

# Anthropology 5201.200/ 300

## Health, Healing, and Society: An Introduction to Medical Anthropology Fall 2020

**Instructor:** Doug Henry  
**Office Hours:** Wed 1:15 – 3:30pm,  
or by appointment  
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### Course Information

#### Course Description

This course is a graduate-level seminar introduction to my favorite part of anthropology- medical anthropology. If you've never taken medical anthropology, that's OK, but I'll assume that everyone has had some background into thinking critically about health, wellness, medicine, and society- either through an undergraduate course, or on your own. We'll cover both classics and modern work on disease etiology, "embodiment" and the experience of suffering, "ethnomedical" beliefs, "sick role" behavior, the provision of health services, so called "biocultural" aspects of disease, structural violence, and the role of larger political/ economic factors on provision of health care, as well as the creation and elimination of health disparities.

#### Course Learning Objectives

- By the end of the course, you should be able to define medical anthropology and understand the nature, scope, and contributions of the discipline.
- Be able to describe the application of theory in medical anthropology, and the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.
- Apply all of this to specific health related topics, to address real-world health problems.

### Requirements

#### Readings:

Readings will be either things you look up each week through the UNT library catalog, be "on reserve" readings in Canvas, or be required ethnographies that you will have to purchase yourself. Some articles in the syllabus will be marked "required;" for others you will pick one from among a group. Several weeks you'll have the option of browsing medical anthropology journals and selecting your own article, as long as it falls within the weekly topic.

The required ethnographies for this course will be:

Holmes, Seth (2013). *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Jordan-Young, Rebecca, and Katrina Karkazis (2019). *Testosterone: An Unauthorized Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mattingly, Cheryl (2014). *Moral Laboratories: Family Peril and the Struggle for a Good Life*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 1, 3-7.

**Canvas:** you will need to check Canvas regularly for class announcements, course updates, additional readings, and supplemental material!

Trouble-shooting: If you run into technical issues with Canvas, follow the procedures outlined under “Technical Issues” in the Student Success Guide on Canvas. Once you have a ticket number from the HelpDesk, email Dr. Henry.

**Minimum computer skills and digital literacy:** This course defines digital literacy as the ability to use technology to find, evaluate, and communicate information. At a minimum, your successful completion of this course requires a basic digital literacy, where you must either know, or be able to learn, how to navigate UNT’s Canvas system, including posting discussion and assignments, or linking out the course to readings, watch required videos posted, or view films through the UNT digital library.

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course.

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## Assessment & Grading

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**Course Assignments and Discussions:** This class will require you to complete weekly assignments, weekly discussions, including discussions about the 3 course medical ethnographies, and class interviews on a project idea.

1. Discussion Board Topics: You will be required to engage in discussion-post conversation with your peers, presented throughout the course. Each discussion will be scored out of 10 points. The general guideline is, for each discussion, you will be expected to post one short but substantial paragraph by Wednesday midnight of any week, and then respond to (at least) two of your classmates’ posts with a substantial response, by Saturday midnight. By substantial I mean that you say more than just “I agree” or “great point!” You must explain yourself by referring back to the corresponding topic. Discussions are designed to demonstrate that you understand and can clearly and effectively articulate anthropological concepts and facts. Only relay personal beliefs or opinions if prompted by assignment instructions. You may certainly incorporate outside reading material or anecdotal information provided it is relevant to the Topic.
2. Unit Assignments: Assignments will be usually based on readings or required films (and the films will be available to you through the UNT library).

3. Zoom call participation.
4. Project Interviews and write-ups.

**Points Distribution and Grading Scale:**

<b>Assignments and Discussions</b>	<b>Possible Points</b>
Assignments (40%)	200 (14 x 14.3 pts per assign)
Topic Discussions (32%)	160 (16 x 10)
Interviews and write-ups (16%)	80
Zoom meeting participation (12%)	60 (5 x 12)
<b>Total: 500 points</b>	

**Calculating your grade:**

<b>Point Conversion to a Letter Grade</b>
450 – 500 points (90-100%) = A
400 – 449 points (80-89%) = B
350 – 399 points (70-79%) = C
300 – 349 points (60-69%) = D
0 – 300 points ( < 59%) = F

**Course Policies**

**How to be successful in this course:**

1. Manage Your Time Wisely  
 You must stay up-to-date in this course! I recommend scheduling designated times to read and work on the assigned Topics and readings, assignments, and discussions– and sticking to them. The course is structured so that everyone is looking at the same Topic and participating in the same discussions, every week. Each week, you should review the Schedule, read the Topic and readings materials, then complete the corresponding Assignments and Discussionst.

