

Princeton University  
Department of Anthropology & Humanities Council  
Spring 2018

## **MEDICAL HUMANITIES**

**ANT 235 / HUM 235**

*M/W 1:30 - 2:50 pm*

**Instructors:** João Biehl | [jbiehl@princeton.edu](mailto:jbiehl@princeton.edu)  
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### **Course Description:**

How might the humanities deepen our understanding of disease, healing, and care?

*Medical Humanities* draws from anthropological approaches and dialogues with history, journalism, literature, philosophy, religion, film and visual arts to understand the cross-cultural significance of medicine and present-day struggles for wellbeing in the United States and comparatively. These are some of the core questions that will guide our medical humanities exploration of individual and collective experiences: Which values, technologies, and ideas of normality inform medical theory and practice? How do people diversely experience and narrate pain, the fear of death, and treatment uncertainty? What accounts for therapeutic efficacy? What are the relations and thresholds between biomedical frameworks and other forms of healing and care in unequal local worlds? How can the medical humanities illuminate bioethical grey areas in medical research, technoscience, and clinical and domestic caregiving?

In *Medical Humanities*, we will read, think, and write across genres. While engaging a variety of readings and media, we will learn to collect and interpret illness narratives and medical stories and to chart and analyze therapeutic itineraries, health disparities, and caregiving. As we inquire into human plasticity in the face of illness and the ways biosocial and medical realities actively shape each other, we will learn ethnographic research methods, engage critical ethical debates, and experiment with modes of expression. Students will be encouraged to develop community-based research and artistic projects.

**THIS IS AN INTERNET AND LAPTOP-FREE CLASS!**

**Please turn off ALL electronic devices before entering the classroom.**

The success of the course depends on your commitment to complete all required readings for each class meeting, to critically reflect on the texts and films, to participate actively in class discussions, and to creatively integrate these insights in the midterm paper and final course project. Grading will be based on:

- **Lecture attendance and class participation (10%).** Students are expected to attend regularly and actively contribute to discussions and Q&A in lecture.
- **Weekly Responses (25%).** Each week students will submit written responses on Blackboard about that week's readings, film or art viewing. There are two formats for the response: **either a one-page précis to be submitted to a folder under Blackboard's Course Assignments, or a more impressionist short post on Blackboard's Discussion Board.** The **précis** should be approximately one-page, not to exceed 500 words. It should provide a brief review of the assigned readings along with your own critical reflections. You may choose one or two key points that strike you in the readings and discuss them in relation to broader course themes. The **Discussion Board posts** should consist of three to five-sentences expressing your impressions and probing thoughts on films and artworks. Please read one another's posts before attending class, as they will likely be a starting point for our class discussions. **The response format (one-page précis or discussion post) and due date will vary on a weekly basis (due either Monday, Wednesday or Friday at 11am). Be sure to check the syllabus.**
- **Midterm paper (6-8 double-spaced pages plus one page with references) analyzing an "illness narrative" (30%).** This can be based on: 1) an interview you conduct with a family member who has experienced some health condition and/or treatment, biomedical or other; 2) your own illness narrative of a health experience you have had. The midterm paper must be submitted on Blackboard on March 16<sup>th</sup> by 10pm.
- **Final community-based research project and poster with key findings OR an artistic project (35%).** Students will present their posters and artistic projects in a Medical Humanities final session (to be scheduled towards the end of the reading period).

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

- Biehl, João. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* (with a New Afterward). Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Chast, Roz. *Can't We Talk about Something More Pleasant?: A Memoir*. New York: Bloomsbury: 2016.
- Fadiman, Anne. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (with a New Afterward). New York: Noonday Press, 2013.
- Frazier, Latoya Ruby. *The Notion of Family*. New York: Aperture, 2016.
- Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador, 2003.

February 5

**Medical Humanities | Introduction & Course Overview**

- Whitman, Walt. 1974. “The Real War Will Never Get in the Books.” *Specimen Days* in *The Portable Walt Whitman* edited by Mark Van Doren. New York: Viking, pp.482-484.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1974. “Preface for the Second Edition.” *The Gay Science*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 32-38.
- Mann, Thomas. 1995. *The Magic Mountain*. New York: Vintage International, pp. 31-33.
- Film: *The Happy Child* by Mohsen Makhmalbaf (Iran)

**Film Response**

Submit impressions about the film *The Happy Child* on Blackboard’s **Discussion Board** by February 6<sup>th</sup> at 11 pm.

February 7

**The Normal and the Pathological**

- Benedict, Ruth. 1959. “Anthropology and the Abnormal.” *An Anthropologist at Work: Writings of Ruth Benedict*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, pp. 262-283.
- Sontag, Susan. 1990. *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*. New York: Doubleday, pp. 1-9.
- Guibert, Hervé. 1996. *Cytomegalovirus: A Hospitalization Diary*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, pp.1-13.

