

**ANT 3400: Introduction to Medical Anthropology**  
**Fall 2024**

**Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.**  
**Old Main 1107 (in-person; lecture-discussion)**  
**Wayne State University**

**Instructor:** Dr. Jessica Robbins-Panko (she/her/hers), Associate Professor, Institute of Gerontology and Department of Anthropology

Email: [jessica.robbs@wayne.edu](mailto:jessica.robbs@wayne.edu)

Phone (Department of Anthropology): 313-577-2935

Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m., and by appointment.

Location: FAB 3041

**Course Description**

This course uses a biosocial, cross-cultural approach to explore the complexities of health and medicine today – in the United States and elsewhere. It pays special attention to health disparities and how they are experienced by various social groups. This course will expose students to a number of cultural systems of health and illness from around the world and describe the behaviors, practices, institutions, and systems that define them. In keeping with an anthropological approach, it will treat western biomedicine as one of many cultural systems of explaining and addressing illness.

*This course satisfies the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Inquiry and Social Inquiry General Education requirements.*

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain how health and illness have social, political, and cultural dimensions by comparing and contrasting the ways that different cultures conceptualize the body, perceive the human life cycle, and explain and treat illness.
- Discuss the ways in which culture and belief affect the lived experience of illness.
- Describe the training, practices, place in society, and behavior of healers in different cultures.
- Discuss the ways in which medical knowledge and practice operate on various social scales (individual, familial, local, global).
- Identify the ethical and moral issues related to conducting social science research on health and illness, especially about related to vulnerable groups such as racial, ethnic and religious minorities.
- Examine the roots of individual cultural values and prejudices and how they influence perspectives on health and health-seeking behavior.
- Understand and utilize basic concepts in social analysis to better understand health beliefs and practices cross-culturally.
- Analyze social institutions (including religious ones) seen as related to health and illness in a variety of social groups.
- Recognize how inequalities in health and illness can be used to understand broader inequities in societies along race, class, gender, sexuality and disability, and other social fault lines.

- Identify your own interests within the fields of medical anthropology, biomedicine, and health science through exposure to a variety of issues and approaches to health concerns locally and globally.

### **Required texts**

There is one required textbook, listed below, which is available at the campus bookstore and [online via the WSU Library](#). PDFs of every required reading are also posted on Canvas Modules. In other words, if you would like to read a hard copy, you can purchase it through the campus bookstore or many online booksellers, or print out the PDFs from Canvas. If you would like to read an electronic copy, you do not need to buy the book; instead, you can access it via the WSU Library or Canvas.

Manderson, Lenore, Elizabeth Cartwright, and Anita Hardon, eds. 2016. *Routledge Handbook of Medical Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.

Other course readings consist of articles and book chapters, which will be posted on the course Canvas site. I strongly encourage you to print out hard copies of all electronic readings. In-class films are also a required part of our course content. Most films will be available after class to stream as well.

The syllabus may be updated; you will be informed of any changes at least one week ahead of time.

### **Communication Policies**

- My preferred mode of communication is by email. Wayne State University policy is that faculty/student communication should be done via WSU email addresses, rather than a third-party email (like gmail). I try to return emails within 48 hours except during weekends/holidays, and expect the same turn-around time from you for responding to our emails.
- In your email, please write the course number (ANT 3400) in the subject line so that it stands out in my inbox and I can respond in a timely manner.
- As professionals, we write emails with formal greetings and signatures. You can address me as either Dr. Robbins-Panko or Professor Robbins-Panko. These days, emails are often the primary mode of professional communication and they often serve as a first impression. Emails in professional settings should not be treated in the same way as with your friends and family (e.g., avoid starting the email with “hey,” end the email with “Sincerely, [your name]”).
- Canvas Inbox: I will check the Canvas Inbox regularly, but not as often as email. If you need an immediate response, use email.
- Please communicate any issues or concerns in advance – it is always easier to address the problem earlier rather than later.
- Office hours are a time for you to meet with me to discuss any issue related to this class. You are welcome to drop in without an appointment. Office hours can be a space to ask questions about a concept from lecture or reading, to discuss ideas from this class that relate to topics you’re learning in other classes, your own life experiences, or career goals, or to discuss a personal issue that is affecting your learning.