2. Do the Readings

Seriously. It's graduate school. Reading, writing, and critical thinking are par for the course.

3. View Any Required Films

ALL links to the films can be found both in the individual **Topics** themselves. First you login with your EUID and password, then the video will pop up. The library's Video-On-Demand page will also open in the background and display all the films that are available to you through in the Video-on-demand system. After viewing each film, you will complete the corresponding assignment or discussion.

4. Pay attention to class announcements or emails through Canvas.

And as part of this, make sure that your Canvas announcements and emails get forwarded to whatever email you use the most (like your UNT email). If I send an email out through Canvas, you need to make sure you're going to be able to see it.

5. Stay in touch with your Instructor.

If you encounter a problem with getting things done or staying up, it's imperative that you stay in touch with us.

**Always remember the core rules of "Netiquette:"**

Rule 1. Remember the human. Never forget that the person reading your mail or posting is, indeed, a person, with feelings that can be hurt.

*Corollary 1: It's not nice to hurt other people's feelings.*

*Corollary 2: Never mail or post anything you wouldn't say to your reader's face.*

Rule 2. Adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life.

*Corollary 1: Be ethical.*

Rule 3. Know where you are in cyberspace.

*Corollary 1: Netiquette varies from domain to domain, and even class to class.*

**Rule 4.** Respect other people's time and bandwidth.

*Corollary 1: It's OK to think that what you're doing at the moment is the most important thing in the universe, but don't expect anyone else to agree with you.*

*Corollary 2: Post messages to the appropriate discussion group.*

*Corollary 3: Don't ask your instructor, IAs, or other students questions whose answers are already on the course syllabus or in the class itself.*

(Abstracted from Albion.com <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/0963702513p32.html>)

**CLASSROOM COMMUNITY**

## **Attendance and Participation**

This is a small graduate seminar, so you all will HAVE to “show up” every week in our virtual class having read, prepared, and being ready to discuss. How much people get out of the class is in large part determined by how much everyone puts into the class. I expect LOTS of discussion, and everyone’s participation. I like an informal class style where everyone is respectful of each other. In your discussion posts, TALK TO EACH OTHER – not just to me. Attendance at our 5 Zoom meetings will be mandatory. If you have a reason you can’t attend one of those classes, talk to me first.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Approx. 40% (200 points total). Weekly Assignments.** Each week, everyone will read the 1-2 articles in BOLD listed in the syllabus, or the ethnography for the week. Come to class ready to discuss those in detail. Following those in the syllabus are other articles, from which you will choose ONE that matches your own interest (or sometimes a “browse for your own” option). Assignments will vary by week, but every week (unless otherwise noted in the syllabus), you will write a single-spaced response and submit it yourself on the Assignments tab. This will usually involve you doing SHORT summary (5-6ish sentences) paragraphs for each of the 3 pieces, and a slightly longer analysis, where you more critically compare and connect the pieces topically or conceptually, discuss your reaction to them, any questions you’re left with, what you would have liked to have seen more of, and how this type of research could be actionable or practically significant. Additional assignments will happen as “Film responses.”

**Approx. 12% (60 points total) Attendance and Participation in 5 Zoom Meetings**

**32% Online Discussions (160 points total).** It’s a small seminar class, so discussion is critical. How much each person gets out of the class will be dependent on how much each person puts into it. Every week, we’ll discuss either readings, or a particular topic, or both. Discussions almost always have an initial post that will be due by Wednesday midnight of a particular week, and then a response to 2 other posts by Saturday midnight.

**Approx. 16% Interviews and Write-ups. (80 points total).** This semester, instead of a “client-based” applied project, we’ll be doing a “traditional” anthropology project, but on an applied topic. For about 10 years out of my professional life, I’ve studied sleep disorders, and people’s strategic self-treatment for sleep problems. When I tell people about this, they often start telling me stories of their own “disordered” sleep, or the sleep of their spouses/ children/ bed partners, or of some remedies they’ve tried. Everyone occasionally gets a bad night sleep, and everybody has a strategy to deal with it. Our working question, then, for the class interviews, will be, “When does an occasional bad night’s sleep become something people try to remedy, or attempt to control? How do people exert this control? When do they seek the advice or help of others? What are strategies of sleep management and regulation? What are the explanatory models of those who have sleep problems? What are the structural/ environmental influences on sleep habits that college students inhabit?” More detail on this will be in the Canvas lesson.

