

Global Biocultures: Anthropological Perspectives on Public Health

ANTH-UA 36

Fall 2015

Helena Hansen, MD, Ph.D.
25 Waverly Place room 608
helena.hansen@nyu.edu
(212) 998-8189
Office Hours: Thursdays 12:15-1:30
and by appointment

Course Assistant:
Anisha Chadha
ac5069@nyu.edu
Available after class Thursdays
and by appointment

Course Description:

This course surveys the mutual shaping of culture and biology in diverse contexts around the world. Drawing on sociocultural theories of biocultural process, and ethnographies of embodiment, illness, disability, drugs, violence, and biotechnology, we will examine the relationship of larger political economic structures to individual subjectivities, and examine biological experience as simultaneously material and socioculturally plastic.

This seminar is experimental. We will review classical and contemporary scholarship from medical anthropology, medical sociology and science studies in order to foster creative thinking about the relationship between biology and culture. We will also screen and discuss films related to biocultures. The films are not to be taken at face value but rather are to be analyzed as artifacts that reflect a collective imagination about biology and culture.

Requirements:

- Attend all course meetings, complete the readings, view the films, and contribute to discussion. On two occasions during the semester, each course participant will present 3 minutes of commentary based on their short reading paper (see below) and a biocultural event or artifact related to that week's assigned reading. Commentators for a given course meeting will meet outside of class to select a biocultural event from news headlines, historical accounts, youtube or other sources, and come up with discussion questions. Participation is 25% of the final grade.
- Do the course readings, watch films as indicated for each week, and post a response on the course discussion board (on blackboard) before midnight the Monday of that week. The response should be 200-400 words long and pose serious questions or comments from the readings and film for discussion in class. Feel free to respond to other postings but this is not required. Responses make up 25% of the final grade.

Useful questions to ask yourself while reading and blogging include:

- What is the biocultural argument here?
- How does it relate to other versions of the "biocultural" that we have studied? What does it add to our analytic toolbox?
- What is at stake in the argument? That is, who is the author addressing and for what purpose? To which controversies, policies or social trends is the author reacting?
- What are the author's strategies of argument in using data and undertaking an analysis?
- What do you find are the strengths, weaknesses, and potential uses of the author's argument? How would you have argued differently?

- Two 3-4 page* **extended reading response papers** that ask you to contrast and apply the theoretical frameworks presented earlier in the course with that covered on the day you select for your extended response paper. You may use the same framing questions as listed above, but go into more depth in your response and use standard essay format (with thesis statement, supporting paragraphs, and conclusion), providing citations. You will make a 3 minute presentation based on your reading response and your group's biocultural event (see above) in class on the day to which you are assigned. A sign up list for dates will be circulated in class. This is 25% of the final grade.
- One **final project** in which you will research a topic of biocultural controversy and develop a website on that topic with 7-8 pages* of text double spaced not including images. The website should draw on the theories discussed in class. You must submit a paragraph length proposal for your topic by October 31 explaining the topic, thesis statement or question, and data sources (e.g. interviews, films, artifacts). You will have technical support for uploading the website from Bobst Library staff. You may work as a team if each team member develops a sub-section of a website that is 7-8 pages in length. Each person will make a 5 minute presentation of their weblink during the last two weeks of class, which must be uploaded prior to their presentation. This is 25% of the final grade.

* Double spaced 12 point font with 1 inch margins

Course Books:

Eric Manheimer Twelve Patients: Life and Death at Bellevue Hospital

Jack Saul Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster

Articles and selected chapters will be available in Classes under this course title.

Part I: Biocultural Theories

Week 1: What are biocultures? Mutual construction of the cultural and the biological

Thursday, September 3

Davis and Morris "Biocultures Manifesto"

Recommended:

Lennard Davis "The Bioethics of Diagnosis: A Biocultural Critique of Certainty"

David Morris "What is Postmodern Illness?"

Week 2: Cultural construction of the body

Tuesday, September 8

Ian Hacking "Making up People"

Anne Marie Mol The Body Multiple Chapters 1 and 2

Thursday, September 10

Janice Boddy "Womb as Oasis: The Symbolic Context of Pharoanic Circumcision in Rural Northern Sudan"

Margaret Lock "Menopause, Local Biologies, and Cultures of Aging"

Week 3: Cultural construction of illness and gender

Tuesday, September 15

Arthur Kleinman Illness Narratives excerpt

Mark Nichter "Idioms of Distress: Alternatives in the Expression of Psychosocial Distress: A Case Study from South India"

Atwood Gaines "From DSM I to III T-R: A Cultural Constructivist Reading of US Psychiatric Classification"

Thursday, September 17

Film: Paris is Burning **in class**

Week 4: Embodiment and Performativity

Tuesday, September 22

Judith Butler "Gender is Burning"

Thursday, September 24

Marcel Mauss "Techniques of the Body"

EP Thompson "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism"

Walther, M. "A Comparative Study Based on Bourdieu's Theory of Practice."

