Medical Anthropology is a critical and people-centered investigation of affliction and therapeutics. It draws from approaches in anthropology and the medical humanities to understand the body-environment-medicine interface in a cross-cultural perspective. How do social processes determine disease and health in individuals and collectivities? How does culture surface in the seeking of treatment and the provision of medical care? What role do medical technologies and public interventions play in health outcomes? Which values inform medical theory and practice, and how might the humanities deepen our understanding of the realities of disease and care?

In the first half of the course, we will discuss topics such as: the relation of illness, subjectivity, and social experience; the logic of witchcraft; the healing efficacy of symbols and rituals; the art of caregiving and moral sensibility. We will also probe the reach and relevance of concepts such as the normal and the pathological, body techniques, discipline and normalization, medicalization, the nocebo and placebo effects, the mindful body, and the body politic. In the second half of the course, we will explore how scientific knowledge and medical technologies move from the laboratory to public health policy and popular culture, and from professional medicine to the intimate realm of bodily experience. How is medical science influenced by economic and political institutions and by patient mobilization? How do social markers of difference such as gender, ethnicity and race and patterns of economic inclusion and exclusion govern access to therapies and experiences of care? How do bioethical debates refract or unsettle the political economy of medicine and caregiving?

The course will introduce students to anthropological research methods. Students will learn to collect and interpret illness narratives, and to study differences in patterns of disease that afflict populations in both affluent and resource-poor contexts. The course draws from historical accounts, ethnographies, medical journals, media reports, nonfiction literature, and documentary films. Students will be asked to think, read, and write across genres, and to experiment with modes of expression as they inquire into the competing values undergirding health decision-making (personal and institutional) and the ways biosocial, medical, political, economic and ethical realities actively shape each other.
THIS IS AN INTERNET AND LAPTOP-FREE CLASS!
Please turn off ALL electronic devices before entering the classroom.
Checking personal email/facebook/etc during class time will affect your participation grade.

Assignments/Grading

The success of the course depends on your commitment to complete all required readings for each class meeting, to critically reflect on the readings, to participate actively in class discussions, and to creatively integrate these insights in the mid-term and final papers, which are meant to be an exploratory forum for your own medical anthropological interests. Grading will be based on:

- **Attendance and participation (10%)**.
- **Weekly reports** with critical reflections that arise from close reading of class materials. Your reports must be turned in at the beginning of class in hard copy on the following days and should cover the materials assigned for that week: **February 9, 16, 25; March 5, 25; April 1, 8, 15, 27**. Though you are expected to complete all required reading, your report should be more than a summary of what you have read. Choose a specific theme, focus, or question to guide you in crafting a thoughtful response. Reports should demonstrate close reading and understanding of texts as well as critical engagement with core ideas. Claims and arguments should be supported, with clear writing and organization. The report should be no more than one double-spaced page, or 400 words, in length—please, adhere to these limits (20%).

- **Midterm paper** (7 to 9 double-spaced pages plus page of references) analyzing an “illness narrative.” This can be based on: 1) an interview you conduct with a family member or friend who has experienced some health condition and/or treatment, biomedical or other (highly recommended); 2) your own illness narrative of a health experience you have had; 3) an illness narrative found in a memoir or autobiography. The paper has to incorporate course concepts to interpret and reflect on the illness narrative.

  The assignment is due on **March 13** and can be uploaded on blackboard until 11:59 pm (25%). Late submissions will be penalized one full letter grade per day.

- **Final research paper** (8 to 10 double-spaced pages plus page of references) that explores in depth a health topic of your own interest, drawing especially on course readings and materials from the second part of the course. Suggestions include: 1) a paper based on a local health problem and based on field research in coordination with Princeton’s Community Based Learning Initiative (CBLI); 2) a paper addressing a contemporary disease and health policy OR the development and usage of a new medical technology; 3) an artistic project (audio-visual or creative writing) that explores a medical controversy or bioethical issues.

  The final paper is due on **May 12** (Dean’s Date) at 5 pm at 116 Aaron Burr Hall (35%). Late submissions will be penalized one full letter grade per day.

- **Two in-class quizzes (March 9 and April 22) (10%).**
Course Materials

The following required books will be on reserve at Firestone Library, and can be purchased at Labyrinth. Additional articles and book chapters can be downloaded from Blackboard's electronic reserve.