Optional Reading:

- Canguilhem, Georges. 2008. “The Normal and the Pathological.” In *Knowledge of Life* edited by Paola Marrati and Todd Meyers. New York: Fordham University Press, pp.121-133.
- Luhrmann, T. M. 2012. “Living With Voices.” *The American Scholar*, June 1.

February 12

**How Does Culture Surface in Medical Care?**

- Fadiman, Anne. 2013. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (with a New Afterward). New York: Noonday Press.
- Williams, William Carlos. 1984. “The Use of Force.” *The Doctor Stories*. New York: New Directions, pp. 56-60.

**Reading Response**

Submit a précis on *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* to this week’s assignment folder on Blackboard by February 12<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

February 14

### **The Anatomy Lesson**

- Rembrandt, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (oil painting, 1632).
- Sebald, W.G. 1999. "I." *The Rings of Saturn*. New York: New Directions, pp.1-26.
- Gawande, Atul. 2002. "Education of a Knife." *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. New York: Metropolitan Books, pp.11-34.
- Film: *Island of Flowers* by Jorge Furtado (Brazil)

#### Optional Reading:

- Selzer, Richard. 1997. "The Knife." *Mortal Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 92-104.

#### **Film Response**

Submit impressions about the film *Island of Flowers* on Blackboard's Discussion Board by February 16<sup>th</sup> at 11 am.

February 19

### **On How Medicine Constructs Its Objects**

- Good, Byron. 1994. "How Medicine Constructs Its Objects." *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 65-87.
- Wendland, Claire. 2010. "Introduction: Moral Order and Medical Science" and "Chapter Four: Seeing Deeply and Seeing Through in the Basic Science Years." *A Heart for the Work: Journeys through an African Medical School*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp.6-35, 89-118.

#### **Reading Response**

Submit a précis on the Good and Wendland readings to this week's assignment folder on Blackboard by February 19<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

February 21

### **Illness Narratives and Moral Sensibility in Medicine**

- Kleinman, Arthur. 1988. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 3-55.
- Kleinman, Arthur. 2011. "The Art of Medicine: The Divided Self, Hidden Values, and Moral Sensibility in Medicine." *The Lancet*, Vol. 377, pp. 804-805.
- Kafka, Franz. 2009. "A Country Doctor." *Franz Kafka, Stories 1904-1924*. London: Abacus, pp. 182-187.

#### Optional Reading:

- O'Rourke, Meghan. 2013. "What's wrong with me?" *The New Yorker*, August 26.
- Rosenberg, Charles. 2002. "The Tyranny of Diagnosis: Specific Entities and Individual Experience." *Milbank Quarterly* 80(2): 237-260

February 26  
**Why Me? Why Now?**

- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 2010. "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events." *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities* edited by Byron J. Good, Michael M.J. Fischer, Sarah S. Willen, and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 18-25.
- Hillenbrand, Laura. 2003. "A Sudden Illness: How My Life Changed." *The New Yorker*, July 7, 2003, pp.56-57.
- Levy, Ariel. 2013. "Thanksgiving in Mongolia: Adventure and heartbreak at the edge of the earth." *The New Yorker*, November 18.
- Didion, Joan. 2006. *The Year of Magical Thinking*. New York: Alfred Knopf, pp.1-33.
- Film: *Living with Dying* (PBS | USA)

**Reading Response**

Submit a précis on the Evans-Pritchard, Hillenbrand, Levy, and Didion readings to this week's assignment folder on Blackboard by February 26<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

February 28  
**The Mindful Body**

- Mauss, Marcel. 1979. "The Notion of Body Techniques." *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 95-119.
- Gawande, Atul. 2003. "Crimson Tide." *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*. New York: Picador, pp.146-161.
- Cannon, Walter B. 1942. "Voodoo' Death." *American Anthropologist* 44:169-181.
- Pilcher, Helen. 2009. "The Science of Voodoo: When Mind Attacks Body." *New Scientist*, May 13.
- Film: *The Spirit Possession of Alejandro Mamani* by Hubert Smith and Neil Reichline (USA/Bolivia)

Optional Reading:

- Schepers-Hughes, Nancy and Margaret Lock. 1987. "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1 (1): 6-41.
- Thompson, Jennifer Jo and Mark Nichter. 2015. "Is There a Role for Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Preventive and Promotive Health? An Anthropological Assessment in the Context of U.S. Health Reform." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 30(1):80-99.

**Film Response**

Submit impressions about the film *The Spirit Possession of Alejandro Mamani* on Blackboard's Discussion Board by March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 11 am.

