Course Description
This course introduces students to the field of medical anthropology as well as some core concepts of social anthropology. Medical Anthropology is the study of health, healing, disease, and illness from a cross-cultural perspective. It draws on a range of theoretical approaches to analyze the interaction of medicine, environment, the organization of society, and biology. The practice of medical anthropology entails theory-building and application, meaning anthropologists collect data that supports or refute an hypothesis, and they aim to use their knowledge to solve problems, such as poor healthcare delivery and resource distribution, patient-doctor communication, and people’s misunderstanding of disease contagion and efficacious treatment. We will compare logics of medicine by probing the matter of belief and treatment efficacy in different times and places. We will examine our own medical systems (predominantly “Western” or “biomedicine”) through an anthropological lens, identifying how people in the USA experience illness and treatment, confront medical authority, understand disease causation, and seek remedies. We will look at how the political economy shapes the experience of illness and trauma over time, and how anthropologists approach medical ecology in an already politicized and dynamic environment.

Textbook:
Skloot, Rebecca, The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
(Available at Barnes and Noble on campus)

Objectives
1) Students will gain knowledge of the subdiscipline of medical anthropology and understand the major theoretical approaches in the field.
2) Students will be able to identify, collect, and analyze an “illness narrative” and demonstrate understanding of how illness narratives are shaped by culture and the social-economic circumstances of the narrator.
3) Students will gain an understanding of diverse ethnomedical systems, including biomedicine (or Western medicine) and their inherent rationality.
4) Students will demonstrate knowledge of health disparities and healthcare inequalities in the US and globally.
5) Students will demonstrate an ability to analyze a contemporary medical topic of their own choosing through one of the main theoretical frameworks of the field.

Course Requirements

The weekly assignments will be posted on Blackboard. You must check BB regularly since assignments on the hard copy syllabus are subject to change. This course will test students on material presented in lectures, films, texts, and class discussions. You are expected to read the weekly assignments carefully and on to come to class prepared to discuss readings.

Grading

The course grade will be based on participation in class, Blackboard reading quizzes, an Illness Narrative assignment, a midterm exam, an oral presentation, and a final exam.

Class participation (discussion and presence): 10%
Illness narrative assignment (2-4 pages double-spaced): 15%
Oral presentation: 15%
Reading quizzes in Blackboard: 10%
Midterm exam: 25%
Final exam: 25%

POLICIES:

MISSED ASSIGNMENTS or TESTS:
Missed exams, quizzes, and/or assignments require either that a student arranges a makeup date in advance with the professor, or that the student provides legitimate documentation for an illness or other emergency.

PLAGARISM and INDEPENDENT WORK:
Students are advised to re-read the university policies on Academic Integrity (find link in the course on Blackboard). Cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism (submitting someone else’s written, fully or partially, as one’s own) will not be tolerated, and this includes using or adapting someone else’s work for a take-home exam or for course notes. It also includes using one of your papers from a different course to submit for the current course. Such actions will result in a failing grade for the assignment and may result in a failing grade for the course.

Here are some general rules of thumb on plagiarism: If you are unsure whether you are plagiarizing text, take precautions by always referencing the materials you have read. In other words, you must add a footnote, endnote, or cite your source text in parenthesis.
Citations show you have done serious research and have acknowledged the work of other scholars. However, it is not good to rely on one or two sources exclusively. Your research papers must include multiple sources of information (these sources may be in the form of books, journal and newspaper articles, magazines, internet resources, films, etc.).

Forms of plagiarism include the following scenarios:

◦ You find a research paper in the library or off the internet and submit it as your own paper.
◦ You pay a service or individual to write your paper for you submit it as your own work.
◦ You use a portion of an article, radio or TV show, book, internet paper, etcetera, without giving a citation for the work and therefore implying the text is your own.
◦ You find an article or research paper and paraphrase its argument or ideas in your own words without offering a citation, and then you submit ideas as your own.

ATTENDANCE: Regular attendance is required, and I will call roll. If you arrive after roll call, you will be marked absent; also, leaving class early will be counted as an absence. Unexcused absences will affect your course grade. **After the SECOND unexcused absence, the final grade will be docked no matter how well you did on other assignments and tests.** At the third unexcused absence, you will be unable to get higher than a B+ in the course, all other work figured in. For the fourth unexcused absence, you will be unable to get higher than a B; for the fifth, no higher than a C+, and so on according to the grades that Rutgers-Newark recognizes (C, D, F).

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS: Powerpoint presentations used in class lectures will be made available to you before scheduled exams and not necessarily before that. Not all material from the lectures will be on the slides but material from lectures may be on tests. So it is essential that you take notes by hand (no laptops).

USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM: Students’ use of laptops, internet, and cell phone texting are **NOT ALLOWED** in class. For tests, you must put your phones under your desks.

ETIQUETTE: Students are expected to pay attention in class and to address fellow students and the professor respectfully (in person and via email correspondence). Emails to the professor should begin with “Dear Professor Sodikoff,” and should sign off by giving student’s full name. It is not always clear from NET IDs who is writing, plus it is polite to sign off with your name.
ASSIGNMENTS (These are subject to change. Rely mainly on Blackboard postings, not on the hard copy of syllabus)

WEEK 1 (1/18) – Introduction

WEEK 2 (1/23, 1/25) What is Medical Anthropology?; Disease versus Illness


WEEK 3 (1/30, 2/1) The Problem of Belief; Defining Normal and Pathological

Ruth Benedict (1934), “Anthropology and the Abnormal”


Do Blackboard reading quiz.

WEEK 4 (2/6, 2/8) Culture and Medicine; Culture Bound Syndromes


Do Blackboard reading quiz.

WEEK 5 (2/13, 2/15) Film: Kuru: The Science and the Sorcery


Do Blackboard reading quiz

Assignment: Collect an “illness narrative” from a friend, family member, or acquaintance. Write a short paper (2-4 pages, double-spaced) in which you analyze the illness narrative in terms of its structure (it’s plot), the person’s experience of suffering (identified symptoms, problems encountered in care or treatment, social interactions,
etc.), remedies sought (biomedical and/or alternative), and belief in causation. (Due 3/6).

WEEK 6 (2/20, 2/22) guest speaker Ellen Rubinstein; Ethnomedical Systems


Work on Illness Narratives.

WEEK 7 (2/27, 3/1) Ethnomedical Systems


Work on Illness Narratives.

WEEK 8 (3/6, 3/8) Biomedicine as Ethnomedicine; MIDTERM EXAM

**Illness Narrative assignment due**

Re-read materials for midterm.

WEEK 9 (3/13, 3/15) SPRING BREAK (Begin The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, Chaps 1-12)

WEEK 10 (3/20, 3/22) Global Health Disparities; Francis Barchi talk (International research ethics)

Craig R. Jones and Kitty K. Corbett, “Anthropology and Global Health.” (Reader)


Do blackboard reading quiz.


Henrietta Lacks: chaps. 24-34.

Do blackboard reading quiz.

WEEK 12 (4/3, 4/5) Film: Sicko; The State and Health
Rebecca Adkins Fletcher (2014), “Keeping up with the Cadillacs: What Health Insurance Disparities, Moral Hazard, and the Cadillac Tax Mean to The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.”


Do blackboard reading quiz.

WEEK 13 (4/10, 4/12) Biosocial approach to disease; Political Ecologies of Disease


Do Blackboard reading quiz

WEEK 14 (4/17, 4/19) Student Presentations

WEEK 15 (4/24, 4/26) Student Presentations; Wrap-up and review

FINAL EXAM: Monday, May 8, 3-6 PM