

*School of Arts & Sciences*

**Social Sciences**

**Course Syllabus**

**Course Title:** Medical Anthropology

**Course Number:** SSC.432 A

**Course Credit:** Three (3) credit hours

**Term:** Spring 2025: 01/13/2025 – 05/03/2025

**Location:** Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00-3:15 PM, White 016D

**Prerequisite**: LIB.113

**Course Director**: Shir Lerman Ginzburg, PhD, MPH

**Email**: [shir.ginzburg@mcphs.edu](mailto:shir.ginzburg@mcphs.edu)

**Phone:**  617-732-2951

**Office:** Matricaria 4005C (it’s in the M4005 Suite; enter the main door and take a left)

**Open-Door Engagement Time (aka Office Hours)**:

Tuesdays, 9:00-10:30 AM

Wednesdays, 3:00 – 4:30 PM

Thursdays, 12:30-1:30 PM

If you would like to meet with me outside of the times listed above, you can either email me to set up a time or go through the online booking system, which can be found [here](https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/OfficeHoursAutumn2022@mcphs.edu/bookings/). Virtual appointments are scheduled on-request and are conducted via telephone, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom.

**Course Description**

The course is comparative and holistic, focusing on culture and its influence on disease and healthcare. The significance of sociocultural factors, type/frequency of disease in a population, explanatory models, and the social construction of illness are explored.

Topics include: structure of medical systems, traditional medicine, complementary and alternative medicine, healers, the meaning of illness and curing, medical systems as social institutions, and the impact of biomedicine on ethnomedicines. The course will be conducted lecture/discussion format. Active participation and contribution to class discussion are expected as well as verbal presentations of two research papers in class.

**Welcome Statement**

Hello everyone! My name is Dr. Shir Ginzburg, and I will be your professor for this course. I am a medical anthropologist and public health professional who focuses on mental health, and I’m happy to teach this course. I’m excited to support your journey through this class and to assist you as you learn more about this important topic.

**Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify the basic approaches and scope of medical anthropology.
2. Examine the relationship between ecology/health and disease.
3. Compare and contrast health resources in changing cultures.
4. Discuss the costs and benefits of economic development and industrialization across cultures.
5. Identify the basic approaches and scope of medical anthropology.
6. Discuss cultural construction of health/illness.
7. Synthesize the value of interdisciplinary research with respect to health issues.

**Social Sciences Program Objectives**

1. Demonstrate effective writing skills (e.g., thesis development, use of evidence from multiple sources, and coherent argument) appropriate to the social sciences.
2. Apply basic critical reasoning skills (e.g., analysis and synthesis) in class discussion and writing assignments, and in response to primary and secondary source texts.
3. Use effective oral communication skills in class discussions, presentations and/or group assignments. (not possible for all online courses)
4. Use effective visual analysis skills including critical reasoning, interpretation, and contextualizing for in-class incorporation of visual images from PowerPoint lectures, films, and online exhibits.

## **Text/Course Materials**

There are no required textbooks for this course. You are assigned journal articles to read every week; you can access them through the MCPHS library or from Google Scholar (I will indicate in Blackboard where to find each article). Due to copyright laws, I’m not allowed to upload the article PDF directly to Blackboard.

Required readings and resources have been compiled from a variety of academic and web-based sources for this course. These are listed under weekly topics at the end of the syllabus. The course Blackboard site has additional resources, including links to MCPHS library electronic resources, websites, and PowerPoint slides.

**Attendance Policy**

This is an in-person class; as such, please attend class unless you have an approved documented absence request. Excessive absences from class are detrimental to your learning journeys and can impede your academic growth. For every undocumented absence, your grade will drop by 5%. If you know that you will miss class, please notify me and fill out a Documented/Emergency Absences Request Form. Documented/Emergency Absences are allowed in certain circumstances but do not excuse you from making up the work you missed.

To fill out a Documented/Emergency Absence Request form, please go to: <https://mcphsreslife.wufoo.com/forms/w1ewjh3k09bi7tm/>.

For more information on MCPHS’s Documented Absence requirements, please go to: <https://www.mcphs.edu/departments/student-affairs/documented-absence>

**Assessing Student Learning and Teaching Effectiveness**

This course integrates traditional approaches to learning with current evidence-based methodology. Methods of instruction include, but are not limited to, the use of Blackboard as the course management system, class lectures, PowerPoint presentations, reading assignments, discussion board, and two research based projects.

