

SOAN 3300
Health and Illness
Spring 2012
Tuesdays 6:30-9:00

Instructor: Julian M. Murchison
Room: SH 347
Office: SH 346
Office Hours: MWF 11-12am¹, or by appointment
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Enrollment key for Course Connect page: “ethnomedicine”

Course Description:

Virtually all human beings experience sickness of one sort or another during the course of their lives. However, how they diagnose, treat, and even experience these sicknesses varies from person to person, place to place, culture to culture, and society to society. Using diverse examples ranging from AIDS in Haiti to chiropractic care in the United States, we will examine these differences and compare different systems and ask whether states of health and well-being are in fact culturally, socially, and contextually relative. We will analyze different approaches to healing and healthcare, with a particular focus on how these different approaches fit into larger social and cultural systems. This consideration of larger social and cultural systems will focus on issues such as politics, economics, gender, and religion.

The goal of this course is to encourage you to examine critically the social and cultural factors that factor into experiences of health and illness. This course will often require you to question the things that you and others have learned to take for granted. In this process, we will often find ourselves wondering and asking where the boundaries lie between the natural/scientific and the social/cultural.

Required Texts:

Bluebond-Langner, Myra

1978 The private worlds of dying children. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Fadiman, Anne

1997 The spirit catches you and you fall down: a Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

¹You are welcome to stop by and knock on my door whenever I am there, but I’m often dealing with sixteen different things at once. These office hours are times that I have set aside when you will get my undivided attention. Please make use of them whenever possible.

Farmer, Paul

1992 AIDS and accusation: Haiti and the geography of blame. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Katz, Pearl

1999 The scalpel's edge: the culture of surgeons. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Quinlan, Marsha B.

2004 From the Bush: the front line of health care in a Caribbean village. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning.

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Reaction Papers (15%)** Each of you will write one reaction paper a week. These reaction papers will be shared at the beginning of class and provide the starting point for class discussions. The papers should build off of (but not summarize) the readings for a given day/week. You should aim to raise questions, find connections, and explore the implications with your reaction papers.
- 2) **Current events (10%)** During the course of the semester, each of you will post links to at least ten current news articles that relate in some way to the topic of the course. A forum will be set up on Course Connect for this purpose. In your forum posts, you should include a link to the news article and a brief discussion of how the topic relates to the course. You might think about how an anthropological or sociological perspective is or is not reflected in the news coverage.
- 3) **Productive Participation (10%)** You will be expected to contribute regularly to class discussions and other activities. You can participate productively by asking questions, exploring ideas, and engaging your classmates and their ideas.
- 4) **Exams (35%)** There will be two open-book, take-home exams (the first worth 15% of your final grade and the second 20%), one at the midpoint of the semester and one at the end. You will have 72 hours to complete each exam after it is distributed. These exams will include several short answer questions and a single essay. They will cover specific terms and concepts as well as the broader theoretical issues that we engage.
- 5) **Essays (30%)** You will write two essays (at least five to seven pages) during the course of the semester. You will be provided with a list of prompts in advance of the due dates for these essays. The essays will ask you to synthesize and to develop an analytical argument based on the class readings to that point. For one of the essays, you may choose to write a detailed review of an academic book in medical anthropology or sociology that is not on the syllabus. Your choice of book must be approved by Julian.

Class Policies

The dates provided on this syllabus for the submission of assignments are *deadlines*. You should submit all assignments by the *beginning* of the class meeting on the date due. You should also keep a hard copy of all assignments and save them on disk for your own records. Computer problems are not an acceptable excuse for late papers. Late submissions will only be accepted at the discretion of the instructor and, if accepted, will be penalized half of a letter grade (5%) for each day (i.e., 24-hour period) late. If legitimate, unavoidable circumstances require you to seek an extension, make sure you consult with me about an extension as early as possible *before the deadline*. No work will be accepted after the final exam date.

If you miss class, for whatever reason (i.e., excused or unexcused, including due to late registration), *you* are responsible for making up any work. Talk to me and fellow students to find out what was covered, get notes, etc. You will not be allowed to make up an exam unless you provide proper documentation indicating that your absence was excused.

