Medical anthropology
(CHDV 23204, 43204; ANTH 24330, 40330; HIPS 27301)
Spring 2012

Eugene Raikhel
Comparative Human Development
University of Chicago
eraikhel@uchicago.edu

LOCATION AND TIME
Monday and Wednesday 1:30 – 2:50

SUMMARY
This course introduces students to the central concepts and methods of medical anthropology. Drawing on a number of classic and contemporary texts, we will consider both the specificity of local medical cultures and the processes which increasingly link these systems of knowledge and practice. We will study the social and political economic shaping of illness and suffering and will examine medical and healing systems – including biomedicine – as social institutions and as sources of epistemological authority. Topics covered will include the problem of belief; local theories of disease causation and healing efficacy; the placebo effect and contextual healing; theories of embodiment; medicalization; structural violence; modernity and the distribution of risk; the meanings and effects of new medical technologies; and global health.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION
Students will be evaluated on the basis of the following requirements and assignments:

1) Attendance of lectures and participation in discussions (15% of grade)
   Please make sure that you complete the required readings for the day.
   Graduate students will be expected to also complete supplementary readings.
2) A series of short (500 word) **reading responses**. Beginning week 2 of the course, students will write a response to the readings for each week and post it to the “Discussion Board” section of the Chalk website. The reading response can either take the form of comments or questions that arise from the readings for that week (either Monday or Wednesday), or a comment on a reading response posted by another student. If you choose to comment on another student’s response you should make clear reference to and engage with the text(s) being discussed as well. Students who would prefer not to share their responses with their classmates, can email them directly to me and to your TA. It is important that responses be posted (or emailed) 10 PM on the Tuesday prior to the Wednesday class session. (15% of grade)

3) A take-home **midterm exam**. (30% of grade) Midterm will be distributed at the end of class on Monday April 23, and will be due on Monday April 30 at 10:00am.

4) A 3,000 - 4,000 word **final paper**. All students have the following options for the final project:

   A) An **illness narrative** based on either 1) an interview with a family member or friend who has experienced illness, 2) an interview with family member or friend who has witnessed or been a caregiver for a relative struggling with illness and undergoing treatment, or 3) a first-person account of mental illness as found in an autobiography or film/documentary.

   B) A **research paper** addressing either a contemporary disease or the development and use of a new medical technology.

   C) A **review** of a full-length ethnography—chosen from a list—which links the book to course readings.

   D) An in-depth **proposal for a research project** which engages with some of the issues and literatures discussed in the class. The proposal would be appropriate for a BA or Master’s thesis project or a grant proposal.

Students should prepare a one paragraph abstract proposing their topic by May 7. The paper is due on June 6 – one week after the last day of class. (40% of grade)
Schedule of course sessions and readings:

All texts will be available in the “Course Documents” folder on Chalk.

March 26 – Introduction

Required:


Supplementary:


March 28 – History, rationality and belief

Required:


Supplementary:

April 2 – Understanding illness: etiologies, models and narratives

Required:


Supplementary:


April 4 – Discussion

April 9 – Therapeutic trajectories: medical pluralism, hybridity and movement

Required:


Supplementary:

April 11 – The epistemic cultures of biomedicine

Required:


Supplementary:


April 16 – Interpreting the body in medicine

Required:


Supplementary:


April 18 – Discussion
April 23 – Healing, embodiment and the placebo effect
* Midterm distributed at the end of class *

Required:


Supplementary:


April 25 – Institutional lives

Required:


Supplementary:


April 30 – Structural violence and health care disparities
* Midterm due at 10am *

Required:


**Supplementary:**


May 2 – Discussion

May 7 – Local biologies
  * Proposal for final paper due *

**Required:**


May 9 – Governing bodies and populations

**Required:**


**Supplementary:**

May 14 – Making up patients

Required:


Supplementary:


May 16 – Discussion

May 21 – Between global health and global biomedicine

Required:


May 23 – Care

Required:


Janelle Taylor, ‘On Recognition, Caring, and Dementia’, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 22 (2008), 313–335

May 30 – New medical technologies: remaking bodies, lives and kinship

Required:


Supplementary:


June 6

* Final paper due *