Culture, Illness, and Healing  
ANTH 5/420  

Winter 2016  
104 Condon  
M,W 10-11:20am  

Professor: Dr. Sara Lewis  
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3:30-5:30pm  
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Course description:  

What does it mean to suffer, and how do we make meaning of social and personal ills? This course grapples with concepts of physical, mental and spiritual forms of suffering and how as human beings, we employ highly agentive means of healing to abate our distress. This advanced seminar in the anthropology of health and healing does not automatically assume that human suffering should be medicalized. We also consider the ways that illness may be deeply moral and social, asking how people understand their plight, and how they live within social worlds. The course is divided into three units: 1) illness, imagined and lived, 2) religious healing traditions, and 3) global collisions. Integral to our exploration will be an interrogation of the term “global”; we consider why some voices are heard above others and how the diagnosis of illness may reveal insidious power structures and disparities across race, gender, sexuality and class.  

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

• Utilize critical social theory to understand core debates in the anthropology of health and healing.  
• Identify how illness narratives are produced and circulated, and how this changes over time.  
• Explain how social inequality and structural sources of suffering are fundamental causes of individual problems across the globe.  
• Generate multiple interpretations of how and why the categories of gender, race and sexuality are culturally constructed, and how this shapes health.  
• Interrogate theoretical claims, and make use of theory in their own work.  

Course Expectation and Grades:  

Attendance and Participation, 10%  
Assignments, (weeks 2 and 7), 5% each for a total of 10%  
Reflection Papers (end of weeks 3, 6 and 9), 20% each for a total of 60%  
Final Exam (take home, due March 16), 20%
Accommodations

Please contact Professor Lewis during the first week of the term should you require accommodations.

Class Culture

The culture of this class is based on mutual respect, decorum, and a sense of openness and curiosity. You may use laptop computers and tablets as you see fit, however please be sure to bring a pencil and paper to every class, which we will often use for in-class exercises. Lectures will be highly interactive and students will be called upon at random.

Academic Honesty

The following actions may result in disciplinary action according to the university’s academic honesty policies:
--Evidence of collusion when expected to submit individual work (working with someone else).
--Evidence of plagiarism (using someone else’s work without proper citation).
--Multiple submissions (submitting the same paper for more than one class).

Attendance and class participation (10%)

This course is heavily focused on critical analysis, which will largely be accomplished on a collaborative basis as a class. Therefore, simply doing the readings is not sufficient participation. Your participation grade considers the quality of your contribution to classroom discussions, including how much you leave space for others, and the degree to which you aim to support a diversity of perspectives and ideas.

You may miss 3 classes without penalty. For every class missed beyond that, you will lose 1/3 of your participation grade (e.g. a participation grade of B becomes a B-)

For every day an assignment is late, you will lose 1/3 of your grade for that assignment (e.g. a paper that earns a B becomes a B-).

Assignments (5% each, total of 10%)

Due in weeks 2 and 7

These short assignments are connected with classroom activities; late submissions are not accepted.
Reflection papers (20% each for a total of 60%)

Due at the end of weeks 3, 6 and 9

You will complete reflection papers at the end of each unit. Each paper, which has a specific prompt, should be approximately 1,000 words and will draw upon course readings. Your reflection should not summarize readings in a book report format, but rather be used as an opportunity to explore analytic concepts. I encourage you to take intellectual risks in thinking through your ideas. What is thought-provoking about the readings? What is obscured in the readings? What is illuminated by them? Papers that earn high marks will make good use of course readings.

Reflection Paper 1: Illness, Imagined and Lived (20%)

Your paper is due in class at the end of week 3. No electronic submissions accepted.

Write a 1000-word essay based on what you learned in Unit 1 to explain the concept of “social suffering.” Consider why anthropologists argue that illness and distress are not merely individual, but social problems. Are you convinced by these arguments? Why or why not?

Reflection Paper 2: Religious Healing Traditions (20%)

Your paper is due in class at the end of week 6. No electronic submissions accepted.

Write a 1-2 page lesson plan that will guide a mini-lesson you will teach to your peers. Choose a topic that sparked your interest during our exploration of religious healing traditions; or choose another religious healing tradition you wish to explore. Your mini lesson should help explain why and how religion/spirituality shapes the experience of illness and healing among a particular cultural group.

Reflection Paper 3: Global Collisions (20%)

Your paper is due in class at the end of week 9. No electronic submissions accepted.

This paper asks you to find a current event that you believe speaks to a moment of “global collision.” The 1000 word essay will describe the current event, and how course readings help you to understand the problem. The majority of the essay should be devoted to the arguments that you are making—that is, how and why, specific course readings illuminate this particular global problem. You may attach appendices or links to electronic sources that give more information about your current event so that you can devote most of the essay to your own argument.

Final Paper (20%): Submitted by March 16

Details on final paper TBA.
COURSE READINGS

All articles are posted online. Books can be purchased at the campus bookstore.

UNIT 1: Illness, Imagined and Lived

WEEK ONE: Social Suffering


WEEK TWO: Embodiment


**DUE: Assignment #1 submitted to Canvas by 10am on Jan 11**

WEEK THREE: Anthropology of Care

**DUE: Reflection Paper #1 in class on Monday**

WEEK FOUR: Health Disparities

**UNIT 2: Religious Healing Traditions**

**WEEK FIVE: Christianity and Healing**


2/3 Chapter 6-10 of *When God Talks Back*.

**WEEK SIX: Buddhism and Healing**


2/10 Part 3 of *Living Buddhism*.

*Film: “Himalaya, a Path to the Sky,”* directed by Marianne Chaud, ZED productions, 52 minutes, 2008. (Screened in class)

**DUE: Reflection Paper #2 due in class on Wednesday**

**WEEK SEVEN: Healing, Measured**


**DUE: Exercise #2 submitted to Canvas by 10am, Feb 17**

**UNIT 3: Global Collisions**

**WEEK EIGHT: Global Mental Health**


**DUE: Reflection Paper #3 due in class on Wednesday**

**WEEK NINE: Modern Ills**


*Film:* “Between Two Worlds: The Hmong Shaman in America,” directed by Taggart Siegel, Collective Eye Films, 28 mins, 1996.

**WEEK TEN: Recovery and Resilience**


**Final Paper due March 16, Submitted to Canvas**