"The human body is both the creative source of experience and the site of domination.”
Byron Good, 1990

“(T)here is no society (Western or non-Western) where explanations for pain, suffering, and death are systematically dissociated from a larger social, political, cosmic order.”
Nancy Schepfer-Hughes & Margaret Lock, 1991

“If we substitute defense against bio-terrorism for public health, we risk coming to see the world’s poor as a hostile reservoir of pestilence.”
David Keppel, 2001

**Course description:** Medical anthropology analyzes the relations among health, illness, social institutions and cultural representations. Medical anthropologists work comparatively, illuminating different systems for understanding and intervening into embodied problems. Although Western biomedicine has developed powerful theories and practices to treat all bodies in universal, pre-cultural terms, medical anthropology continually points to the differences in how bodies count: Who thrives; who falls ill and from what causes; who has access or lacks access to relevant expert healing resources are matters not only of biological vulnerability, but of history, culture and power. This course provides an overview of the intersection where health, culture, and political-economic power meet. It requires that you consider not only intellectually challenging materials on health and disease cross-culturally, but that you interrogate your own personal and social beliefs about bodies and the causes and responses to their vulnerabilities, as well.

**Requirements:**
- Attend all classes and participate in discussion. Turn off your text messaging and email. Attendance will be taken. This counts for 10% of grade.
• Keep up with assigned readings and write regular one-page entries on your “file drop” responding to reading assignments: these are due each Tuesday by 10AM; your responses should show that you’ve read the assignments for Monday and Wednesday of the week for which you are writing, and pose one or more serious questions that the readings raised for you. This will enable RR, AL, and BA to meet to discuss your reading responses on Tuesday afternoon. We will engage your written responses and address some of your questions in Wednesday’s class. Your cumulative reading response file counts for 40% of your grade. You must post on all five required books; the Lock & Nguyen book is broken down by sections, and you must post on each of the four parts of the book. You will chose the articles on which you want to write from the articles assigned for the other weeks. Writing assignments are marked for each week on the syllabus.

• Two 5-page papers, due Friday 15 March (midterm) and Friday 17 May (final). Both must be typed, paginated, double-spaced, in 12-point typeface. One entails taking an illness narrative or interviewing a health care provider. The other reports on and evaluates Web resources available for a medical condition of your choice. You must send a group e-mail to RR, AL, and BA at least two weeks in advance of the paper’s due date to tell us about the topic or person you have selected, and get our approval. These research-oriented papers will be explained in class. Each counts 25%, for a total of 50% of grade.

• We remind you that you must turn in original work; NYU’s regulations concerning plagiarism will be strictly followed. If you have any questions about whether something you are writing is “original”, RR and/or AL and BA are happy to discuss your specific assignment with you.

Required books should be purchased at the NYU Bookstore; they are also available at Shakespeare and Co:

• Joao Biehl, 2007, Will to Live, Princeton UP.

All assigned articles are posted on an NYU course CLASSES in PDF form. These are marked C on the syllabus. To access our course CLASSES site, log on to NYU Home at http://home.nyu.edu, enter your NYU net ID and password, click the “academics” tab, look under the “classes” channel for “medical anthropology”. The articles are in the “resources” section of the site.

Please write an entry each week focusing on that week’s readings. You should be sure to write briefly about your reactions to the assigned ethnographies (after you’ve
finished reading each one), and articles; you can also raise questions about the Lock & Nguyen text, although you do not need to write about this book chapter-by-chapter.

**WORD COUNT: 300-400 words per one-page single-spaced entry.** Your reading responses should be written in Word (or another text program), then uploaded onto “File Drop”. Please make sure your name is on your file. Save a copy of your reading response; we’ve had postings disappear and need replacement, and we want to be sure that you receive credit for the work that you complete.

To repeat: Each of you should have an entry posted by Tuesday @ 10AM covering the Monday and Wednesday readings assigned for that week. The main goal is to make sure you’re reading/thinking about the material. We also want to watch your anthropological interpretations grow through the weeks of the course. Thus, your teaching team will be able to read them on Tuesday, addressing some of the questions you raise in class on Wednesday.

