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Medicine, Health, and Culture

ANTH 4330 / 5325, Spring 2023

Instructor: Dr. Venera R. KHALIKOVA
venera.khalikova@cuhk.edu.hk
Office Hours: by appointment, NAH 303

Class time: Tuesday 2:30 pm – 5:15pm

Class location:
T.C. Cheng Building (UCC) C4, then C1

RA: Amy LAM
1155108785@link.cuhk.edu.hk

Course Description

This course examines health, illness, and care from an anthropological perspective. By doing so, the course serves as an introduction to medical anthropology (or health anthropology as it is sometimes called today). You will learn about various medical traditions, theories, and practices in different parts of the world as well as cultural influences in biomedicine, i.e., currently dominant “modern” or “cosmopolitan” medicine.

Specifically, in the first half of the course, we will discuss how culture shapes the representations and experiences of illness, what distinguishes belief from knowledge, how people navigate a plurality of medial options, and how patients and healers make sense of illness through narratives. The second half of the course will redirect our attention to the culture, economy, and politics of biomedicine. We will examine the ideologies of science, the role of governments, pharmaceutical companies, as well as one’s citizenship, class, gender, and race in experiences of health and suffering, provision of care, and access to medical resources. The themes of health inequality, structural violence, global health, and mental health will be central to our discussions at the end of the course.

Course format

As this is a 4000-level UG course cross-coded with an MA course, it is a challenging one. There will be many readings: at least three academic texts for UG students and four for MA students each week, in addition to an entire book that you will need to read at your time throughout the semester. There will be no long lectures and separate tutorials. Instead, it will be an interactive seminar with class and small group discussions. Therefore, I expect you to come to class having read the readings with prepared discussion questions.

Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- describe the history and major theoretical positions of medical anthropology;
- explain the diversity of health-related beliefs, systems of knowledge, and practices across different cultures and societies;
- analyze the interactions between biological, cultural, and social factors in the shaping of health-related experiences

Learning Material

All readings will be available on Blackboard, but you may want to purchase hard copies of the following textbooks:

- Byron Good, Michael Fischer, Sarah Willen and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, 2010. *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories and Emergent Realities*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell
- Anne Fadiman (2012) *The spirit catches you and you fall down: a Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures* (with a new afterward by the author). New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux

Additional resources:

Textbooks and readers:

- Good, Byron. 1994. *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience: An Anthropological Perspective*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press
- Peter Brown and Ron Barret. *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*. Third Edition. Left Coast Press

Major academic journals in medical anthropology:

- Medical Anthropology Quarterly
- Medical Anthropology
- Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry
- Anthropology & Medicine
- Medical Anthropology Theory
- Social Sciences & Medicine
- Transcultural Psychiatry

Online resources:

- The Society for Medical Anthropology (<https://medanthro.net>) – the website of the professional associations of medical anthropologists under the American Anthropological Association

- Medical Anthropology Europe (<https://www.easaonline.org/networks/medical/>) – the website of the medical anthropology network under the European Association of Medical Anthropologists
- Medical Anthropology Young Scholars (<https://mayseasa.org/>) – the website of the young scholar wing of the Medical Anthropology Europe
- IASTAM The International Association for the Study of Traditional Asian Medicine (<http://iastam.org/>)
- Somatosphere (<http://somatosphere.net>) - the most influential medical anthropology blog

Assessment Criteria

Reading responses on Blackboard – 20 %

For 9 weeks marked below, you will need to submit **two reading responses** in either of the following formats:

- your own post + one comment on your classmate’s post
- two comments on your classmates’ posts

These responses do not have to be long—they could be as brief as two-three sentences but they must meet the following criteria:

- be pertinent to the main arguments of the texts (demonstrate that you have read the texts)
- be meaningful and original (demonstrate that you have thought about the texts)
- be polite and respectful

The posts should be posted onto Blackboard **before the class**.

Short papers – 60%

There is no term paper. Instead of a long final essay, you will be required to write three short essays of 1500 words each (1400 min, 1600 max) excluding bibliography

1) Health-seeking in the context of medical plurality

Write a paper based on an interview with a family member or a friend who has experienced any kind of illness. You should use the concept of medical plurality to analyze their experience. An interview script must be attached.

Due: February 14

2) Doctor’s view

Write a paper based on an interview a health care professional on any aspect discussed in the course readings or lectures. Here, a health care professional is understood broadly: they can be doctor, nurse, pharmacist, fitness coach, nutrition specialist, alternative medical doctor, yoga teacher, but they must have been educated, trained, and licensed to practice their profession. An interview script must be attached.