### **Comments on Pandemic Academic Life**

- The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the world since March 2020. It has heightened already existing stressful elements of our lives, and created new stressful situations, in a myriad of ways. It is

my job as your instructor to support your learning, which means supporting you as a whole person. I care about your physical and mental wellbeing.

- Please reach out with any concerns or troubles you may have related to your ability to complete the requirements of this course, or to any other aspect of being a student at Wayne State. I will do my best to accommodate you and to connect you to the appropriate resources. I will work with you so you can achieve a robust learning experience even if you encounter challenging circumstances.

### **Attendance**

I do not take attendance in ANT 3400; however, regular and consistent attendance will provide you with the best learning experience. There are weekly assignments that are due in-person at the end of class (see page 7, “In-class responses,” for details). You must complete a minimum number of these assignments at a satisfactory level for each grade bundle (see pages 5-6 for details on grade bundles). If you do miss class, you may use a token to complete the in-class response for the week. Note that you have three tokens for the semester which you may use to submit late work or try to improve your grade on a weekly assignment (see page 5, “Tokens, flexibility, and late policy”). Slides will be posted after class on Canvas/Modules. Lectures will not be recorded, and may not be recorded except with my explicit permission. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to make up the material that you missed by reaching out to your colleagues for notes.

### **Using AI in this course**

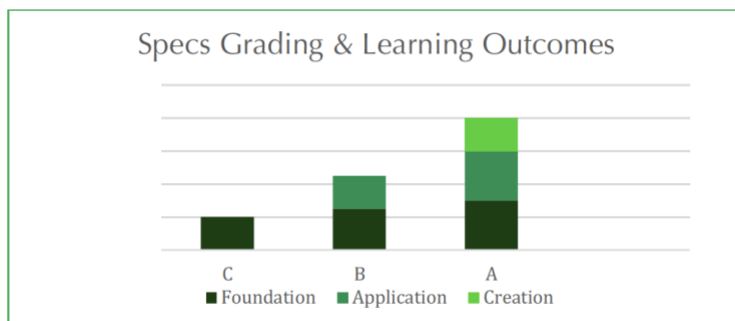
Generative AI (artificial intelligence), such as ChatGPT, is reshaping how we gather, organize, and process information. AI usage is *\*not\** recommended in this class. Although you are welcome to use generative AI as a tool, you must identify how you have used it. When submitting work, you must clearly identify any writing or text generated (or improved) by AI. Writing generated by AI should appear in a different colored font, and the relationships between those sections and your contributions must be discussed in an accompanying statement (appended at the bottom of your submission). Unattributed use of AI, or use of AI beyond the scope of this policy will be considered academic dishonesty. Note that you will get the best learning experience in ANT 3400 by avoiding the use of AI.

## **UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STUDENT SUPPORT**

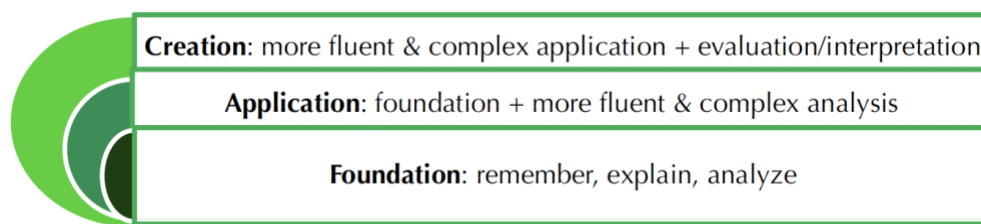
For complete information, see [this webpage](#).

### **Grading**

This class uses a grading method called Specifications (SPECS) Grading, meaning your grade is dependent on the number of learning outcomes you achieve. Think of it as a contract that lays out the specific requirements for each grade, and you choose which contract you want to fulfill. This method helps with intrinsic motivation for robust learning, and gives you control over which grade you will strive to accomplish based on your learning priorities and judgement over time-management as well as intellectual goals.



Essentially, your grade will reflect the group of tasks you complete as “satisfactory,” or for which you meet the minimum specifications (see grade bundles and separate rubrics below). Except for the syllabus quiz and exams, each assignment receives a “satisfactory” or “not satisfactory” grade. In other words, there is no gradation (e.g., 90 points vs. 88 points) for your assignments or partial credit (and no extra-credit), but you may use your tokens (see below) for extensions or revisions so you can receive a satisfactory grade. “Satisfactory” does NOT mean “minimum competence” but rather a mark of having achieved the learning outcomes.



