Global Biocultures: Anthropological Perspectives on Public Health
ANTH-UA 36

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00-3:15

Course Description:
This seminar surveys the mutual shaping of culture and biology in diverse contexts around the world. Starting with sociocultural theories of biocultural process, and ending with ethnographies of disability, drugs, place, pain, and biotechnology, we will examine the relationship of larger political economic structures to individual subjectivities, and examine biological experience as simultaneously material and socioculturally plastic.

This seminar is experimental. We will review classical and contemporary scholarship from medical anthropology, medical sociology and science studies in order to foster creative thinking about the relationship between biology and culture. We will also screen and discuss films related to biocultures. You will be able to borrow or download the films. The films are fictional and non-fictional; they are not to be taken at face value but rather are to be analyzed as artifacts that reflect a collective imagination about biology and culture.

Requirements:

• Attend all course meetings, view the films, and contribute to discussion. Each course participant will present 5 minutes of commentary and a set of questions for discussion once during the semester. Course participation is 25% of the final grade.

• Do the course readings and watch films as indicated for each week and post a response on the course discussion board (on blackboard) before midnight the Wednesday of that week. The response should be 200-400 words long and pose serious questions or comments from the readings and film for discussion in class. Feel free to respond to other postings but this is not required. Please save the entry in a word processing program prior to pasting it on the discussion board with your name preceding it. Responses make up 25% of the final grade.

Useful questions to ask yourself while reading and blogging include:

• What is the biocultural argument here?
• How does it relate to other versions of the “biocultural” that we have studied? What does it add to our analytic toolbox?
• What is at stake in the argument? That is, who is the author addressing and for what purpose? To which controversies, policies or social trends is the author reacting?
• What are the author’s strategies of argument in using data and undertaking an analysis?
• What do you find are the strengths, weaknesses, and potential uses of the author’s argument? How would you have argued differently?

• One 7-8 page* midterm film review (due date of Nov. 1) that asks you to contrast and apply the theoretical frameworks presented in the first half of the course. This is 25% of the final grade.

• One 7-8 page* final project in which you will work with a team of four people to research a topic of biocultural controversy and develop a website on that topic with one entry or link by each team member. The website link should draw on the theories discussed in class. Your team must submit a proposal for your topic by November 15, with one paragraph per person - one describing each of your four weblinks. You will have technical support for developing and uploading the website homepage and the team’s four related links from Bobst Library staff (specific directions to be given in class). Each team member will make a 5 minute presentation on their weblink as part of their team’s website during the last two weeks of class, and upload their completed weblink by Friday December 14. This is 25% of your final grade.

* double spaced 12 point font with 1 inch margins

Course Books:

Ernest Drucker *A Plague of Prisons: The Epidemiology of Mass Incarceration In America*
Paul Farmer *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights and the New War on the Poor*
Mindy Fullilove *Root Shock: How Tearing Up Inner City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It*
Eric Manheimer *Twelve Patients: Life and Death at Bellevue Hospital*
Nikolas Rose *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*

Articles and selected chapters will be available on blackboard under this course title.

Part I: Biocultural Theories

Week 1: What are biocultures? Mutual construction of the cultural and the biological vs. sociobiology
*Tuesday, September 4*
Reading in class: Davis and Morris “Biocultures Manifesto”
Film: Lord of the Ants (see youtube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiCFPFS4UW4)
Thursday, September 6
Lennard Davis “The Bioethics of Diagnosis: A Biocultural Critique of Certainty”
David Morris “What is Postmodern Illness?”
Allen et al. “Against Sociobology”

Week 2: Cultural construction of illness and local biologies

Tuesday, September 11
Mark Nichter “Idioms of Distress: Alternatives in the Expression of Psychosocial Distress: A Case Study from South India”
Atwood Gaines “From DSM I to III T-R: A Cultural Constructivist Reading of US Psychiatric Classification”
Lock and Nguyen An Anthropology of Biomedicine Chapter 4 Excerpt
Arthur Kleinman Illness Narratives Excerpt

Thursday, September 13

Week 3: Critical medical anthropology: how political economy shapes health

Tuesday, September 18
Sir Michael Marmot Inequalities in Health
Paul Farmer Pathologies of Power Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 5, 9
Film screenings - attend at least one and, for extra credit, both:
1) Wednesday September 19 pre-release NYU screening of Escape Fire: The Fight to Rescue American Healthcare, followed discussion with director Matthew Heineman
2) Thursday September 20 5:30-8:30 NYU Medical Center Alumni Hall A
   A Lion in the House (five stories of children with cancer) followed by discussion with filmmakers Steven Bognar and Julia Reichert

Thursday, September 20
**Guest Lecturer: Professor Eric Manheimer**
Eric Manheimer 12 Patients: Life and Death at Bellevue Hospital Chapters 1-4, 11, 12

Week 4: What is globalization?