Students will complete weekly assigned readings outlined in the course calendar for each topic and engage in discussion board assignments, complete weekly check ins and two major assignments over the course of the semester. The grade book in Blackboard will be updated so that ongoing monitoring of student progress is available to both the individual student and the professor. Teaching effectiveness will be assessed via mid-term student survey, end of course evaluations and faculty observation.

Rubrics for all assignments can be found in Blackboard.

**Grading Scale**

A 100-92.5 C 79.4-69.5

A- 92.4-89.5F 69.4 and below

B+ 89.4-86.5

B 86.4-82.5

B- 82.4-79.5

**Paper 1 (15%):**

A description (5-7 pages) of a medical system of your choice. Please use at least three academic sources, such as books and journal articles.

**News Project (20%):**

**Group Presentation (10%)**:

You and a partner will present on a news story that relates to the topics discussed in class. The presentation must be 10 minutes in length and must be on a news story that has occurred in the last 10 years. You will summarize the article, explain how it relates to medical anthropology and the topics discussed in class, and pose 2-3 discussion questions to the rest of the class.

**Paper 2 (10%)**:

A short (3-5 pages) paper on your group presentation, reflecting on why you think that the news story is important, whether you agree or disagree with the actions taken in the article, and how you think that this news story will deepen our understanding of illness and healing. This is an *individual paper* – you will write this paper on your own.

**Paper 3 (25%):**

A research paper of 10-12 pages in length. You will select an ethnomedical topic for research (e.g., medical beliefs and practices of a particular cultural group, analysis of healing system in cultural context, field research on an "alternative" healing system, etc.). Papers may be based on library research, field research, or a combination of the two**.** Please use at least five sources. **Please clear your topic with me by 03/16/25.**

**Article Discussion (10%):**

You will bring in a scholarly article of your choice to discuss with the rest of the class. You will summarize the key points of the article and post discussion questions to the rest of the class. Please email me your article a week ahead of time so I can distribute the articles to the rest of the class; you will be responsible for reading everyone else’s articles so we can have a cogent discussion in class.

**Discussion Leadership (15%):**

There are several readings assigned every week. Each student will sign up for a lecture and will be responsible for summarizing that day’s readings to the class and posing discussion questions to the class based on that reading. Please assume that everyone has done the reading.

**Class Participation (15%):**

This is a seminar, and while I will be doing some lecturing, much of what you take from the class will be based on class discussions and analysis of theories and readings. You are expected to have read the day’s readings before coming to class, and to participate in class. Class participation also include participating in the discussions that your peers lead – your colleagues put time and effort into developing thoughtful summaries, presentations, and discussion questions, so please be respectful and take their questions seriously.

Furthermore, in this class, I encourage everyone to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts on what we are discussing. One of the tenets of anthropology is being respectful of and not judging others’ beliefs and opinions (cultural relativism). If you are disrespectful of others, I will ask you to leave, and you will not receive any points for class participation for the day. If you continue to be disrespectful, you will not receive any class participation points for the class.

# **Course policies and procedures**

**You are expected to abide by the College's course policies as defined in the MCPHS Catalog.** The course policies can be located within the Academic Policies and Procedures section of the Catalog (<https://www.mcphs.edu/academics/university-course-catalog>).



## **Submitting assignments**

All assignments are to be turned in via Blackboard (under the assignment link in the weekly folder) unless otherwise noted. Please submit all work only via Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) so that I can easily provide comments and edits to your work. If you submit assignments using a different platform (.pdf, .pages) I will request that you reformat the assignment to Microsoft Word.

## **Late assignments**

All assignments are to be turned in by 11:59 pm EST on the due date via Blackboard. Please reach out to me if you think you will not meet a deadline. I am generally more than happy to work with students on setting up new timelines. If I do not grant prior approval of a new date, points will be deducted for assignments submitted late at a rate of 10% per day.

## Melting wall clock on gray background

## **Support Services**

Office of Student Access and Accommodations (OSAA). A students’ right to equal education is protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. All students must abide by the Academic Policies and Procedures set forth in the MCPHS Academic Catalog. Questions regarding accommodations can be directed to the Office of Student Access and Accommodations. Under the ADA/Section 504, students with documented disabilities/conditions, that impact their access to education, and wish to request reasonable accommodations can contact the Office of Student Access and Accommodations (OSAA). OSAA can be contacted via email at OSAA@mcphs.edu or via phone at 617-879-5995.