**Plagiarism and Cheating.** The Department of Anthropology does not tolerate plagiarism, cheating, or helping others to cheat. Plagiarism is defined as misrepresenting the work of others (whether published or not) as your own. It may be inadvertent or intentional. Any facts, statistics, quotations, or paraphrasing of any information that is not common knowledge, should be cited. Students suspected of any of these will be provided the opportunity for a hearing; if found guilty they can receive an automatic “F” in the course. In addition, I reserve the right to pursue further disciplinary action within the UNT legal system, which may result in your dismissal from the university.

For more information on paper writing, including how to avoid plagiarism, and how to use citations, see <http://anthropology.unt.edu/resources/writing-guide>. For information on the University’s policies regarding academic integrity and dishonesty, see the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, <http://www.unt.edu/csrr/>.

**If you have trouble during the semester-** open communication with me is the best first step! UNT has also recently become very serious about graduate student success in school, and has marshaled resources to support you. See, e.g., <https://success.unt.edu/>

**COVID-19 impact on attendance.** While attendance is expected as outlined above, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. Please contact me if you are unable to attend or log in to class because you are ill due to COVID-19, including symptoms, potential exposure, pending or positive test results, or if you have been given specific instructions to isolate or quarantine from a health care provider or a local authority. It is important that you communicate with me prior to missing work so I may make a decision about accommodating your request to be excused.

If you are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or [askSHWC@unt.edu](mailto:askSHWC@unt.edu)) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or [COVID@unt.edu](mailto:COVID@unt.edu) for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

**Class Materials for remote instruction.** It’s a fully online class, so the only thing you’ll need is a computer that has access to the Internet and UNT Canvas, that can read Adobe pdf documents.

**Class Recordings.** Synchronous (live) sessions in this course will be recorded for students enrolled in this class section to refer to throughout the semester. Class recordings are the intellectual property of the university or instructor and are reserved for use only by students in this class and only for educational purposes. Students may not post or otherwise share the recordings outside the class, or outside the Canvas Learning Management System, in any form. Failing to follow this restriction is a violation of the UNT Code of Student Conduct and could lead to disciplinary action.

**Face Coverings on the UNT Campus.** If you go to the UNT campus, face coverings are required inside of all UNT facilities. If you are unable to wear a face covering or do not feel you can safely attend class without your face covering due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability

Access to request an accommodation. UNT face covering requirements are subject to change due to community health guidelines. Any changes will be communicated by your instructor.

## COURSE PLAN:

### ***Week 1 August 24 – 30<sup>th</sup>***

#### ***MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY: an Overview of Key Concepts, Practices, and Theory***

Introduction to course, the course project, and each other.

#### **Required:**

Brown, Peter, Svea Closser (2016). Medical Anthropology: an Introduction. In *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. Pp. 13-24. Boston: McGraw Hill. (Canvas)

### ***Week 2 August 30 – Sept 6<sup>th</sup>***

#### ***Explanatory Models, Ethnomedicine, and Meaning Centered Understanding***

#### **Required:**

Pamela Erickson- the Healing Lessons of Ethnomedicine (2016). Chapter 17 in *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*. P. Brown and S. Closser, eds. Pp 188-196. New York: Taylor and Francis (Canvas)

Henry, D., and L. Rosenthal (2013). The Significance of Gender and Partner Reporting on the Diagnosis, Management, and Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea. *Social Science and Medicine*. 79 (1): 48-56. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

#### **Choose**

Weller, Susan, Roberta Baer, Javier Garcia de Alba, Ana Salcedo Rocha (2012). Explanatory Models of Diabetes in the U.S. and Mexico: the patient-provider gap and cultural competence. *Social Science and Medicine* 75 (2): 1088-1096. (Available through the UNT library for free <https://library.unt.edu/research>)

Waxler, Nancy (2016). Chapter 22: Learning to be a Leper: a Case Study in the Social Construction of Illness. In *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*. Brown and Closser, eds. Pp. 230-240. (Canvas)

#### **Due: Week 2 reading commentary**

For this week, do a 1-2 page (single space) readings response and commentary. First write a short-paragraph summary of each article, putting in enough “main detail” points to jog your memory in the future. Then, write about why soliciting a meaning-centered understanding is

important. How is illness affected by the social world? Does this approach have any limitations in understanding human behavior?