**IMPORTANT:** We will NOT use Canvas Gradebook for tracking your grades; instead, we will use the grades tab in your Class Notebook. You must create your Class Notebook via Canvas no later than September 8 (see details below on creating your Class Notebook below). You can refer to Canvas Gradebook for information on individual assignments (In-Class Responses, Critical Reflections, Exams), but ignore the final percentage grade on Canvas Gradebook, as it cannot create tallies for SPECS grading. You can keep track of your grades and tokens in Class Notebook. At the end of the semester, you will receive a letter grade based on your achievement as outlined in the grade bundles (see below Grading Rubric for Final Grade regarding +/- grades).

<b>A Bundle</b>
One syllabus quiz
11 in-class responses, all marked as Satisfactory
Total of 12 critical reflections, minimum of 8 achieving 2 points (exceeds expectations)
Exams 1 and 2, minimum of 85% score (average)
Final project, marked as Satisfactory

<b>B Bundle</b>
One syllabus quiz
9 in-class responses, all marked as Satisfactory
Total 10 critical reflections, minimum of 6 achieving 2 points (exceeds expectations)
Exams 1 and 2, minimum of 80% score (average)
Final project, marked as Satisfactory (optional; adds 5 points to each exam)

<b>C Bundle</b>
One syllabus quiz
7 in-class responses, all marked as satisfactory
Total 8 critical reflections, minimum of 4 achieving 2 points (exceeds expectations)
Exams 1 and 2, minimum of 75% score (average)

<b>D Bundle</b>
One syllabus quiz
5 in-class responses, all marked as satisfactory
Total 6 critical reflections, minimum of 2 achieving 2 points (exceeds expectations)
Exams 1 and 2, minimum of 65% score (average)

### **Tokens, Flexibility, and Late Policy:**

To ease stress, allow for flexibility, and encourage opportunities for meaningful learning, you are given tokens. You begin the semester with 3 tokens which you may use to:

- Redo an “unsatisfactory” assignment to receive a “satisfactory” grade.
- Receive a 48-hour extension on an assignment.

I will track your tokens throughout the semester. If you use up your tokens, you will not be able to submit late work or revise unsatisfactory work. If you have an emergency, please contact me as soon as possible.

Additionally, you may earn extra tokens by attending talks in the First Fridays in Anthropology lecture series (one token per lecture). The dates for these events are usually the first Friday of each month at 3 p.m. More information will be shared as the dates approach.

**Grading summary**

	A	B	C	D
Syllabus quiz (minimum %)	100	100	100	100
In-class responses (minimum # evaluated as Satisfactory)	11	9	7	5
Critical Reflections Total # of points (minimum # of weeks)	20 (12)	16 (10)	12 (8)	8(6)
Exams 1 and 2 (average %)	85	80	75	65
Ethnography presentation and response	X	*optional		

**Grading rubric for final letter grade**

A	Fulfills all requirements for A bundle
B	Fulfills all requirements for B bundle
C	Fulfills all requirements for C bundle
D	Fulfills all requirements for D bundle
F	Does not fulfill all requirements for D bundle

+/- grades: If everything but one thing in a bundle is fulfilled, you will receive a -grade; if everything plus one thing in a bundle is fulfilled, you receive a +grade. For example, if you do one less reflection note than necessary for an A, you will earn an A-; if you do one more than necessary for a B, you will earn a B+.

**Assignments, Grading Rubrics, Exams**

Overall, assignments completed satisfactorily mean that you can demonstrate that you have understood the content of the lectures, readings, and class discussions by summarizing the key takeaways correctly, and drawing connections to course content in your reflections. In other words, you need to demonstrate that you have acquired the knowledge and can apply it. Answering the “what,” “why,” and “how” can usually demonstrate it. As such, simply stating, “that was interesting” is not satisfactory. Below is the grading rubric for each assignment that is completed satisfactorily.

- 1) Syllabus quiz and Class Notebook creation:** 1) All students must take the syllabus quiz and pass it. It is multiple-choice, on Canvas. You can take it as many times as you want but you must achieve 100%  
2) All students must create a Class Notebook in Canvas.