Everyone is required to write 12 entries on the blog. Eight will be required; they include each assigned book, and the Lock & Nguyen is broken down into four postings, one for each of its four sections. Your other four blogs can be selected from the various articles assigned each week.

Our CLASSES site also contains many extra documents which may be of use to you as suggested, additional reading; we’ll post optional material and announcements as the semester progresses.

**Week 1**
Mon 28 Jan 2010:
Introduction to Medical Anthropology

Weds 30 Jan:
Health, Illness, Culture (technologies & bodies in context)
- Lock & Nguyen, Ch 1, pp. 1-31
- Fadiman, The Spirit Catches you, pp. vii-59
- (If you’ve already read Fadiman, review the book and read the articles listed in the Week 2 folder: you will post on these articles when new readers post on Fadiman.)

**Week 2**
Mon 4 Feb:
What is Specific to Western Medicine?
- Fadiman, The Spirit Catches You, pp. 60-170
- (If you’ve already read Fadiman: please remember that you are reading Janelle Taylor, “The Story Catches You and You Fall Down…. ” + NYT articles C
- Lock & Nguyen, Ch 2, pp. 32-86

Wed 6 Feb:
- Fadiman, The Spirit Catches You, pp.171-288
**Required post on Fadiman or alternative readings** If you’ve already read Fadiman, please write about the three articles in Week 2 folder having to do with the Hmong (Janelle Taylor, NY Times) Please consider the implications of this longitudinal story.

**Week 3**
**Mon 11 Feb:**
Medical Systems, Medical Pluralism
- **Film: Split Horn: Journey of a Hmong Shaman**

**Weds 13 Feb:**
- Michael Jackson, “Myths/ History/ Lives”
- Arthur Kleinman & Peter Benson, “Anthropology in the Clinic: the Problem of Cultural Competency and How to Fix it”.
- Lock & Nguyen, Ch 3, pp.57-82

**Required post on Bates or Kleinman/Benson or Jackson**

**Week 4**
**Mon 18 Feb:** NO CLASS PRESIDENTS’ DAY
- Lock & Nguyen, Ch. 4, pp.83-109

**Weds 20 Feb**
Civilizational Traditions and Their Medicines
- Scheper-Hughes & Lock, “The Mindful Body”
- Charles Leslie, “Introduction to Asian Medical Systems”

**Required post on Lock & Nguyen Part I.**

**Week 5**
**Mon 25 Feb:**
Health Transitions
- Lock & Nguyen, Ch. 5, pp.111-145
- Merrill Singer, “Ecosyndemics”
- Randall Packard, “Malaria Dreams”

**Weds 27 Feb:** Colonial and Postcolonial Medicine
- **Film: Coppermine**
- Julie Livingston, “Reconfiguring Old Age”

**Required post on Scheper-Hughes & Lock, or Singer or Packard or Anderson or Livingston or Jankowiak/Bradburd.**
Week 6
Mon 4 March:
Population Management and Maternal/Child Health
  • Chapman, pp. 1-104
  • Janice Boddy, “Remembering Amal…”. C
  • Lock & Nguyen, Ch. 6, pp. 146-175

Email RR, AL, BA your interviewee/ midterm paper topic by the end of this week.

Weds 6 March
Maternal/Child Health cont’d
  • Chapman, pp. 105-182

Required post on Boddy or Rivkin-Fish

Week 7
Mon 11 March Guest lecture: Barbara Andersen
Colonial Disease & Bio Commensurability
  • Chapman, pp. 182-252
  • Lock & Nguyen, Ch.7, pp. 176-202

Weds 13 March:
Eugenics Then and Now
  • Rouse, pp. 1-88
  • Vanessa Gamble, “Shadow of Tuskegee” C
  • Nancy Krieger, “Does Racism Hurt Health?” C
  • Rebecca Skloot, “A Mother’s Legacy” C

Required post on Chapman

Writing assignment #1 due Friday 15 March in RR’s mailbox, 25 Waverly Place, 4 PM deadline, typed & paginated

SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS 18, 20 MARCH
  • Rouse, pp. 89-192