**Week 3      September 6 – Sept 13<sup>th</sup>**  
***Public Health, the Political Economy, and Policy***

**Required**

Gravlee, Clarence (2009). How Race Becomes Biology: Embodiment of Social Inequality. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 139 (1): 47-57. (Canvas)

Crooks, Deborah (2003). Trading Nutrition for Education: Nutritional Status and the Sale of Snack Foods in an Eastern Kentucky School. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 17 (2): 182-199. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

**Choose one of the following three:**

Mendoza, Sonia, Rivera, Allyssa Stephanie, and Hansen, Helena Bjerring (2019): Re-racialization of Addiction and the Redistribution of Blame in the White Opioid Epidemic. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 33 (2): 242-262 (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

Schwartz, Norah (2004). Childhood Asthma on the Northern Mexico Border. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 18(2): 214-229. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

Blanchette, Alex (2019). Living Waste and the Labor of Toxic Health on American Factory Farms. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 33 (1): 80-100. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

**Due: *Film Response Assignment (see Canvas)***

**Due: *Week 3 Commentary***

After summarizing the articles for this week, discuss how the political-economic structures of society affect what illnesses people face and what they do about them. Finally, you've now seen two of the "lenses" that medical anthropology uses to understand health and illness- the individual "proximal" level of meaning, and the broader ("system level") political economy. Compare these two perspectives; how do you see them relating to each other? Which one do you see as more useful for your own research/ thesis plans? Aim for 3 pages, single spaced.

**Week 4      September 13 – Sept 20<sup>th</sup>**  
***Ethnography (in person Zoom Meeting this week)***

**Required ethnography:**



Holmes, Seth (2013). *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

In person Zoom meeting this week!

**Due: Week 4 Commentary.**

This week, something a little different. Write a 1-2 page (single spaced) “book review.” About 1/3 of this should be a concise summary. Then, what did you think of the book? What kinds of “everyday violence” do Triqui migrants experience (make sure to look up that concept)? How much of both their illnesses and behaviors are rooted in ethnomedical beliefs and personal choices, and how much is the product of “structural” forces like the political economy? How does the concept of “symbolic violence” play out?

**Also due this week: Project exercise**

From the second week, you had a reading that walked you through WHY soliciting a meaning-centered understanding is important, as well as a reading (and lesson) that walks you through eliciting an explanatory model. For this week, use those guides to create your 8-10 question list of questions, and find someone to interview, about the quality of their sleep. Because EVERYONE occasionally gets a bad night’s sleep- what is a bad night’s sleep for them? What causes it, and what do they do about it? Write 2 ½ - 3 single spaced pages where you discuss this case (you can preserve anonymity), what it reveals about the individual, or what you suspect it reveals about society. Also talk about the strengths or limitations of the methods. Include your questions at the end. This will also be part of our in-person discussion. *Note: to do this assignment, you'll almost certainly have to transcribe your interview.*

**Week 5: Sept 20 – Sept 27<sup>th</sup> In person Zoom Meeting this week – Guest speaker Saira Mehmood: Governmentality, the State, and Cross Cultural Mental Health**

**Required**

LISTEN: NPR story “The Problem with the Solution.” *Invisibilia*. Aired July 1, 2016. Listen from the beginning through 32:06 (*note that the main story starts about 4 minutes in*). [Npr.org](https://www.npr.org)

Kleinman, Arthur (2012). Medical Anthropology and Mental Health: Five Questions for the Next Fifty Years. Chapter 5 in *Medical Anthropology at the Intersections: Histories, Activisms, and the Future*, Inhorn and Wentzell, eds. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Available at: <https://marciainhorn.com/wp-content/uploads/docs/Kleinman.pdf>

**Choose:**

Take 10 minutes (not longer) to browse either the last 5 years of *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* (their articles are open-access: <https://link.springer.com/journal/volumesAndIssues/11013>) or the 2018 issue 7 of *Medical Anthropology* (<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/gmea20/37/7?nav=tocList>) which was about mental health and the family. Choose your own article. It can be anything about mental health, or the role of the state in the regulation or surveillance of health.

**Due: Week 5 reading commentary**

This week, I particularly want you to connect the reading you find to Kleinman's "5 Questions" chapter (linked above). See the details in the Topic Assignment in Canvas.

**Week 6      Sept 27 – Oct. 4<sup>th</sup>**  
***Gender, Health, and the Local Biologies of Life- I (Reproduction, Birth, and Childhood)***

**Required**

Erickson, Pamela, Louise Badiane, and Merrill Singer (2013). The Social Context and Meaning of Virginity Loss among African American and Puerto Rican Young Adults in Hartford. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 27 (3): 313–329 **Available on AnthroSource through the UNT Library!**

Singh, Holly (2017). Fertility Control: Reproductive Desires, Kin Work, and Women's Status in Contemporary India. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 31 (1): 23-39. **Available on AnthroSource through the UNT Library!**

**Choose:**

For this week, I want you to have the freedom of choosing your own article, but centered around the topic of childhood. Go to the UNT library research page <https://library.unt.edu/research/>

and plug in "Medical Anthropology Childhood," and choose your own article. The best journals for this will be *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *Medical Anthropology*, *Social Science and Medicine*, *Human Organization*, *Qualitative Health Research*, or *Medical Sociology*. Note: when I did this, it returned 6,866 articles (including a few from our own program graduates). Don't browse that many. Browse for <5 minutes, and then pick one from the past 5 years or so.

