

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY**  
Fall 2020  
**01:070:307**  
**Wednesday 2:15–5:15PM**

**Anth307: Medical Anthropology (3 Credits)**

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Virtual Office hours: MONDAYS 10:45AM-12:45PM or by Appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic and its response has critically revealed the importance of understanding health and illness in global and cross-cultural perspective. More than ever, the imbalanced responses to the pandemic has made it detrimental to embrace an increasingly interdisciplinary approaches to the analysis of emergence, spread and varying experiences of disease in different countries and communities, as part of defining our common future as a global community

In this course, students are introduced to a range of health, disease, and healthcare problems worldwide and transnational efforts to address them under the guise of medical anthropology. Medical anthropology is a growing subfield of anthropology, contributing to the critical and interdisciplinary understanding of health, illness and wellbeing in a cross-cultural perspective. It draws upon different theoretical and methodological approaches in the social sciences, humanities, public health, science and technology studies (STS) and biomedicine to understand and analyze the individual and collective experiences of affliction and the human body, and how global health is shaped by historical, sociocultural, ecological, political, economic and technological forces.

The course urges students to think critically about the present, past and future of international and global health by focusing on a broad range of health and environmental concerns: the emergence of infectious diseases, such as Ebola, SARS, influenza and HIV/AIDS; the wide spread of Anti-Microbial resistance, the rise of the global cancer burden, trans-national migration of health professionals, the global market of organ transplantation, the globalization of mental health, the changing landscapes of healthcare and humanitarianism in conflicts, and the militarization and securitization of aid and health interventions, to mention few. While exploring the historical, environmental social, political and economic factors that have shaped the development of such problems, we will interrogate actors, institutions, practices and forms of knowledge production that have come to shape health and healthcare across the globe. We will further emphasize the complexities inherent within such interdisciplinary and transnational work, linking local health problems to accelerating global (and globalizing) processes.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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

1. Explain central concepts in the field of medical anthropology.

2. Evaluate critically ethnographic text in medical anthropology and global health
3. Understand and analyze the interdisciplinary approaches applied in the analyzes of local and global health problems, including anthropological, historical, STS, and public health frameworks.
4. Explain bioethical and political economic landscapes influencing the experiences of health and disease across cultures
5. Analyze how biological and social processes are interconnected in shaping and determining health and disease outcomes.

## **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

### **Course Website**

A Canvas website (<https://tlt.rutgers.edu/canvas>) accompanies this course; there you will find announcements, reading material, films, discussion boards, and other resources.

All students are responsible for timely attention to email and Canvas postings for this course and therefore should check the Canvas site and their Rutgers email accounts regularly. Dates and assignments may change; all changes will be announced in class or posted on Canvas or both.

[Please use the Rutgers absence report online system rather than emailing the professor or TAs directly about absences.]

\*\*If you miss more than three classes, you are required to see a Dean of Students for assistance in verifying any special circumstances, and to submit documentation of those unusual circumstances to the professor. The only excused absences are for unusual circumstances—such as medical reasons or a death in the family—and these circumstances must be documented by a physician and/or academic Dean.

### **Religious holidays**

Please notify the professor during the first two weeks of the semester if you will observe a religious holiday that will prevent you from attending a lecture or recitation section meeting. You may arrange to make up the work missed only if you notify the professor during the first two weeks of the semester about any expected absence due to a religious holiday.

### **Lateness**

Please come to lectures on time; it is very distracting to your professor, and classmates when students join the zoom meeting late.

### **E-mail communication with TA and professor**

In the subject line of your email message, begin with "307"—e.g., a subject line might read: "307/reading question" or "307/paper question." (Specifying "307" in your email subject line will help to ensure timely responses.)

### **Communication Netiquette**

Check the course website for general guidelines for interacting online in our class. Please review and try to follow as much as you can. Watch this video also to give you a general idea:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWMk\\_Zv7nB8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWMk_Zv7nB8)

### **Technology Requirements**

You will need a computer with a webcam and microphone and an internet connection for class.

Please visit the [Rutgers Student Tech Guide](#) page for resources available to all students. If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please email Dean of Students [deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu) for assistance.

### **Financial Hardship**

If you are facing other financial hardships, please visit the Office of Financial Aid at <https://financialaid.rutgers.edu/>.”

## **STUDENT EVALUATIONS**

**Class Structure:** This is a 3 hour class: 1 hour is run asynchronously and 2 hours synchronous via ZOOM. Each week, students are required to complete the viewing of a one hour of online material, mainly watching an hour of ethnographic films, and/or other material assigned by the instructor. The two-hours synchronous meeting will entail a short lecture by the instructor and a number of in-class activities and discussions.