To initiate services, students can complete the Student Request for Services Form: <https://mcphs-accommodate.symplicity.com/public_accommodation/>.



## **A note on mental health**

Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleep can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be strictly related to your coursework; if so, please speak to me. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance. The University has a welcoming and comfortable Office of Counseling Services that offers free, confidential, varied services to you by highly qualified and respectful staff. Getting help is not the easiest, but it is a smart and courageous thing to do.

## **Statement on email**

As a MCPHS student, you are required to open, utilize, and maintain (keep storage within the maximum set by IS) an MCPHS email account. Official university communications and noticed are sent via MCPHS email accounts. You are responsible for regularly checking your MCPHS email and for the information contained therein. ONLY MCPHS accounts will be used in all matters related to academics, student life, and university notifications. The university does not forward MCPHS email to personal email accounts.



## **Academic writing**

Academic writing is a two-step ***process***; you must first write to understand the content, and then rewrite to be understood. In other words, the *very best assignments* will have gone through multiple revisions to ensure that the paper says what you intend for it to say, including the intended tone, grammar, and punctuation. As such, I strongly encourage you to use the free services at MCPHS, including the Writing Center and the TutorMe tutors, for your writing assignments. Please note that tutoring availability can vary, so prepare ahead and try different days and times for appointments.

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| **MCPHS Resource** | **Information** |
| **TutorMe Tutors** | Online through Blackboard, there are tutors available through the TutorMe tutoring resource. TutorMe can be found through the “Tools” link in the course website. Selecting TutorMevia the Tools in Blackboard will automatically log you into TutorMe with your MCPHS credentials. MCPHS students have up to 10 hours available each week. Hours reset on Sundays! Remember that at least 5 tutoring sessions are required for this class, but you can use more if needed. |
| **The Writing Center** | The Writing Center offers free individual consultation on any aspectof student writing, from gathering ideas, to refocusing a draft, to revising and editing a paper. At the Writing Center, you will work one-on-one with very friendly and helpful tutor to improve reading, writing, revising, and editing skills. All students are encouraged to go to the Writing Center for help.  To make an appointment, follow this URL: <https://my.mcphs.edu/departments/academic-support/center-for-academic-success-and-enrichment-boston/university-learning-network/writing-center> |
| **Plagiarism** | Plagiarism is defined as*the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as**one’s own*. In my experience as a college professor, the majority of students who plagiarize happen toinadvertently forget to utilize in-text citations. Remember that every sentence that includes a fact that is not common knowledge needs to be clear to the reader where it is coming from. Therefore, you need to cite after each sentence in most cases for proper APA format. However, you can also introduce a source at the beginning of a paragraph to make things a little clearer to read. For more information check out the following link:<http://rasmussen.libanswers.com/faq/32328>.  Please note that any final draft that has one or more areas of plagiarism will receive an automatic zero (0). |

**Center for Academic Success & Enrichment (CASE)**

The Center for Academic Success and Enrichment (CASE) supports students through providing a number of academic support services introducing them to the strategies that will enhance performance in their academic programs and ultimately contribute to their professional lives.

**Academic Coaching/Counseling**

Academic Coaches/Counselors work collaboratively with students by program cohort assignment and can assist students with a variety of topics ranging from time management and prioritization, study skill development, connecting with campus resources and more. The CASE staff are available to meet with students on an appointment basis Monday – Friday 9:00am-4:00pm ET. To schedule an appointment with your assigned coach/counselor visit Student Success Hub.

Questions related to CASE services can be directed to the respective CASE department email based on program location: [case@mcphs.edu](mailto:case@mcphs.edu) (BOS) or [case.wm@mcphs.edu](mailto:case.wm@mcphs.edu) (WOR/MAN/ONL).

**University Learning Network (ULN)**

The ULN is intended to support students in meeting the challenges of our health- science based programs with our resources consisting of: Subject Tutoring (Peer/Professional), English Language Resource Center, Writing Center, and TutorMe.

Students can utilize the ULN’s appointment-based services (Subject Tutoring, English Language Resource Center, & Writing Center) by visiting Student Success Hub. TutorMe can be accessed through the Tools section of the course’s Blackboard page.

Questions related to University Learning Network services can be directed to [ULN@mcphs.edu](mailto:ULN@mcphs.edu).

