

# F21, Medical Anthropology

## Dr. Courtney Cecale (she/her)

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Office hours: after class

### About the Course

This course is an introduction to topics in Medical Anthropology: focused primarily on health and inequality. Together we will explore how sociocultural processes shape how we experience, live in and frame bodily experiences related to health and wellbeing. We will analyze the impacts of systemic inequalities in health, and grapple with the complicated politics of being healthy and unhealthy, marked and unmarked, excluded and included, deviant and in excess of acceptability. We will analyze the impacts of systemic inequalities on health and illness in varying contexts: from economic exclusion, to postcolonial health challenges.

Students will read contemporary work from cultural and medical anthropologists, disability studies scholars, and activists. They will explore disability as it relates to major topics in cultural and medical anthropology such as identity, kinship, citizenship, gender, sex, race, globalization, and the economy. Students will gain deeper knowledge of the ways humans categorize and treat people with varying abilities. In addition to gaining knowledge of disability cross-culturally, students will expand their capacity to analytically read and write.

### Student Learning Objectives

- Discuss various ways to conceptualize *the body*, identifying the ways it's porous, historical and socially complicated
- Understand the various ways that biomedicine is a cultural system
- Learn about health in various cultural and historical contexts
- Practice critical thinking skills by applying various analytical frames to grounded world issues
- Conceptualize issues on multiple scalar levels: from global interconnections, to the individual experience

- Engage in complex discussions with classmates from differing backgrounds and perspectives, in a thoughtful, engaged and respectful manner

## Grading

1. In-class activities and participation (15)
2. Weekly reading reflection papers (15)
3. Illness Narrative Paper (20)
4. Exam 1 (15)
5. Exam 2 (15)
6. Final Exam (20)

### ***In-class Activities and Participation: (15)***

Students are required to be active participants in the class. This means doing all of the readings ahead of time, participating in our group discussions, completing in-class activities, and being a considerate and respectful member of our class.

### ***Reflection Papers (15 points total)***

BEGINNING WEEK 2: To prepare for every discussion, students will write brief reflection papers (2-3 pages) on the materials assigned. They will be submitted online **prior to** class on Mondays under the appropriate Module (i.e. under Week 2, etc.).

This assignment is not intended to be busywork, but rather it is designed to help you think about the readings as we go, pull important quotes, and prepare you for class discussion. It will also help you on your exams which will be open note and open book. Your reflection papers should:

- Explain the major arguments of each author assigned
- Identify a quote or passage from any one of the readings you personally find interesting and explain why
- Find common themes between the readings for the week (and possibly connect them to earlier weeks, if you so desire). This is a chance to theorize why we might be reading these pieces together.
- Please structure your reflections like a short essay and avoid bullet points.

Feel free to personally reflect on the topics, to make connections that you think are interesting with other course material, to connect course content with happenings in the world around us right now, etc.

This doesn't have to be a beautifully written document, it should just serve to help you organize your thoughts, and demonstrate that you have done the work for the week.

### **Illness Narrative (20)**

For your final project, you will be required to conduct an interview with a family member or a friend regarding the experience of an illness, medical event, or disability and analyze it anthropologically by engaging with course materials. You will receive further instructions for this assignment on Wednesday (2nd day of class). Papers will be due after the final on December 9th, 2020 at 11:59pm.

### **Exams (50 points total)**

There will be three exams in this class (two small exams and a final). They are not cumulative. They will be short-answer and essay-based, with the ability to use your notes.

*Late Work:* Late work is not accepted. If you believe you will have difficulty attending classes, turning in assignments, or generally making progress in the course, please contact me in advance. That being said, I have a *Sh\*t Happens* policy that can apply for up to two of your response papers allowing you a 48-hour extension, no questions asked. You do not need to explain anything to me, or provide documentation, just let me know you are cashing in on them in advance so you don't get marked down. You cannot use them retroactively.

*Extra Credit:* Throughout the semester I will try to find extra credit opportunities for students, including attending talks, listening to podcasts, watching films and then doing a 2-3 page write up. These really depend on what is going on in the world at the time, but if you are seeking extra credit, please reach out and I will try to accommodate you.

*Course Readings:* All readings are available to you on the course website. To make the course more accessible, you are not required to purchase any textbooks.