### **Attendance and Participation (20%)**

Students are required to come to class prepared, having done the readings, watched the film, and being ready to participate and engage in class discussion. Attendance is mandatory and absence without excuse will affect your grade. Please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to inform me about the date and reason for your absence. Students are also expected to participate actively in class discussion, by highlighting their take on the weekly readings and online material and the in class discussion about various themes and issues that come up in class.

**Annotated Questions and Responses (20%):** students are responsible for posting **two annotated questions and one response to a student’s question each week**. One question must be about the assigned readings and the other is about the assigned film. Questions can explore concepts or vocabulary that you don’t understand, or topics you would like to explore further in class. **By annotated**, it is meant that each question should refer to a specific passage or set of passages (from the readings, films, or even lectures) and that you should explain your interest in the question in two or more sentences. These questions and responses are due by midnight the evening before the lecture, and to be posted on the course Discussion Forum on Canvas.

Each student is also responsible for posting one response per week to a college’s question. The response does not have to answer the question, but to reflect on that question from your own perspective and reading. The aim is to create dynamic conversations between students about class material and themes to be discussed during our meetings. These weekly discussion activities will count for 20% of your final grade. You will receive two points for each posting per week, graded on a pass/fail basis.

### **Book Review (30%):**

Each student is expected to write one proper book review of a medical anthropology ethnographic manuscript. Book reviews in field of anthropology usually “address the scope and contribution of a specific work, allowing you to get a “quick fix” on its contents. The book review should run between 1000 and 2000 words and should offer a concise summary of the book, highlighting chapter content, outlining the main argument (and derivative arguments), and unpacking the different methodological and disciplinary approaches used in the analysis of the problem. Students are encouraged to highlight the structure of the argument (i.e. its logical articulation, assumptions, and kinds of evidence presented), as well as how successful was the author in applying different disciplinary tools in the analysis of the health/healthcare problem. The assignment will evaluate your ability to succinctly summarize and identify key points and methods clearly. Assignment due after the Spring Recess.

### **Final Project – Mini-Ethnography (30%)**

This is an opportunity for you to conduct short fieldwork and in-depth interview(s), with one person or a number of persons, in order to construct a mini-ethnographic account of an illness narrative/illness experience. You are required to conduct observations and an open-ended interviews with a ‘sufferer,’ which includes a person who is suffering from a chronic illness or condition (including psychological and psychiatric illnesses); a person who is living with a person suffering from a chronic illness or condition; a person who is grieving a loss of a close person; and/or a family member living with a person who is suffering from a chronic and debilitating illness. The final essay should be between 3000-4000 words—an assignment guidelines will be provided. Assignment is due Early May. Keep this in mind from the early weeks of the course and get in touch with me so that we can have a conversation about it.

**Text Examples for Book reviews** (one to be chosen from the following or if not to be approved by the instructor):

Anderson, Warwick. *Colonial Pathologies : American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Caduff, C. 2015. *Pandemic Perhaps: Dramatic Events in a Public Culture of Danger*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Hansen, Helena. *Addicted to Christ: Remaking Men in Puerto Rican Pentecostal Drug Ministries*. Univ of California Press, 2018.

Garcia, A. 2010. *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession Along the Rio Grande*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Livingston, J. 2012. *Improvising Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

Nguyen, V K. 2010. *The Republic of Therapy: Triage and Sovereignty in West Africa’s Time of AIDS*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.

Petryna, A. 2003. *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Nading, Alex M. *Mosquito Trails: Ecology, Health, and the Politics of Entanglement*. Univ of California Press, 2014.

Crane, Johanna Tayloe. *Scrambling for Africa: AIDS, Expertise, and the Rise of American Global Health Science*. Cornell University Press, 2013.

Fassin, Didier. *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa*. 1 edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Redfield, Peter. *Life in Crisis: The Ethical Journey of Doctors without Borders*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1: Introduction

Course Introduction, no readings. In-class activities.

### Week 2: Genealogies of Medical Anthropology

In our first week, we will examine a side of the history of medical anthropology development in the West. How did the field evolve and how is it linked to broader debates in anthropology? What were the different schools of thought that defined its development? Who were some of the known medical anthropologists? What themes have medical anthropologists explored? How medical anthropologist knowledge can be put to use?