**DUE: Sunday, September 8, 11:59 p.m.**

**Instructions on creating Class Notebook:**

- Click on the Class Notebook tab on Canvas.
- You will be prompted to log in to OneNote. Use your AccessID and password (same as WSU email).
- You can open Class Notebook in your browser or the app. I recommend the app for better functionality.

Note: You don't need to type anything in Class Notebook; this is where you will go to access your complete gradebook and track your tokens.

If you are having issues with Class Notebook, try switching browsers, and make sure that your computer software is up to date. If this doesn't work, please contact WSU C&IT -- they are able to help students in resolving technical issues. The C&IT Help Desk is available Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. for

phone calls or emails. You can call them at 313-577-4357 or email [helpdesk@wayne.edu](mailto:helpdesk@wayne.edu). In-person support is available in the Student Center Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

**2) In-class responses:** At the end of each class session, you are required to turn in a completed 4x6 index card that responds to the following prompts: 1) List two key take-aways you learned from this week's course material; and 2) List one question that you have about this week's course material. Your responses must be substantial to receive the satisfactory grade. For the first prompt, "substantial" means restating or synthesizing major points from lecture, discussion, or reading. For the second prompt, "substantial" can mean: a question of clarification, a follow-up question, exploring a connection to topics from previous weeks or other courses, or something about which you'd like to learn more. The prompts are the same each week. You will have 5-10 minutes at the end of each class to complete this assignment.

**DUE:** At the end of each class session (Wednesdays, 2 p.m.); turn in a hand-written, completed 4x6 index card to Dr. Robbins-Panko. Except for the first week, you must provide your own index card. If using a token to complete this assignment (e.g., if you miss class), you must submit the assignment via email to Dr. Robbins-Panko ([jessica.robbs@wayne.edu](mailto:jessica.robbs@wayne.edu)) with ANT 3400 in the subject line.

**3) Critical reflections:** No later than the end of the day after our class (i.e., Thursdays), you will respond to the weekly critical reflection question/prompt. This question will ask you to think critically about the course material for the week (i.e., readings, film, lecture, discussion). You will have the chance to connect the material to your own experience, when applicable, and to deepen your understanding of the course material. There will be a different question each week; it will be posted no later than one week ahead of time (e.g., the question for Week 3 will be posted by Wednesday of Week 2).

**DUE:** Thursdays, 11:59 p.m.

	Foundation	Application	Creation
<b>2 points</b> <b>Foundation + application + creation</b> <b>(about 200 words)</b>	Responds comprehensively to the substance of the question/prompt.	Makes a connection between concepts or examples from this week, to concepts or examples from other modules, or to your own life or culture.	Explores a connection in more detail, or asks a question that deepens or broadens the connection.
<b>1 point</b> <b>Foundation + application</b> <b>(about 100 words)</b>	Responds comprehensively to the substance of the question/prompt.	Makes a connection between concepts or examples from this week, to concepts or examples from other modules, or to your own life or culture.	



Provide a complete answer to the weekly prompt (foundation), explain how you connect this answer to other concepts or examples from this week or others, or to your own life and culture (foundation + application), and deepen or broaden this connection by giving further detail on or asking questions about the specific concepts, arguments, examples, or approaches (foundation + creation/higher-level application). If foundation and application are not present, the reflection note will be graded “Does not meet expectations,” and receive 0 points.

**4) Two exams:** There will be two exams. Both are open-book and open-notes. Both must be done individually; you may not discuss the exam with anyone else in the class during the exam period. Make-up exams are only available due to extenuating circumstances (a medical or personal emergency that prevents you from taking the exam on the given date[s]). If this occurs, please contact me immediately, so that a necessary accommodation can be arranged. Different grade bundles have different thresholds for achieving the “satisfactory” grade. See the table on p. 5. The exams consist of different types of questions: multiple-choice, true/false, and matching. There is a 72-hour window in which you must take the exams. Once you start the exam, you have 60 minutes to complete it.