**Accessing CASE Support**

*Student Success Hub*: To schedule an appointment with an Academic Coach/Counselor or an appointment-based ULN service, visit Student Success Hub at the following link and navigate to the “Offices & Services” section:

<https://mcphs-university.force.com/StudentSuccessStudentPortal/s/>

**English Language Resource Center (ELRC):**

If you are a multilingual student interested in continuing to strengthen your English language skills, the English Language Resource Center (ELRC) offers free individual tutoring sessions to support all language needs, including oral communication, academic reading, writing, and grammar/vocabulary/pronunciation development. Online appointments can be made by going to <https://www.mcphs.edu/studentsuccesshub> and selecting the English Language Resource Center (ELRC).

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| **Assignment** | **Due Date** |
| **Paper #1** | February 16th, 2025 |
| **News Project Presentations** | February 25th – 27th, 2025 |
| **Paper #2 (News Project)** | March 2nd, 2025 |
| **Student-Led Article Presentations** | April 22nd-24th, 2025 |
| **Paper #3** | April 28th, 2025 |

**Submitting Assignments**

**Assignments** **must be submitted electronically** to the class site on Blackboard on or before the day they are due. Use double spacing and a 12-point font with one-inch page margins for papers. Papers should be structured with an introduction, statement of problem/literature review/ethnographic background (if applicable), methods (if applicable), findings, discussion/conclusion.