You are responsible for doing *all* of the reading on time. Read ahead if you can. If a reading assignment is listed for a particular day, that reading assignment should be completed *prior to* the class meeting on that day. In order for reading to be useful, you must comprehend and engage with the material. Therefore, reading involves more than simply passing your eyes over the text; it involves taking notes and thinking critically about the words on the page. Reading will provide the basis for class discussion and examination of key topics.

If you have a question about a topic covered in the readings, class, or elsewhere, please do not hesitate to ask me about it. You are welcome to contact me over email or to come to see me during office hours, but I also encourage you to ask questions in class, where your classmates can benefit from your questions.

As students at Millsaps, you have all pledged to abide by the Millsaps Honor Code. I expect you to meet the high standards of academic honesty embodied in the Honor Code. Academic honesty is vital for our intellectual endeavors. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are acts of dishonesty. If I find that a student has been academically dishonest, college policies require that I report the case to the academic dean for consideration by the Honor Council. Please take your responsibilities under the Honor Code very seriously. You should always submit your own original work for this class and cite *all* sources upon which you have drawn in developing papers and other projects. I will be unable to grade your work if you fail to provide proper citations. If you have questions about these issues, please see me.

If you are challenged with a learning disability, it is your responsibility to register with Student Services and to inform me of any allowances granted by the college. I will be happy to work with you to make sure that we arrange for the appropriate allowances.

There are many potential distractions in any classroom. Electronic items (like cell phones, ipods, and computers) are a particular source of temptation and distraction for you and for others (including me). Please do not use electronic items for any purpose other than note taking or other tasks directly related to class activities. If you are checking email, writing text messages, surfing the web, or doing anything else not related to class, at the very least you are distracted and you are probably distracting me and some of your classmates. If this occurs, I will ask you to turn it off. If it happens again, I will ask you to leave the classroom. Distractions also come in other forms. For our meetings, anthropology should be our focus. Please do not distract yourself or others with newspapers, homework or textbooks from another class, or anything else. If this happens, I will ask you once to put it away. The second time it happens I will ask you to leave the classroom.

Class Schedule:

Week 1 (1/13-1/17): Medical Anthropology and Medical Sociology

Tuesday:

Thursday: Syllabus, Freund et al., 1-42; Janzen; Brown et al.

Week 2 (1/20-1/24): Biomedicine and the Culture of Surgeons

Tuesday: Katz, vii-xi, 1-41

Thursday: Katz, 43-84, 211-212; Bates

Week 3 (1/27-1/31): The Culture of Surgeons (cont.)

Tuesday: Katz, 85-161

Thursday: Katz, 163-210; Cassell

Week 4 (2/3-2/7): Social Constructions of Health and Illness

Tuesday: Bluebond-Langner, ix-xi, 3-134

Thursday: Bluebond-Langner, 135-197

Week 5 (2/10-2/14): Illness from the Patient=s Perspective

Tuesday: Bluebond-Langner, 198-255

Thursday:

ESSAY #1 DUE

Week 6 (2/17-2/21): Symbols and Categories of Healing

Tuesday: Quinlan, 1-35

Thursday: Quinlan, 36-61; Barsh

Week 7 (2/24-2/28): Healing in the Caribbean

Tuesday: Quinlan, 62-86

Thursday: Quinlan, 87-130

EXAM #1 Distributed

Week 8 (3/3-3/7): AIDS and Haiti

Tuesday: Farmer, xi-xxv, 1-58

Thursday: Farmer, 59-120

SPRING BREAK!

Week 9 (3/17-3/21): The Political-Economy of AIDS

Tuesday: Farmer, 121-190

Thursday: Farmer, 191-264

Week 10 (3/24-3/28): The Economics and Politics of U.S. Healthcare

Tuesday: Freund et al., 255-337

Thursday: TBA

Week 11 (3/31-4/4): Recent Scholarship in Medical Anthropology and Sociology

Tuesday: TBA

Thursday:

ESSAY #2 DUE

Week 12 (4/7-4/11): More Recent Scholarship

Tuesday: TBA

Thursday:

Week 13 (4/14-4/18): Culture Clash?

Tuesday: Fadiman, vii-ix, 3-77

Thursday: Fadiman, 78-153

Week 14 (4/21-4/25): Culture Clash? (cont.)

Tuesday: Fadiman, 154-224

Thursday: Fadiman, 225-290

FINAL EXAM