Due: March 7

3) Medical ideologies and medical discourse

Write a critical analysis of any current medical issue (within a year) as covered in mainstream media **and** social media. It should be related to the discussion of the following topics: medicine as science, medical technology and innovation, health inequality, mental health, the idea of wellness, or healthy food. You should use one concept from course readings or lectures to advance your analysis.

A link to a media article and screenshots of social media discussions must be attached.
 Due: March 21

Book reading test and discussion – 20 %

On the last day of class, there will be a reading test on the assigned book, Anne Fadiman’s *The spirit catches you and you fall down*, followed by a class discussion. The test will take 30 minutes and will consist of 10 questions about the content of the book.

Grading scale and criteria

| Grade | % | Forum participation | Written assignments | Reading test |
|-------|--------|--|---|---|
| A | 95-100 | All 18 posts are submitted on time and fulfil the requirements | Your writing is original, nuanced, well-written, clear, and factually correct; your analysis and arguments are convincing. Everything is of a required length and format, and submitted on time | All ten questions are answered in full. Your answers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the book; information is factually accurate and grounded in course concepts |
| A - | 90-94 | 17 posts are submitted on time and fulfil the requirements | Your writing is original, nuanced, well-written, clear, and factual; your analysis and arguments are convincing, but may occasionally contain minor errors. Everything is of a required length and format, and submitted on time | Either 9 questions are answered in full, or 10 questions with some omissions. Your answers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the book; information is almost entirely factually accurate and grounded in course concepts |
| B+ | 85-89 | 15-16 posts are submitted on time | Your writing demonstrates an overall good grasp of concepts and theories, but occasionally lacks clarity, contains several minor errors, and / or slightly deviates from required length and format. It is original and submitted on time. | Either 8 questions are answered in full, or 9 questions with some omissions. Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of the book but may lack clarity and contain several minor factual errors |
| B | 80-84 | 13-14 posts are submitted on time | Your writing demonstrates an overall good grasp of concepts and theories, but occasionally lacks clarity, contains many minor errors, and / or deviates from required length and format. Everything is submitted on time and is original, although there might be minor problems with citations and attribution | Either 7 questions are answered in full, or 8 questions with some omissions. Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of the book but may lack clarity and contain many minor factual errors |
| B - | 75-79 | 11-12 posts are submitted on time | Your writing demonstrates an overall good grasp of concepts and theories, but lacks clarity, contains minor errors and a few major logical flaws, and / or deviates from required length and format. Everything is submitted on time and is original, although there | Either 6 questions are answered in full, or 7 questions with some omissions. Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of the book but lack clarity, contain many minor factual |

| | | | | |
|-----|-------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| | | | might be minor problems with citations and attribution | errors and a few major logical flaws |
| C + | 70-74 | 9-10 posts are submitted on time | Your writing shows an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and/or often deviates from required length and format. The assignments are submitted on time or a day late. The work is original, although there are serious problems with citations and attribution | Either 5 questions are answered in full, or 6 questions with some omissions. Your answers demonstrate an overall good understanding of the book but lack clarity, contain many major factual errors and logical flaws |
| C | 65-69 | 7-8 posts are submitted on time | Your writing shows an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and does not follow the required length and format. The assignments are submitted on time or a day late. The work is original, although there are major problems with citations and attribution | Either 4 questions are answered in full, or 5 questions with some omissions. Your answers show an acceptable level of understanding of the book but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws |
| C - | 60-64 | 5-6 posts are submitted on time | Your writing shows an acceptable level of understanding of class material, but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual errors and logical flaws, and does not follow the required length and format. The work is submitted a day or two late. It is original, although there are serious problems with citations and attribution | Either 3 questions are answered in full, or 4 questions with some omissions. Your analysis and answers show an acceptable level of understanding of the book but it lacks clarity, contains many major factual and conceptual errors and logical flaws |
| D + | 55-59 | 3-4 posts are submitted on time | Your writing shows a minimal understanding of concepts and theories. It lacks effort, is hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The work is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (answers are too short), and/or are submitted a few days late | Either 2 questions are answered in full, or 3 questions with some omissions. Your answers show minimal understanding of the book. It lacks effort, hard to follow, contains major factual and conceptual errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints |
| D | 50-54 | 1-2 posts are submitted on time | Your writing shows a minimal understanding of concepts and theories. It lacks effort, is hard to read and understand, contains major errors, flaws, and biased viewpoints. The work is original, but citations are absent. It considerably deviates from the required length and format (too short), and submitted many days late | Either 1 question is answered in full, or 2 questions with some omissions. Your answers show minimal understanding of the book. It lacks effort, hard to follow, contains many major factual and conceptual errors, logical flaws, and biased viewpoints |
| F | 0 | No posts submitted | Your writing is submitted more than a week late or not submitted at all. The work is extremely short, factually incorrect, biased, and/or contains instances of plagiarism. | No questions answered, or there is an incomplete attempt to answer 1 question. Or you did not attend the reading test |

Weekly schedule

*Subject to change. Stay tuned on Blackboard

1. January 10: Introduction to the Course

- Byron Good, MJ Fischer, S Willen and MJ DeVecchio-Good, 2010. "Introduction and Setting the Stage," *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, Pp. 1-13.