Recommended: Pierre Bourdieu Logic of Practice Excerpt

Week 5: Political economy of health and structural violence

Tuesday, September 29

Sir Michael Marmot "Inequalities in Health"

Paul Farmer Pathologies of Power Preface, Introduction, Chapter 1, Chapter 9

Recommended: Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois Violence in War and Peace: An Anthology Introduction

Thursday, October 1

Guest Speaker: Eric Manheimer

Eric Manheimer 12 Patients: Life and Death at Bellevue Hospital Chapters 1-4, 12

Week 6: What is globalization?

Tuesday, October 6

Ulrich Beck What is Globalization? Introduction

Glickman et al "Ethical and Scientific Implications of the Globalization of Clinical Research"

Adriana Petryna "Clinical Trials Offshored: On Private Sector Science and Public Health."

Thursday, October 8

Ethan Watters Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche Intro, Ch 1-2, Conclusion

Friday, October 9, 6PM Required Film Screening: Placebo (about medical school in India)

plus discussion with filmmaker Nilita Vachani

Week 7: Biomedicalization

*Tuesday, October 13 **Fall Recess***

Thursday, October 15

Peter Conrad "Shifting Engines of Medicalization"

Adele Clarke "Biomedicalization"

Week 8: Pharmaceutical Selves

Tuesday, October 20

Joe Dumit Drugs for Life Introduction, Chapters 1-3, Conclusion

Thursday, October 22

Film: Managing the Fix: How Do You Treat Addiction in the Age of Pills? (*in class*, rough cut segments)

David Healy "Shaping the Intimate"

Angela Garcia "The Elegaic Addict"

Recommended: Merrill Singer Drugging the Poor Chapters 1, 2

Week 9: Biopower and Bioresistance

Tuesday, October 27

Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose "Biopower Today "

Nikolas Rose Politics of Life itself Introduction, Chapters 1-3

Thursday, October 29

One paragraph final project plan due (biocultural question, methods, data sources)

Didier Fassin "The Embodied Past: From Paranoid Style to Politics of Memory in South Africa"

Joao Biehl "The Activist State: Global Pharmaceuticals, AIDS, and Citizenship in Brazil"

Adriana Petryna "Biological Citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations"

Week 10: Multispecies and Post-Human Ethnography

Tuesday, November 3

Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography"

Multispecies Salon Companion (read all entries under "Multispecies ABC – tabs in lower right hand corner) <http://www.multispecies-salon.org/>

Thursday, November 5

Film: The Ghost in the Machine (*in class*, segments)

Stefan Helmreich Alien Ocean excerpts

Donna Haraway When Species Meet excerpts

Week 11: Human Enhancement and Transhumanism

Tuesday, November 10

Guest Lecture: Anisha Chadha

Stefan Ecks Eating Drugs Ch 4

Ilina Sing "Not Robots: Childrens' Perspectives on Authenticity, Moral Agency, and Stimulant Drug Treatments"

Margaret Talbot "Brain Gain: The Underground World of 'Neuroenhancing' Drugs"

Thursday, November 12

Film: Fixed: The Science/Fiction of Human Enhancement (*in class*, segments)

Linda Hogle "Enhancement Technologies and the Body"

Week 12: War and Terror

Tuesday, November 17

Film: The Shock Doctrine (*in class*, segments)

Michael Taussig The Nervous System Chapters 1, 2 (available electronically

<http://roundtable.kein.org/sites/newtable.kein.org/files/The%20Nervous%20System1.pdf>)

Ken MacLeish "Armor and Anesthesia: Exposure, Feeling, and the Soldier's Body"

Thursday, November 19

Guest Speaker: Jack Saul

Jack Saul Collective Trauma, Collective Healing: Promoting Community Resilience in the Aftermath of Disaster

Week 13: Recovery

Tuesday, November 24

Guest Speakers: Bellevue Hospital Video Stories in Recovery Group

Elizabeth Austin, Aditi Ramakrishnan, Kim Hopper "Embodying Recovery: A Qualitative Study of Peer Work in a Consumer-Run Service Setting"

Dennis Watson "The Evolving Understanding of Recovery: What does the Sociology of Mental Health Have to Offer?"

Thursday, November 26 Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: Making Race

Tuesday, December 1

Steven Epstein "Bodily Differences and Collective Identities: Politics of Race and Gender in Biomedical Research in the United States"

Troy Duster "Molecular Reinscription of Race"

Lance Gravlee "How Race Becomes Biology: Embodiment of Social Inequality"

Recommended: Alondra Nelson "Reconciliation Projects: From Kinship to Justice"

Thursday, December 3

Rachel Watkins "Biohistorical Narratives of Racial Difference in the American Negro"

Required Attendance: Anthropology Colloquium Dorothy Nelkin Lecture:

Rachel Watkins, American University

6 PM, 20 Cooper Square Carter Center

Week 15:

Tuesday, December 8

Student presentations of websites

Thursday December 10

Student presentations of websites