Office Hours

- Professor João Biehl – Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 pm, 128 Aaron Burr Hall
- Bridget Purcell – Mondays 1:30-2:30 pm, East Pyne Cafe
- Kessie Alexandre – Wednesdays 3:00-4:00 pm, East Pyne Cafe
- Thalia Gigerenzer – Thursdays 3:00-4:00 pm, East Pyne Cafe
February 2
Introduction to Medical Anthropology

- Film: The Happy Child by Mohsen Makhmalbaf

For Further Reading:

February 4
The Normal and the Pathological

- Film: In My Language by Amanda Baggs

For Further Reading:
February 9

How Does Culture Surface in Medical Care?

Reading Report Due

- Film: *Island of Flowers* by Jorge Furtado

For Further Reading:

February 10

Lunch symposium with award-winning author and activist Andrew Solomon:

“Humanistic Approaches to Mental Health Care in an Age of Biological Psychiatry”

12:00 – 1:30 p.m., 202 Jones Hall

Solomon is author of *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression*, winner of the National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize finalist. *The Noonday Demon* examines depression in personal, cultural, and scientific terms. Solomon draws on his own struggles with the illness and interviews with fellow sufferers, doctors and scientists, policy makers, drug designers, and philosophers.

*Panelists include João Biehl, Ronald Comer, and Tanya Luhrmann. Moderated by Amy Borovoy.*

February 11

Biomedicine Examined

February 16

Doctors for the People

Reading Report Due

- Skype Discussion with Professor Claire Wendland, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

For Further Reading:

February 18

Disease Constructs and Illness Narratives


For Further Reading:
February 23

On Recognition and the Art of Caregiving


Guest Speaker: Professor Arthur Kleinman, Harvard University

February 25

Embodied Knowledge

Reading Report Due


For Further Reading:
- Film: Sir Edwards Evans Pritchard: Strange Beliefs by Bruce Dakowski
March 2

The Mind-Body Nexus


For Further Reading:
- Film: The Spirit Possession of Alejandro Mamani by Hubert Smith and Neil Reichline

March 5

Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment

Reading Report Due


For Further Reading:
March 9
Lives, Flux, Time, Story-Telling
Quiz


*For Further Reading:*

March 11
Making Sense of a Devastating Disease through Cinema

- **Film:** *When I Walk* by Jason DaSilva

*Guest Speakers:* Filmmakers Jason DaSilva and Alice Cook

*For Further Reading:*

*Illness narratives are due on March 13 and can be uploaded on blackboard until 11:59 pm.*

*** SPRING RECESS ***
March 23

The Politics of Truth and Health


Guest Speaker: Trisha Thorme, Director of Princeton’s Community-Based Learning Initiative

For Further Reading:

March 25

Biological Citizens

Reading Report Due


Guest Speaker: Professor Adriana Petryna, University of Pennsylvania

March 30

Race in Medical Science and Care

- Film: Deadly Deception by Denise DiAnni

Guest Speaker: Professor Carolyn Rouse, Princeton University
For Further Reading:


April 1
Pathologies of Power and the Doctor Who Would Cure the World

Reading Report Due

- Film: Partners in Health: Saving Lives in Rural Haiti by David Murdock

For Further Reading:


April 6
The Continuum of Violence

- Film: All of Us by Emily Abt

For Further Reading:

April 8

Making Up People

Reading Report Due

- Film: The Medicated Child by Marcela Gaviria (PBS/Frontline)

For Further Reading:

April 13

The Social Lives of Medicines


Guest Speakers: Professors Susan Reynolds Whyte and Michael Whyte, University of Copenhagen

For Further Reading:
April 15
Surviving AIDS
Reading Report Due


Guest Speakers: Professors Susan Reynolds Whyte and Michael Whyte, University of Copenhagen

April 20
Organ Transplantation and Trade: Post-Human Ethics?

- Film: Tales from the Organ Trade by Ric Bienstock (HBO)

For Further Reading:
April 22
Experimentality and Ethical Variability

Quiz


For Further Reading:

April 27
Facing Mortality

Reading Report Due


- Skype Conversation with Professor S. Lochlann Jain, Stanford University.

April 29

“And so each venture is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate” (T. S. Eliot)


- Skype Conversation with Raphael Frankfurter ’13, Wellbody Alliance, Sierra Leone.

The final paper is due on **May 12** (Dean’s Date) at 5 pm at 116 Aaron Burr Hall.