The two readings for this week will give an overview of the development of medical anthropology and explore some of the broad themes that anthropologist have been exploring.

[Van Der Geest, Sjaak “Medical Anthropology” \*The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Health, Illness, Behavior, and Society\*, First Edition. Edited by William C. Cockerham, Robert Dingwall, and Stella R. Quah.](#)

Kleinman and Petryna. 2002. “Health: Anthropological Aspects.” *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*. London: Elsevier Science Ltd, pp. 6495-6499.

FILM: W.H.Rivers: We Are All Relatives. Strangers Abroad Series )(50:38mins)

### Week 3: Medicine, Rationality and Witchcraft

In this week, we will look back at one of the classical debates in medical anthropology related to questions of rationality and irrationality. We will read a piece by British anthropologist Evans-Pritchard from his study of witchcraft among the Azande, an African tribe based in what is now known as South of Sudan. Evans-Pritchard was key member of the British school of Structural functionalism, who served in the British colonial service. While critical and reflexive of his positionality, we will explore the contribution of this school of thought to the rationality debate and the to the question of relativity. We will also examine how the study of witchcraft became central to the early approaches in medical anthropology.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1976. “The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events.” *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*. Clarendon Press, pp. 18-32.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1967. “The Sorcerer and His Magic.” *Structural Anthropology*. Anchor Books, pp. 167-185.

FILM: Witchcraft Among the Azande

## **Week 4: Illness Narrative**

In this week we will explore illness narrative, one of the key approaches in medical anthropology to understand meaning of experience of illness. Inspired by the work of Clifford Geertz and the interpretive turn in anthropology, this approach became very influential during the late 1980s and 1990s, and continue to shape various work in medical anthropology. Distinguishing between illness, disease, and sickness, illness narrative focuses on the meaning making process of patients and communities in terms of how illness shapes the world view and experiences of people in everyday life. We will read the classical work of Arthur Kleinman who wrote his famous book introducing illness narrative to clinicians and health professionals. We will also read a more recent applications of that framework in Varma's work on rehabilitation clinics in Kashmir.

Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition*. Basic Books, pp. 3-55.

Varma, Saiba. 2016. "Love in the Time of Occupation: Reveries, Longing and Intoxication in Kashmir." *American Ethnologist* 43(1), pp. 50-62.

FILM: The Name of the Disease

## **Week 5: Body, Embodiment and Experience**

One of the central critiques levied by medical anthropologist has been the lens of embodiment. Embodiment allows the anthropologist to understand how processes and events outside the body become internalized, shaping the experiences of individuals and communities. In this week we will explore frameworks of body and embodiment through exploring the different registers of the body: physical, social and body politic.

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

Al-Mohammad, Hayder. "Ordure and Disorder: The Case of Basra and the Anthropology of Excrement." *Anthropology of the Middle East* 2, no. 2 (September 30, 2007): 1-23.

FILM: Sari's Mother. James Langley (20mins)

## **Week 6: Local Biology**

Local biology is a term coined by anthropologist Margaret lock in her study of the cross-cultural experiences of menopause in Japan and North America. The concept explores how physiological processes that often considered universal in the human body, vary due to various cultural, environmental and nutritional context. Few decades later, advancement in science and technology showed us how this term predicted the science of epigenetics. In this week we will explore the applications of local biology and the challenges faced by anthropologists in the context of the development of epigenetics.

Lock, Margaret and Vinh-Kim Nyugen. 2010. "Local Biologies and Human Difference." In *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*. Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 83-109.

Lock, Margaret. "The Epigenome and Nature/Nurture Reunification: A Challenge for Anthropology." *Medical Anthropology* 32, no. 4 (July 1, 2013): 291–308.

FILM: TBA

### **Week 7: Commodities, Markets, and Medicines**

Political Economy is an important framework to understand processes of health and illness in a capitalist world system. Many medical anthropologists today turn to the critique of capitalism building on a history of Marxist analysis in anthropology. We will examine such framework through three case studies: organ transplantation, pharmaceuticals, and HIV/AIDS structural violence.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 2003. "Keeping an Eye on the Global Traffic in Human Organs," *Lancet* Vol. 361: 1645-1648.

Robert Moynihan, I. Heath and D. Henry, 2002. "Selling Sickness: The Pharmaceutical Industry and Disease Mongering," *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 324 (7342): 886-891.

Farmer, Paul. 'On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below'. *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 3, no. 1 (2009): 11–28.