2. January 17: Rationality and the Problem of Belief

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- W.H.R. Rivers. Massage in Melanesia. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*. Pp 15-17
- E.E. Evans-Pritchard, 1976. "The Notion Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events," *A Reader in Medical Anthropology* Pp. 18-25
- Byron Good, 1994. "Medical Anthropology and the Problem of Belief," *A Reader in Medical Anthropology* Pp. 64-75

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Benjamin D. Paul. 1958. The Role of Beliefs and Customs in Sanitation Programs. *A Reader in Medical Anthropology* Pp. 64-75

3. January 31. Medical plurality

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- George M Foster. 1976. Disease Etiologies in Non-Western Medical Systems. In *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*, pp. 103-110 or in *American Anthropologist* 78(4): 773-782
- Charles Leslie. 1976. Introduction to Asian Medical Systems: A Comparative Study. *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 55-63
- Zhang, E.Y. 2007. Switching between traditional Chinese medicine and Viagra: cosmopolitanism and medical pluralism today. *Medical Anthropology* 26, 53-96

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Venera Khalikova. 2020. Doctors of Plural Medicine, Knowledge Transmission, and Family Space in India, *Medical Anthropology*, 39:3, 282-296

4. February 7: Illness experiences and narratives

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- Arthur Kleinman, 1973. "Medicine's Symbolic Reality: On a Central Problem in the Philosophy of Medicine," *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 86-90
- Mattingly, Cheryl. 1994 (reprint 2010) "The Concept of Therapeutic Emplotment" in *A Reader in Medical Anthropology* pp. 121-136.
- Michael Jackson, 1998 (reprint 2010). "Myths/Histories/Lives," *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp.137-142.

Recommended for UG, required for MA

- Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. The Meaning of Symptoms and Disorders (Chapter 1) in *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing & the Human Condition*. New York: Basic Books

5. February 14. The culture of biomedicine

First paper due in class

- Blumhagen, D.W. 1979. The Doctor's White Coat: The Image of the Physician in Modern America. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 91(1):111-116.
- Daniel Moerman. 2002. Doctors and Patients: The Role of Clinicians in the Placebo Effect. In *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*, pp. 133-141
- Robert Hahn. 1997. The Nocebo Phenomenon: Concept, Evidence and Implications for Public Health. In *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*, pp. 142-147

In Class Documentary: Becoming a Doctor

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Conrad, Peter. "The shifting engines of medicalization." *Journal of health and social behavior* 46.1 (2005): 3-14.

6. February 21. Ideologies of science and anti-science

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- Martin, Emily. "Medical metaphors of women's bodies: Menstruation and menopause." In *The woman in the body: A cultural analysis of reproduction*. Beacon Press, 2001
- Bonnie Henry, 2020, *Soap and Water and Common Sense: The Definitive Guide to Viruses, Bacteria Parasites and Disease*, Toronto, ON: Anansi Press. "Chapter Two - Humans vs Microbes," pp. 30-71
- Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good. *The Medical Imaginary and the Biotechnical Embrace: Subjective Experiences of Clinical Scientists and Patients* 272

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Margaret Lock and Vinh-Kim Nguyen. 2010. *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*. Introduction and Part 1, pp. 1-31

7. February 28: Governmentality and biological citizenship

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- Adriana Petryna. *Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations*. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 199-212
- João Biehl. *Human Pharmakon: Symptoms, Technologies, Subjectivities*. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 213=231
- Stefan Ecks, 2005. *Pharmaceutical Citizenship: Antidepressant Marketing and the Promise of Demarginalization in India*. *Anthropology and Medicine* 12(3): 239-254

Recommended for UG, required for MA

- Paul Rabinow and Nicholas Rose, 2006. Biopower Today. In *Biosocieties*, 1: 195-217

March 7. No class. Reading week

Second paper due on Blackboard

If you haven't started reading *Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, it's time now!

