Introduction to Medical Anthropology

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes: This course provides knowledge of the field of medical anthropology. Through reading and discussions, students will become familiar with how different cultures understand human physiology and health, definitions of sickness, types of medical systems and practitioners, how cultural practices affect health, issues in gender and health and in environmental health, how anthropology as a discipline has responded to health challenges around the world and how the discipline has influenced international health policy.

At the conclusion of this course, students will demonstrate the following Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

- Categorize anthropological approaches to major types of medical systems cross culturally.
- Discuss theorists associated with schools of thought in medical anthropology.
- Identify ethical issues in applied anthropology.
- Describe and assess qualitative and quantitative research methods as they apply to anthropology.
- Describe anthropological terminology, concepts, and theoretical approaches to the meaning of being human. (PLOs 1 and 2)
- Use anthropological knowledge and critical thinking skills to evaluate anthropological arguments.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

1. Possess and apply fundamental anthropological knowledge, including terminology, concepts, intellectual traditions, and theoretical approaches;
2. Identify and analyze common topics of research shared by the sub-fields of anthropology;
3. Understand ethics and responsibility in the practice of anthropology and in our roles as citizens;
4. Recognize and appreciate what it means to be human and how ethnographic, archaeological, and biological knowledge contribute to that understanding;
5. Understand both qualitative and quantitative research methods as they apply to anthropological inquiry;
6. Possess skills to communicate anthropological knowledge effectively through writing, oral presentation, and data presentation in various formats for diverse audiences.

The course is broadly applicable and fundamentally addresses the UC Merced Guiding Principles of General Education:
1. Communication: The course is structured to maximize critical thinking, through critical reading skills and verbal and written communication exercises (class discussions, final paper).

2. Self and society: Courses such as this broaden the student’s overall perspective on the world and invite them to examine their own closely-held beliefs about their community, society and surroundings.

3. Ethics and responsibility: Exposure to sociocultural anthropology perspectives on religion is expected to foster societal responsibility, sustainable forms of living, understanding and tolerance of human diversity and awareness of social, political and economic inequalities.

Assignments and Evaluation:

All assignments are due when indicated on the syllabus. All assignments must be completed with the student’s own original work. Please turn in assignments electronically in WORD documents. For exams, students will answer questions in short essays as take home assignments. Students will receive the questions two weeks before they are due. Each exam covers material up to that date; they are not cumulative.

Midterms (30% each) Two take home midterms due March 3 and April 14,

Final Examination (35%): This will consist of one take-home essay due May 11.

Class Participation: (5%) Students are expected to attend and participate in class and section.

All assignments must be completed to pass the class.

Readings:

Books:
Schedule of Readings:

**WEEK ONE: INTRODUCTION**

no readings

**WEEK TWO: MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: A FIELD OF STUDY**

Singer and Baer

Chapter 1 "Introduction to Medical Anthropology"

**WEEK THREE: HOW DIFFERENT PEOPLES EXPERIENCE AND EXPLAIN SICKNESS**

Singer and Baer:

Chapter 3 "What Is Health: Experiencing Illness, Knowing Disease"


**WEEK FOUR: TYPES OF MEDICAL SYSTEMS**
Singer and Baer:
   Chapter 4 “Ethnomedicines: The Worlds of Treatment and Healing”
   Chapter 5 “Medical Pluralism in the Contemporary World”


**WEEK FIVE: TYPES OF SICKNESS**


Pylpa, Jen. 2007. “Healing Herbs and Dangerous Doctors: “Fruit Fever” and Community Conflicts with Biomedical Care in Northeast Thailand” Medical Anthropology Quarterly 21, 4:


**WEEK SIX: FIELDWORK IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

Chapter 2 “What Medical Anthropologists Do”


**WEEK SEVEN: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HEALTH**
Singer and Baer:
Chapter 6 "Health Disparities, Health Inequities"


**WEEK EIGHT: NEW AND NEWLY EMERGENT DISEASES**


**WEEK NINE: AIDS**


**WEEK TEN: VIOLENCE AND HEALTH**


**WEEK ELEVEN: HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT**
Singer and Baer:  
Chapter 7 “Health and the Environment: Toward a Healthier World”


**Week Twelve: Gender and Health**


**Week Thirteen: Unhealing: Cursing and Witchcraft**


**WEEK FOURTEEN: TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH APPLIED MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY**


**WEEK FIFTEEN: SUMMARY**

No readings