FILM: TBA

### **Week 8: Making Up People**

One of the central critiques of biomedicine has been its insidious role in reducing complex and biological and social phenomenon to making up of medical and beaura people to fit medical categories, and the use and abuse of th

Hacking, Ian. 2006. "Making Up People." *London Review of Books* 28(16), pp. 1-10.

Hansen, Helena, Philippe Bourgois, and E. Drucker. 2014. "Pathologizing Poverty: New Forms of Disability, Diagnosis and Stigma under Welfare Reform." *Social Science and Medicine* 103:126-33.

Hannah Landecker, 2000 (reprint 2010). "Immortality, In Vitro: A History of the HeLa Cell Line," in Byron Good, MJ Fischer, S Willen and MJ DelVecchio-Good, *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, Wiley Blackwell. Pp. 252-266.

FILM: TBA

### **Week 9: Applied Medical Anthropology**

In this week we will explore one of the most famous investigative cases in medical anthropology, the mystery of Kuru.

Shirley Lindenbaum Annotated History of Kuru. MAT. 2015

FILM: Watch: Kuru: The Science and the Sorcery (2010)



## **Pandemic Perspectives**

### **Week 10: Contagion: Outbreak Narratives**

This week we will explore the meanings of contagion, an analytic that we will be using to understand the relationships between biological and social processes in society, and to think more broadly with it through the current COVID-19 Pandemic. How have social scientists understood the notion of contagion as both a biological and social phenomenon? What is the "outbreak narrative?" and why is it important in understanding epidemics and pandemics? What is the "silent carrier" and how has this figure been featured in the outbreak narrative? why is it useful to understand it in the presence?" How can we apply the concept of contagion and "outbreak narrative" to understand the present day situation of COVID-19?

Pandemic Perspectives: Responding to COVID-19 - Open Anthropology - Stay Informed." Accessed April 18, 2020.

"Introduction" from Wald, Priscilla. *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative*. 1 edition. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2008.

What historians teach us about epidemics. (2020)  
<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2004361>

FILM: Contagion

### **Week 11: Epidemic of Suspicion**

In this week, we will explore the global Ebola pandemic and the responses to it. We will focus on how failures to address the social determinants of Ebola, and the failures to develop healthcare infrastructures have been one of the main drivers of the epidemic in Africa. How does the Ebola epidemic speak to the limits of global health and humanitarian interventions in African states? Define and explain the social determinants of health? What kind of approaches have global health interventions taken to respond to global health problems? How does global health create fault lines between the north and south?

Nguyen, Vinh-Kim. 'An Epidemic of Suspicion — Ebola and Violence in the DRC'. *New England Journal of Medicine* 380, no. 14 (4 April 2019): 1298–99.

Veronica Gomez-Temesio. *Outliving Death: Ebola, Zombies, and the Politics of Saving Lives*. *American Anthropologist*. Volume 120, Issue 4:738-751 (2018)

Theorizing (Vaccine) Refusal: Through the Looking Glass  
Elisa J. Sobo *Cultural Anthropology*. Volume 31, Volume 3:342-350 (2016)

FILM: Check on CANVAS

## **Wounds**

## **Week 12: Intervening in the Lives of Others**

Fassin, Didier. "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life." *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities* 15 (2010): 452.

Dewachi, Omar. "When Wounds Travel." *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 2, no. 2 (2015): 61–82.

## **Week 13: Global Madness**

Collins, Pamela, et.al. 2011. "Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health." *Nature* 475: 27-30.

Becker, A.E. and Kleinman, A. 2013. "Mental Health and the Global Agenda." *NEJM* 369:66-73.

Miller, Greg. 2012. "Who Needs Psychiatrists?" *Science* 335: pp. 1294-1298.

Summerfield, Derek. 2008. "How scientifically valid is the knowledge base of global mental health?" *BMJ* 336: 992-994.

## **Week 14 The Biology of History**

This week we will explore the role of modern industrialization human activities on the development of the global epidemic of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). Landecker's piece on the biology of history is a great framing for this history.

Landecker, Hannah. 'Antibiotic Resistance and the Biology of History'. *Body & Society* 22, no. 4 (December 2016): 19–52.

Dewachi, Omar. 'Iraqibacter and the Pathologies of Intervention | MERIP'. Accessed 22 August 2019.

Fassin, Didier. "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life." *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities* 15 (2010): 452.

Dewachi, Omar. "The Toxicity of Everyday Survival in Iraq." *Jadaliyya*, 2013.

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/13537/the-toxicity-of-everyday-survival-in-iraq>.