- **The window for Exam 1 is between 12:00 a.m. on Sunday 10/6 and 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday 10/8.**
- **The window for Exam 2 is between 12:00 a.m. on Thursday 12/12 and 11:59 p.m. on Saturday 12/14.**

**5) Final project - ethnography group presentation and individual written assignment:** For students who are aiming to achieve an A, or for students who are aiming to achieve a B and would like a 5-point boost on each exam, you must complete all parts of the group presentation and the individual written assignment. The assignment requires you to read an ethnography (i.e., a medical anthropology monograph), complete an individual written assignment, work with your group to prepare a presentation, and give a presentation as a group during the last two weeks of classes. More information about the group presentation will be shared in Weeks 2 and 3 of class. **You must sign up for the final project no later than Sunday, September 22.**

#### Weekly course calendar/deadlines

Days	Wednesdays	Thursdays
<b>Time/deadline/assignment or event</b>	11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-person class session</li> <li>• All assigned readings for the module to be completed before class</li> <li>• In-class response due at end of class</li> </ul>	11:59 p.m. Critical Reflection due on Canvas
	2:30-4:30 p.m. Dr. Robbins-Panko’s drop-in office hours, FAB 3041	



## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

### *Part 1: Introductions, definitions, and the power to define*

#### **Week 1, 8/28: Introduction to the course and key concepts in medical anthropology**

Brown and Closser, Medical Anthropology: An Introduction

Ruder, [Can Medical Anthropology Solve the Diabetes Dilemma?](#)

Manderson et al., Introduction

#### **Week 2, 9/4: Social construction of race, gender, and sexuality**

Gravlee, 2009, How Race Becomes Biology

Chapter 3, Sexuality and Technology

“Unnatural Causes: In Sickness and in Wealth” film in class

**Syllabus quiz and Class Notebook creation due: Sunday, September 8, 11:59 p.m.**

### *Part 2: Sickness and health across time and place*

#### **Week 3, 9/11: Early life**

Chapter 2, Changing Childhoods

Tucker and Lemelson, [Nurturing Autism Acceptance in Indonesia](#)

“All God’s Children” film in class

#### **Week 4, 9/18: Later life**

Chapter 9, Endings

Robbins, 2019, Expanding Personhood Beyond Remembered Selves

**Final project sign-up deadline: Sunday, September 22, 11:59 p.m.**

#### **Week 5, 9/25: Pandemics: HIV and COVID-19**

Chapter 4, The Socialities of HIV

Wahlberg et al., 2021, Introduction: Stratified Livability and Pandemic Effects

Pop, 2021, Unprecedented Times? Romanian Roma and Discrimination during the COVID-19 Pandemic

#### **Week 6, 10/2: Sickness and the everyday**

Chapter 5, Stress in Everyday Life

Lévi-Strauss, 1963, The Sorcerer and His Magic

“Unnatural Causes: Becoming American” film in class

**\*\*EXAM 1: You may take the exam anytime in the 72-hour window between 12:00 a.m. on Sunday 10/6 and 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday 10/8. Once you begin the exam, you have 60 minutes to complete it.**

#### **Week 7, 10/9: Chronic illness**

Chapter 7, Chronicities of Illness

Rogers, 2022, Recursive Debility: Symptoms, Patient Activism, and the Incomplete Medicalization of ME/CFS

“Long Haul” film in class

***Part 3: Political economies of sickness and health***

**Week 8, 10/16: Care and inequality**

Chapter 12, Global Quests for Care

Buch, 2015, Postponing Passage: Doorways, Distinctions, and the Thresholds of Personhood among Older Chicagoans

“Unnatural Causes: Place Matters” film in class

**Week 9, 10/23: Violence**

Chapter 13, War, Violence, and Social Repair

Carroll, 2022, Losing the Plot: On Method and Meaning in Traumatizing Ethnographic Work

**Week 10, 10/30: Globalization**

Chapter 15, How the Logics of Biomedical Practice Travel

Berry, 2014, Did We Do Good? NGOs, Conflicts of Interest, and the Evaluation of Short-Term Medical Missions in Sololá, Guatemala

**Week 11, 11/6: Environment**

Chapter 11, The Anthropocene

Linn et al., 2023, Living with Lead: Older Adults’ Experiences of Necropolitical Water Governance in Flint, Michigan

Film TBD in class

***Part 4: Student presentations***

**Week 12, 11/13: Ethnography presentations (1)**

**Week 13, 11/20: NO CLASS – American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting, Tampa, FL. Begin studying for Exam 2.**

**Week 14, 11/27: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving break**

**Week 15, 12/4: Ethnography presentations (2)**

**\*\*EXAM 2:** You may take the exam anytime in the 72-hour window between 12:00 a.m. on Thursday 12/12 and 11:59 p.m. on Saturday 12/14. Once you begin the exam, you have 60 minutes to complete it.