***The weekly course readings begin on the next page.***

**Weekly Readings and Assignments**

| **Week** | **Topic and Readings** | **Learning Objectives** | **Assignments** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Week 1**  01.14.2025 | **Introducing Medical Anthropology**   1. Inhorn 2010 | 1. Provide an overview of medical anthropology as it currently stands. |  |
| 01.16.2025 | **Cultural Constructions of Health & Illness**   1. Bautista-Valazero et al. 2020 | 1. Discuss various perceptions of health, illness, and healing in different cultures. |  |
| **Week 2**  01.21.2025 | **Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAMs)**   1. Ouma et al. 2023 | 1. Describe various medical systems in different cultures. 2. Trace the role of CAMs in various healing systems. |  |
| 01.23.2025 | **Biomedicine**   1. Knopes and Cascio 2024 | 1. Define and understand the role of biomedicine in current healing practices. 2. Compare and contrast biomedicine with CAMs in healing effectiveness. |  |
| **Week 3**  01.28.2025 | **Healers & Places of Healing**   * Padilla et al. 2024 | 1. Investigate the role of healers in various healing traditions. 2. Describe the process of becoming a healer. 3. Review the various sites of healing. 4. Assess the ways in which healthcare sites impact healing. |  |
| 01.30.2025 | **Syndemics**  * Houston et al. 2021 * Singer et al. 2021 | 1. Discuss the syndemics framework’s focus on the structural barriers to health. 2. Appraise the syndemics framework’s contribution to better understandings of culturally sensitive treatment options. |  |
| **Week 4**  02.04.2025 | **Biopolitics**  * Smith-Morris et al. 2021 | * 1. Demonstrate an understanding of how biopolitics impact health outcomes.   2. Analyze the complex influences of biopolitics on the healthcare system. |  |
| 02.06.2025 | **Structural Inequalities**Liao et al. 2024  * Team and Manderson 2020 | * + 1. Describe the impact of structural inequalities on health outcomes in different cultures.     2. Trace the role of the US healthcare system in perpetuating structural inequalities. |  |
| **Week 5**  02.11.2025 | **Interpersonal and Structural Violence**Castro and Savage 2019Jenkinson et al. 2025 | Evaluate the impacts of structural violence on health outcomes in cross-cultural contexts.  Identify how interpersonal violence interacts with coexisting structural factors to exacerbate illnesses in different populations. |  |
| 02.13.2025 | **Stigma**  * O’Neill et al. 2022 * Trainer et al. 2022 | 1. Determine the role of stigma in healthcare decision-making. 2. Critique the healthcare system’s role in perpetuating health outcomes. 3. Assess stigma in different cultural contexts as it relates to different health outcomes. | **Paper #1 due on Sunday, February 16th by 11:59 PM** |
| **Week 6**  02.18.2025 | **Ethnicity and Racism**   * Muller da Silva 2024 * Rubin and Hines 2023 | 1. Investigate the ways in which racism impacts health in various healthcare systems. |  |
| 02.20.2025 | **Legal Limbo: (Im)migration**   * Crocker 2021 * Kashnitsky and Demintseva 2018 | 1. Investigate the unique barriers that this vulnerable population faces. |  |
| **Week 7**  02.25.2025 | **News Project Presentations** | |  |
| 02.27.2025 | **News Project Presentations** | | Paper #2 is due on Sunday, March 2nd by 11:59 PM. |
| 03.02.2025 – 03.08.2025 | **SPRING BREAK** | | |
| **Week 8**  03.11.2025 | **COVID-19**   * Horton 2022 * Rocha 2021 | 1. Measure how COVID-19 disrupted various cultural practices over time. 2. Monitor the ways in which different cultures reacted to COVID-19. |  |
| 03.13.2025 | **Geographies of Health**  * Lebovitz et al. 2024 * O’Meara et al. 2024 | * 1. Investigate how geographic location defines health outcomes in different populations.   2. Examine how geographies and social environments interact to impact health outcomes. |  |
| **Week 9**  03.18.2025 | **(Dis)Ability**   * Hartblay 2020 * Mkabile and Swartz 2022 | * 1. Assess the culturally constructed definitions of (dis)ability in different cultural contexts.   2. Describe the roles of people with disabilities in their respective cultures.   3. Investigate the role of stigma in the diagnosis and treatment of (dis)abilities. |  |
| 03.20.2025 | **Gender & Reproductive Health**   * Agénor et al. 2022 * Chaprro-Buitrago 2022 | * 1. Discuss how gender and reproductive health are understood in various cultural systems of health and well-being. |  |
| **Week 10**  03.25.2025 | **Mental Health**   * Lichtenberg et al. 2022 * Myers et al. 2022 | 1. Interpret how different mental illnesses are viewed in different cultures. 2. Examine the role of structural factors on mental health outcomes. 3. Evaluate the effectiveness of various treatments on mental health outcomes. 4. Investigate the role of stigma in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses. |  |
| 03.27.2025 | **Substance Use**   * Hayat 2024 * Morrissey et al. 2022 | 1. Explain the role of social, political, and economic factors on the diagnosis and treatment of substance use disorders. 2. Compare the roles of various substances in cultural contexts. 3. Inspect the role of stigma on the treatment of substance use disorders. | Deadline to clear your topics with me for Paper #3:  March 30, 2025 |
| **Week 11**  04.01.2025 | **Diabetes**   * Tolentino and Brynes 2024 * Kjærgaard Thorsen 2023 | 1. Examine the role of structural factors on diabetes etiology. 2. Trace the impacts of food insecurity on diabetes outcomes. 3. Illustrate the capacity of healthcare centers to manage diabetes outcomes. |  |
| 04.03.2025 | **Food & Nutrition**   * Lerman Ginzburg 2022 * Peeters et al. 2023 | * + 1. Identify the various roles of foods and cooking in various cultures.     2. Describe how food is understood and utilized in both illness and healing.     3. Inspect the role of social, political, and economic factors on food insecurity. |  |
| **Week 12**  04.08.2025 | **Religion**  * Luhrmann et al. 2024 * Hardin 2023 | 1. Interpret the role of religious practice in the diagnosis and treatment of illnesses. 2. Discuss the role of religious practice in healthcare in different cultures. |  |
| 04.10.2025 | **Healthcare in the US**  * Basmajian 2024 * Mendenhall 2024 | Critique the impacts of the healthcare system on health outcomes in different populations.  Compare the US healthcare system with those in other cultures. |  |
| **Week 13**  04.15.2025 | **Ethics in Uncertain Times**  * Friedner 2023 * König 2023 | * + 1. Analyze the ways in which medical anthropology can be useful for decision-making when in bioethical dilemmas.     2. Examine the situations in which there are no clear-cut answers for health-based concerns. |  |
| 04.17.2025 | **Medical Tourism**  * Au 2023 | * + - 1. Evaluate how medical tourists propagate health disparities in low-income countries.       2. Investigate the ways in which healthcare systems change due to medical tourists. | Your journal article for the Article Summary is due on April 20, 2025 |
| **Week 14**  04.22.2025 | **Student-Led Article Discussion** | |  |
| 04.24.2025 | **Student-Led Article Discussion** | |  |
| **FINALS WEEK** | **Paper #3 is due on Monday, April 28, 2025.** | | |