Week 8
Mon 25 March
  • Poverty and Health at Home
  • Rouse, pp. 193-267
  • Nicholas Kristof, “Unhealthy America”, NYT C
• **Follow this link:**  
• Paul Tough, “The Poverty Clinic” C

Weds 27 March: Guest Lecture, Prof. Helena Hansen

Public Health and Abstract Bodies
• Emily Yates-Doerr, “The Weight of the Self” C
• Angela Garcia, “The Elegiac Addict: History, Chronicity, & the Melancholic Subject” C
• Jose Goita, “A Regime’s Tight Grip on AIDS: Lessons From Cuba” C

**Required post: Rouse**

Week 9
Mon 1 Apr:
Smoking and Public Health
• Peter Benson, “Good Clean Tobacco” C
• “Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco Study Group Takes a Stand: The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: An Urgent Call for U.S. Ratification” C
• Lock & Nguyen, Ch 8, pp. 205-228

Weds 3 Apr:
The Social Life of Organs & Bodies
• Lock & Nguyen, Ch 9, pp. 229-253
• Sherine Hamdy, “When the State and Your Kidneys Both Fail” C
• Sharon Kaufman, “Hidden Places, Uncommon Persons” C

**Required post, Lock & Nguyen Part II.**

Week 10
Mon 8 Apr:
How to Think Through Epidemics: The Politics of HIV/AIDS
• Katherine Erwin, “The Circulatory System” C
• Joao Biehl, 1-104

Weds 10 Apr:
Globalization
• **Film: People, Profits, Protests**
• Joao Biehl, pp.105-237 (long section!)

**Required post on Hamdy, Kaufman or Erwin.**
Week 11
Thinking about Hospice, Dying, Death: Guest Lecturers: Ann Newman/ Dwai Banerjee
Mon 15 Apr:
• Joao Biehl, Will to Live, pp 241-336

Weds 17 Apr:
Global/ Medical/ Kinship
• Arlie Hochschild, “Birth at the Crossroads” C
• Lock & Nguyen, Ch.10, pp. 254-280.

**Required post: Lock & Nguyen Part III.**

Week 12
Mon 22 Apr:
Guest Lecture: Katelin Wilton
Health Movements, Social Movements
• Joao Biehl, Will to Live, 339-406
• NY Times “Americanization of Mental Illness” C

**Email RR, AL & BA your final paper topic**

Weds 24 Apr:
What is Global About Global Health?
• Lock & Nguyen, Ch. 11, pp. 283-302
• Joao Biehl, Will to Live, pp 241-406
• NY Times “Americanization of Mental Illness” C
• Nik Kristof, “Warnings From a Flabby Mouse” C
• Dan Fagin, “A Cancer Cycle, From Here to China” C

**Required post on Biehl**

Week 13
Human Differences, Revisited
Lock & Nguyen, Ch. 12 & 13, pp. 303-347

Weds 1 May:
Human Differences, Revisited
• Lock & Nguyen, Ch. 14 & Epilogue, pp. 348-364
• Matthew Kohrman, “Motorcycles for the Disabled” C
• Gail Landsman, “Emplotting Children's Lives” C

**Required post, Lock & Nguyen Parts III & IV**

Week 14
Mon 6 May:
Film: Liebe Perle

Weds 8 May:
New Technologies, New Entanglements of Life and Death
  • Tine Gammeltoft, 2007, “Sonography and Sociality” C
  • Aditya Bharadwaj “Assisted Life: Stem Cells in India’’” C
  • Tsipy Ivry, “Kosher Medicine and Medicalized Halacha” C

Required post on Kohrman or Landsman or Gammeltoft or Tremayne or Kaufman or Ivry

Mon 13 May (Make-up for Presidents’ Day)
Conclusions: Health-as-Culture in a Volatile World
course evaluations

Writing assignment #2 due Friday 17 May in RR’s mailbox, 25 Waverly Place, 4 PM
deadline, typed & paginated

Students with disabilities are entitled to all accommodations as specified in their
registration with the Moses Center. Please see me after class or in my office hours if
further clarification or flexibility of this policy is needed.