**Due: Week 6 reading commentary**

For this week, write a SHORT summary (5-6ish sentences) paragraphs for each of the 3 pieces, then an analysis where you more critically compare and connect the pieces topically or conceptually. Discuss your reactions to this week's readings, any questions you're left with, what you would have liked to have seen more of, and how this type of research could be made actionable or practically significant. 1-2 pages, single spaced.

**Week 7      Oct 4 – Oct 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**Treatment, Therapy, and The Culture of “Biomedicine”**

**Required:**

Rhodes, Lorna (1990). Chapter 3. “The Game of Hot Shit,” in *Emptying Beds: the Work of an Emergency Psychiatric Unit*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 55-80.  
(Canvas)

Angell, A. M., & Solomon, O. (2014). The social life of health records: Understanding families' experiences of autism. *Social Science & Medicine*, 117, 50-57. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

**Choose:**

Lyon-Callo, Vincent (2000). Medicalizing Homelessness: the Production of Self-Blame and Self-Governing within Homeless Shelters. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 14 (3): 328-345. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

Robertson, William (2017). The Irrelevance Narrative: Queer (In)Visibility in Medical Education and Practice. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 31 (2): 159-176. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

Ugo, Felicia Edu (2018). When Doctors Don't Tie: Hierarchical Medicalization, Reproduction, and Sterilization in Brazil. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 32 (4): 556-573.

**Due: Week 7 reading commentary**

Instead of a summary of articles this week, use the readings to come up with a list of 6-10 important components of Western/ bio-medical culture. You can bullet this list, and include a 1-3 sentence description of what these things are, and how they play out in healthcare settings with patients (to help you, you can conceive of it this way: if you were to describe our health care culture to a visiting Martian-anthropologist, how would you do it?). Don't write more than one page single-spaced total.

**Project update:**

It's a shorter-than-usual written product this week, because you guys have a bigger interview-and-analysis coming up in 2 weeks. Get busy on this!

**Week 8      October 11 – October 18<sup>th</sup>**  
**Gender, Health, and the Local Biologies of Life- II**

**Required:**

Murray, Rebecca, Day, Katy & Tobbell, Jane (2019). Duvet woman versus action man: the gendered aetiology of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome according to English newspapers. *Feminist Media Studies* 19(6): 890-905. (Available through the UNT library for free; *Feminist Media Studies* is one of our e-journals.)

Chadde, Sky (2014). How the Low-T Industry is Cashing in on Dubious, and Perhaps Dangerous, Science. *Dallas Observer*. November 12, 2014. Available in Canvas.

**Choose:**

Kral, Michael (2013). “The Weight on Our Shoulders is too Much, and we are Falling”: Suicide among Inuit Male Youth in Nunavut, Canada. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 27 (1): 63-83. Available on **AnthroSource** through the UNT Library!

Lamb, Sarah (2019). On Being (Not) Old: Agency, Self-care, and Life-course Aspirations in the United States. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 33 (2): 263-281. Available on **AnthroSource** through the UNT Library!

Cecilia Tasca, Mariangela Rapetti, Mauro Giovanni Carta, and Bianca Fadda. (2012) Women And Hysteria In The History Of Mental Health. *Clinical Practice in Epidemiology and Mental Health* 8: 110-119. (Available through the UNT library for free <http://www.library.unt.edu/research>)

**Due: Week 8 reading commentary**

After you writing a paragraph summary, use the articles you read to think about-- how are bodies (or illnesses) “sites of communication,” where there is discourse between individuals and society about gender? What does this discourse tell you about the “proper” way of being, “the way things should be,” or about individuals in distress? 2-3 single spaced pages.

**Week 9 Oct 18 – Oct 25<sup>th</sup> In class Zoom meeting**  
**Ethnography, and review of interviews.**

**Required Reading:**

Jordan-Young, Rebecca, and Katrina Karkazis (2019). *Testosterone: An Unauthorized Biography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

**Due: Week 9 reading commentary**

This week, write a 1-2 page (single spaced) “book review.” About 1/3 of this should be a concise summary. Then, what did you think of the book? How do parents navigate structural constraints, and how are they themselves transformed? How are decisions “moral

laboratories?” How do the concepts of “first person ethics” or doing the “best good” seem relevant in understanding parents’ actions?