Tuesday, September 25
**Brief Guest Lectures: Filmmaker Mary Skinner “How to Read a Film”**
**Writer Nick Jacobs “How to Write a Film Review”**
Ulrich Beck What is Globalization? Introduction
Arjun Appadurai Modernity at Large Chapters 1-4
Film: Rx for Survival (available in Bobst)

Thursday, September 27
Brad Lewis “New Global Health Movement: Rx for the World?”
Andrew Lakoff “Diagnostic Liquidity: Mental Illness and the Global Trade in DNA”

Week 5: Biopower - naturalization and internalization of power structures
Tuesday, October 2
Paul Rabinow “From Sociobiology to Biosociality”
Nikolas Rose Politics of Life itself Introduction, Chapters 1-3
Film: Gattaca (available on Netflix by mail only and in Bobst)

Thursday, October 4
**Brief Guest Lecture: Shahriar Khan “How to Make an Argument in a Paper”**
Rose Chapters 4, 6-8

Week 6: Embodiment
Tuesday, October 9
Marcel Mauss “Techniques of the Body”
EP Thompson “Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism”
Pierre Bourdieu Logic of Practice Excerpts
Film: Paris is Burning (available on Netflix by mail only and in Bobst)

Thursday, October 11
Judith Butler “Gender is Burning”
Lock and Nguyen Chapter 11 excerpt

Week 7: Biomedicalization
Tuesday, October 16 **Winter Recess**

Thursday, October 18
Peter Conrad “Shifting Engines of Medicalization”
Adele Clarke “Biomedicalization”

Week 8: Substance Flows
Tuesday, October 23
Philippe Bourgois “Disciplining Addictions: The Biopolitics of Methadone and Heroin in the United States”
Merrill Singer Drugging the Poor Chapters 1,2,7
Film: Side Effects (available on Netflix by mail only)

Thursday, October 25
David Healy “Shaping the Intimate”
Singer Chapters 3,4,5

Week 9: Place and Displacement
Tuesday, October 30
**Guest Lecture Professor Mindy Fullilove and Midterm Film Review Due by E-mail**
Mindy Fullilove Root Shock Chapters 1-6
Film: Race: the Power of an Illusion (available in Bobst)

Thursday, November 1
**Guest Lecture Professor Ernest Drucker**
Ernest Drucker A Plague of Prisons Chapters 1-5, 8-10

Week 10: Biotechnologies Inc.
Tuesday, November 6
**Guest Lecture Shahriar Khan**
Paul Rabinow “Severing the Ties: Fragmentation and Dignity in Late Modernity”
Deborah Douglas “MIT and War.”
U.S. Whitehouse Publication “Executive Summary: National Bioeconomy Blueprint”
Film: Wall Street (available at Bobst or Netflix by mail only)

*Thursday, November 8*
Jeremy Rifkin The Biotech Century *excerpts*
Alastair Matheson “Corporate Science and the Husbandry of Scientific and Medical Knowledge”
Marcia Angell “Industry-Sponsored Clinical Research: A Broken System”

Week 11: Normality and Disability
Tuesday, November 13
**Guest Lecture Professor Rayna Rapp & Topic for Final Project Due via E-mail**
Rayna Rapp and Faye Ginsburg “Reverberations: Disability and the New Kinship Imaginary”
Rayna Rapp “A Child Surrounds this Brain: The Future of Neurological Difference According to Scientists, Parents, and Diagnosed Young Adults”
Film: Lars and the Real Girl (available on Netflix by mail only and in Bobst)

*Thursday, November 15*
**Guest Lecture Professor Brad Lewis**
Bradley Lewis “A Mad Fight: Psychiatry and Disability Activism”
Lennard Davis “The Rule of Normalcy”

Week 12: Biological Boundary Crossings Part 1
Tuesday, November 20
Sarah Franklin “Biologization Revisited: Kinship Theory in the Context of New Biologies”
Nancy Schepet-Hughes “The Last Commodity: Post-Human Ethics and the Global Traffic in ‘Fresh’ Organs”
Film: Stingray Sam

*Thursday Thanksgiving Break*

Week 13: Biological Boundary Crossings Continued
Tuesday, November 27
Donna Haraway Cyborg Manifesto
Film: Shock Doctrine (available in Bobst)

Pain and Suffering as Structure and Commodity
*Thursday, November 29*
Arthur and Joan Kleinman “The Appeal of Experience: The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times”
Adriana Petryna “Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations”
Jean Comaroff “Beyond Bare Life: AIDS, (Bio)Politics, and the Neoliberal Order”

Weeks 14-15 (December 4-13)
Student presentations of websites

*Friday December 14 Website Project Upload Deadline*