28(2): 252-277.

Week 2 Jan 27
Ritual and the Corporeal

Asad, Talal *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam*. JHU Press, 2009. Chapters 3 and 4.

Mahmood, Saba. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent."

Beliso-de Jesús, Aisha. *Electric Santería*, chapters 3 and 5

Recommended:

Pinto, Sarah (2016) “The Tools of Your Chants and Spells”: Stories of Madwomen and Indian Practical Healing. *Medical Anthropology* 35:3: 263-277.

Meyer, Birgit. “Religious and Secular, ‘Spiritual’ and ‘Physical’ in Ghana.” *In What Matters?: Ethnographies of Value in a Not So Secular Age*. Courtney Bender & Ann Taves, eds. Columbia University Press, 2012: 86-118. (32 pp)

Fernando, Mayanthi. 2014 *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism*. Duke University Press.

Tsintjilonis, Dimitri. 2004 “Words of Intimacy: Re-membering the Dead in Buntao” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10:375-393

Seremetakis, C. Nadia. 1991. *Women, Death, and Divination in Inner Mani*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Ramberg, Lucinda 2014 *Given to the Goddess. South Indian Devadasis and the Sexuality of Religion*. Duke University press

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. *M Archive*. Duke University Press.

Week 3 Feb 3

Politics and the Modern Flesh

Klima, Alan 2001 “The Telegraphic Object: Buddhist Meditation and the Redemption of Mechanical Reproduction.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43(3): 552-582.

Spillers, Hortense J. 1987. *Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book*. *Diacritics* 17(2): 64.

Recommended:

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish*

Mauss, Marcel. “Techniques of the Body.”

Merleau Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. *Economies of Abandonment*.

Puar, Jasbir. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*.

Week 4 Feb 10

The Good

Malkki, Liisa. "Children, Humanity, and the Infantilization of Peace." In *In the Name of Humanity*.

Boon, James 1999 "Of Foreskins." Chapter 2 of *Verging on Extra-Vagance: Anthropology, History, Religion, Literature, Arts...Showbiz*. Princeton University Press

Lacan, Jacques, 2002a. Aggressiveness in psychoanalysis. In *Ecrits: A selection*. Bruce Fink, trans. Pp. 10-30. W.W. Norton. New York.

Recommended:

Borneman, John. "Caring and Being Cared For."

Povinelli, Elizabeth. 2006. *The Empire of Love*. Duke University Press.

Lacan, Jaques 2002 "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis." In *Ecrits*. Bruce Fink, trans. New York: W.W. Norton. (31-106)

Deleuze, Gilles. 1992 "Post-Script on Control Societies." *October* 59: 3-7.

Whitmarsh, Ian. 2014 "The No/Name of the Institution." *Anthropological Quarterly*.

Dubal, Sam. 2018. *Against Humanity*. (see especially conclusion)

Garcia, Angela. "Blood Relative." In *The Pastoral Clinic*.

Week 5 Feb 17

Desire, Trauma, and Memory I

Das, Veena 1997. "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." In *Social Suffering*, Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, eds. Berkeley: University of California Press. (67-92) and *Life and Words* 59-78; 205-220

Singh, Julietta. 2018. "A Thief, A Desire," "The Body Archive," and "The Inarticulate Trace." *No Archive Will Restore You*. 15-19; 29-80.

Recommended:

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy and Margaret Lock. 1987. "A Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology." *MAQ* 1(1): 6-41.

Butler, Judith. *Psychic Life of Power*.

Zambreno, Kate. *The Appendix Project*.

Spivak, Gayatri. "Can the subaltern speak?"

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain*.

Good, DelVecchio Good, Hyde, and Pinto, ed. *Postcolonial Disorders*.

Attia, Kader. *Repair*.

Week 6 Feb 24

Desire, Trauma, and Memory II

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* James Strachey, trans. New York: W.W. Norton.

Stefania Pandolfo's book selections (to be determined)

Nelson, Diane. 2009. "Horror's Special Effects." *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala*. Duke University Press. 86-114.