March 14. No class

I am at a conference overseas

8. March 21. Public health and drug addiction in China

Third paper due on Blackboard

- TBD
- TBD

9. March 28. Body economy: birth, life, and death

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- Lawrence Cohen. Where It Hurts: Indian Material for an Ethics of Organ Transplantation. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 284
- Marcia C. Inhorn. Quest for Conception: Gender, Infertility, and Egyptian Medical Traditions. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 319

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, 2000. The Global Traffic in Human Organs. *Current Anthropology* 41:2, 191-224 (Read the article but replies are optional)

In class documentary: HOT-Human Organ Trade

10. April 4: Race, gender, and health inequalities

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- Hannah Landecker. Immortality, In Vitro: A History of the HeLa Cell Line. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp 353
- Gravlee, Clarence C. 2009. "How Race Becomes Biology: Embodiment of Social Inequality." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 139 (1): 47-57.
- Veena Das. The Figure of the Abducted Woman: The Citizen as Sexed. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 232-244

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Krause, Kristine. 2008 Transnational Therapy Networks among Ghanaians in London. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34(2):235-251

11. April 11: Global health, global medicine

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- Craig R. Janes and Kitty K. Corbett. Anthropology and Global Health. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 405
- Paul Farmer. The New Malaise: Medical Ethics and Social Rights in the Global Era. In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 437
- Didier Fassin. Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life, In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology*, pp. 452

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Merrill Singer, D. Ann Herring, Judith Littleton, and Melanie Rock. 2011. Syndemics in Global Health. In *A Companion to Medical Anthropology*, pp. 159-180

12. April 18: Mental health and culture

submit two reading responses to a Blackboard forum

- Arthur Kleinman, 1973. “Do psychiatric disorders differ in different cultures? In *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*, pp. 223-234
- Els van Dongen, 2010. Repetition and Repertoires: The Creation of Cultural Differences in Dutch Mental Health Care. In *Anthropology & Medicine*, 12 (2): 179-197
- Joanna Cook and Julia Cassaniti. 2022. Mindfulness and culture. In *Anthropology Today*, 38: 1-3

Recommended for UG, required for MA:

- Nicholas Bartlett, William Garriott and Eugene Raikhel, 2014. What’s in the ‘Treatment Gap’? Ethnographic Perspectives on Addiction and Global Mental Health from China, Russia, and the United States. In *Medical Anthropology*, 33(6): 457-477

13. April 25: Make up class

Book reading test and discussion

- Anne Fadiman (2012) *The spirit catches you and you fall down: a Hmong child, her American doctors, and the collision of two cultures* (with a new afterward by the author). New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux

Course Policies and Support

Contacting me

Use your CUHK email (not your personal email), when communicating about class matters. For most situations, you should write to the class RA first—they are very knowledgeable and ready to help you. But feel free to email me as well, if there is something that the RA does not know, or if you want to contact me directly. In line with the convention of academic communication, you can

address me as Venera or Dr. Khalikova. I will do my best to answer your email within 24 hours, with an understandable exception of weekends and public holidays.

Educational technology

This class relies on the use of Blackboard and VeriGuide. All class communications, announcements, assignment guidelines, and homework submissions will be done through Blackboard. Note that it uses the email address assigned to you by the University, so it is your responsibility to have an electronic mail forwarded to your primary email address.

Each written assignment should be run through VeriGuide

Academic Integrity

The University has recently updated its policy on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_%282013-14%29/p06.htm

Read it carefully: every student is expected to comply with the policy; otherwise, if you are suspected of violating these obligations, you will be subject to the outlined sanctions. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask me or your TA about this!

Special accommodation

If you need special accommodations or classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the University's Wellness and Counselling Center (<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB>) no later than the third week of class.

Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, **you may not record** our discussions and activities during the class without my permission obtained in advance, and only solely for your own private use. Typically, PowerPoint slides will be uploaded to Blackboard and available for review. For days, when the class cannot meet, a lecture will be pre-recorded and posted to Blackboard.

Late Work and Absence

Late or incomplete assignments will be marked down: a full grade will be subtracted **for each late day**. Class attendance is not required, but if you miss a class, it is your responsibility to copy class notes and go over the PowerPoint presentations; otherwise, it will most likely result in poor understanding of class material and, ultimately, in a low grade. You are welcome to talk to me during office hours to go over the missed lectures!

Discussion Rules

We will discuss many interesting, important and potentially controversial topics. I expect you to be **polite and respectful** of your classmates' opinions, limit your statements to academic (not emotional) arguments, and not use offensive language or judgmental statements.

Grade Review

If you want to discuss and contest your grade, you can send me an email to set up an appointment during my office hours when we will go over your exam/written work and decide on a grade

together. During this process, I can both mark your original grade up, if you demonstrate evidence that you know the material well, or mark it down.

Independent Learning Center

If you need help with communication and learning skills, the University has an excellent resource for you. You can schedule a consultation or attend workshops on various strategies for improving learning outcomes <https://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/EN/mission.aspx>