

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
INSTITUTE OF ANTHROPOLOGY, GENDER AND AFRICAN STUDIES
NAF 308: MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY-COURSE OUTLINE

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COURSE OBJECTIVE

The general aim of this course is to introduce medical anthropology as a cross-cultural study of health and illness from a perspective that is both biological and cultural. This course addresses the underlying belief systems or assumptions that drive behaviour, together with the wider social context in which the behaviour takes place in relation to health problems, health care systems, health practices and theories about illness in different cultures and ethnic groups. To do so, we are compelled to move beyond common tendencies to narrowly focus on the biological dimensions of illness and healing. By turning our attention to the ways in which illness, health, and healing are embedded within distinct social, political, and cultural worlds, the course will examine how experiences such as pain, misfortune, and ecstasy are produced and understood.

COURSE CONTENT

1. Medical Anthropology
 - Definition of medical anthropology and key terms
 - Its relationship with other disciplines of anthropology
2. Health and Disease
 - Determinants of health and disease
3. Theoretical orientations in medical anthropology
4. Medical anthropology, epidemiology and ecology
 - Environment, culture and health
 - Social and cultural aspects of epidemiology
5. Health care systems
6. Ethno medicine
 - Disease classifications
 - Aetiology, diagnosis and therapy of disease
7. Culture and pharmacology
8. Medical Anthropology in the 21st Century

Evaluation

Active Reading Exercises (20%). Students will break down and summarize the major points) and conclusions (**5pages maximum**) on "Self-care and Subjectivity

among Mexican Diabetes Patients in the United States". This paper is already mailed.

Presentations on Current Issues 10%

All presentations must explicitly relate the information to course materials. You are advised to join any of the five groups constituted on the basis of topics. Topics include:

Topic 1: Medical tourism

Organs are not the only things travelling around the globe. Report on several types of medical tourism or transnational health-seeking behaviors that have developed in recent years.

Topic 2: Women, HIV, & Social Risk

How is protecting women from HIV transmission both a social and medical problem? What are the major issues at stake? Describe anthropological studies on barriers to condom use.

Topic 3: Anthropological analysis of Double standards in Health

What are the gender dimensions of double standards in reproductive health? What insights can Anthropology offer to the phenomenon?

Topic 4: Zig-zag health and healing seeking behavior

How does plural health care existence influence such behavior? What are the socio-cultural contributors to pluralistic health seeking?

Topic 5: Where next for Medical Anthropology?

“The Future of Medical Anthropology: Meeting Global Health Challenges”

Final examination : written (70%)

NOTE:

Assignment Due Date: The essay assignment on journal reading and analysis: *15th Day of June, 2015*. No extensions can be granted on this.

Group work is mandatory for all the members, assessment is based on individual competence on the subject matter at the point of presentation.

Attendance: Missing class more than three times automatically disqualifies you from taking examination on this unit.

READING LIST

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- Fabrega H.** 1997. Evolution of sickness and healing, Berkeley: University of California Press
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- Loustaunau M.O. and E. J. Sobo** 1984. The cultural context of health, illness and medicine. London: Bergin and Garvey.
- McElroy A. and P.K. Townsend** 2004. Medical Anthropology in Ecological perspective. London: Westview Press.
- Mwenesi HA.** 2005. Social Science research in malaria prevention, management and control in the last two decades: an overview. *Acta Tropica 95(3): 292-7.*
- Pelto P.J. and Pelto G. H.** 1990. Medical Anthropology: Contemporary theory and methods, New York: Greenwood Publications Company
- Romanucci-Ross L., Moerman DE. & Tancredi LR.** 1997. The Anthropology of medicine: from culture to method. Connecticut, Bergin & Garvey.
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- Whyte S. R. 1997.** Questioning misfortune. The pragmatics of uncertainty in eastern Uganda. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.