Recommended:

Caruth, Cathy *Unclaimed Experience* Introduction and Chapter 5 "Traumatic Awakenings: Freud, Lacan, and the Ethics of Memory"

Hartman, Saidiya. 2008. "Venus in Two Acts" *Small Axe* 26. 12(2): 1-14.

Hunt, Nancy Rose. 2008. "An Acoustic Register, Tenacious Images, and Congolese Scenes of Rape and Repetition." *Cultural Anthropology* 23(2): 220-253.

Rukeyser, Muriel. *The Book of the Dead*.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past*.

Week 7 March 3
Human and the Inhuman

Yusoff, Kathryn. 2018. "Golden Spikes and Dubious Origins." *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. University of Minnesota Press. 23-64.

Raffles, Hugh. 2010. "Chernobyl," "Jews," "Sex." *Insectopedia*. Vintage: New York. 15-40; 141-161; 267-290.

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. "A Properly Political Concept of Love." *Cultural Anthropology* 26(4): 683-691.

Recommended:

Hardt, Michael. 2011. "For Love or For Money." *Cultural Anthropology* 26(4): 676-682.

Lorde, Audre. "Poetry is Not a Luxury."

Gumbs, Alexis Pauline. *Undrowned*.

Brown, Adrienne Maree. *Emergent Strategy*.

Butler, Octavia. *Bloodchild*.

Dungy, Camille, ed. *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*.

Tsing, Swanson, Gan, Bubandt, ed. *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*.

Week 8 March 10
Sovereignty and Life

Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1*.

Sharpe, Christina. 2016. "The Wake." *In the Wake on Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press.

Recommended:

Weheliye, Alexander. *Habeas Viscus*.

Foucault, Michel. *Hermeneutics of the Subject*

Moten, Fred. "The Case of Blackness."

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*.

Mbembe, Achille and Janet Roitman. 1995. "Figures of the Subject in a Time of Crisis." *Public Culture* 7 (2): 323–352.

Week 9 March 17

Death and Liminality

Turner, Victor. "Liminality and Communitas." In Lambek, Michael, ed. 2002. *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*. Blackwell. 358-374.

Taussig, Michael. 1987. "Culture of Terror, Space of Death." *Shamanism, Terrorism, and the Wild Man*. Chicago: 3-36.

Yurchak, Alexei. 2015. "Bodies of Lenin." *Representations* 129(1): 116-157.

Recommended:

Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press.

Redfield, Peter. 2005. "Doctors, Borders, and Life in Crisis." *Cultural Anthropology*.

Mbembe, Achille. 2005. "Variations on the Beautiful in the Congolese World of Sounds." *Politique africaine*, 4(100): 69-91.

Weismantel, Mary. 2001. "City of Indians." In *Cholas and Pishtacos*

Lepselter, Susan. *The Resonance of Unseen Things*.

Stevenson, Lisa. 2014. *Life Beside Itself*. Duke University Press.

[Note: we don't meet March 24th]

Week 10 March 31

Violence and the Law

Benjamin, Walter "Critique of Violence." In *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. New York: Schocken Books.

Fanon, Frantz "Concerning Violence" in *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Mbembe, Achille. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15(1): 11-40.

Recommended:

Lacan, Jacques. Chapter 6: On the Moral Law. in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Jacques-Alain Miller, ed, Dennis Porter, trans. WW Norton. New York.

Arendt, Hannah *On Violence*

Asad, Talal. *On Suicide Bombing*.

Taussig, Michael. *The Magic of the State*.

Mbembe, Achille. 2019. *Necropolitics*.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 2002. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're so paranoid, you probably think this essay is about you." In *Touching Feeling*.

Bourgeois, Holmes, Sue, and Quesada. 2017. "Structural Vulnerability: Operationalizing the Concept to Discuss Health Disparities in Clinical Care." *Acad Med*. 2017 92(3): 299–307.

Shange, Savannah. 2019. *Progressive Dystopia*. Duke University Press.