March 5

**Therapeutic Efficacy & the Human Compulsion to Narrate**

- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1967. "The Sorcerer and His Magic." *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Anchor Books, pp. 167-185.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. "Tell My Story: The Human Compulsion To Narrate." Lecture at The Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2014.  
Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvtgLkhij2s>
- Biehl, João. 2013. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-66 (Introduction and Part I).

Optional Readings:

- Moerman, Daniel E. 2016. "Looking at placebos through a cultural lens and finding meaning." *Placebo Talks* (edited by Amit Raz and Cory Harris). Oxford: Oxford University, pp. 99-118.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. 2017. "Prologue" and "Bare Bones." *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Even*. New York: W.W. Norton, pp. 1-20.

March 7

**Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment**

- Biehl, João. 2013. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 71-265 (Part II, Part III, Part IV).

Optional Film:

- *Titicut Follies* by Frederick Wiseman (USA)

**Reading Response**

Submit a précis on *Vita* to this week's assignment folder on Blackboard by March 7<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

March 12

**Catarina's Dictionary**

- Biehl, João. 2013. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 271-396 (Part V, Part VI, Conclusion, Postscript, Afterword).
- Frank, Arthur W. 2014. "Being a Good Story: The Humanities as Therapeutic Practice." *Health Humanities Reader* (edited by Therese Jones, Delese Wear, and Lester D. Friedman. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp.13-25.

March 14

**Human Plasticity and Artistic Imagination**

- Artistic exercise with Gary Hurst (visual artist)

**No response due this week**

**| SPRING BREAK |**

March 26

### **The Plagued City and Regarding the Pain of Others I**

- Sophocles. 2010. *Oedipus the King* (translated by David Grene). Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp.11-13.
- Foucault, Michel. 1995. "Panopticism." *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 195-202.
- Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux. Excerpts.
- Half of the class will visit the Princeton Art Museum to view and discuss artwork with curator Veronica White.
- Half of the class will discuss community-based final research projects: with Trisha Thorne, Director of Princeton's PROCESS

March 28

### **The Plagued City and Regarding the Pain of Others II**

- Half of the class will visit the Princeton Art Museum to view and discuss artwork with curator Veronica White.
- Half of the class will discuss community-based final research projects: with Trisha Thorne, Director of Princeton's PROCESS

#### **Artwork Response**

Submit critical reflections about the images seen at the Princeton Art Museum, in connection with this week's readings and discussions, on Blackboard's Discussion Board by Friday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

April 2

### **Resocializing Medicine**

- Virchow, Rudolf. "The Charity Physician." *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities* edited by Byron J. Good, Michael M.J. Fischer, Sarah S. Willen, and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 47-49.
- Kidder, Tracy. 2000. "The Good Doctor." *The New Yorker*, July 10, pp. 40-57.
- Farmer, Paul. 2005. "Never Again? Reflections on Human Values and Human rights." *Tanner Lecture Series*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press.
- Film: *All of Us* by Emily Abt (USA)

#### Optional Reading:

- Levy, Ariel. 2017. "Ophelia Dahl's National Health Service." *The New Yorker*, December 18 & 25.



April 4

**Medicine's Harming-Healing Paradox:  
Ordinary and Extraordinary Ethical Case Studies I**

- Washington, Harriet. 2008. "A Notoriously Syphilis-Soaked Race?: What Really Happened at Tuskegee?" In *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Harlem Moon/Broadway Books, pp.157-185.
- Film: *The Deadly Deception* by Denise DiAnni (USA)

Optional Reading:

- Jones, James. 1993. "The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment: A Moral Astigmatism." In *The Racial Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future* edited by Sandra Harding. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, pp. 275-286.
- Proctor, Robert. 1993. "Nazi Medicine and the Politics of Knowledge." In *The 'Racial' Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future* edited by Sandra Harding. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp. 344-358.

**Film/Reading Response**

**Submit critical reflections about the Tuskegee experiment (film and text) on Blackboard's Discussion Board by April 4<sup>th</sup> at 11am.**

April 9

**Medicine's Harming-Healing Paradox:  
Ordinary and Extraordinary Ethical Case Studies II**

- Fink, Sheri. 2009. "Deadly Choices at Memorial." *New York Times Magazine*, August 25.
- Rouse, Carolyn. 2009. Introduction, Chapter 1, and Conclusion. *Uncertain Suffering: Racial Health Care Disparities and Sickle Cell Disease*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp.1-44 and 257-267.
- Livingston, Julie. "The Next Epidemic: Pain and the Politics of Relief in Botswana's Cancer Ward." In *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health* edited by João Biehl and Adriana Petryna. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 182-206.

Optional Reading:

- Rothman, David. 2000. "The Shame of Medical Research." *The New York Review of Books*, November 30.
- Wailoo, Keith, Julie Livingston, and Peter Guarnaccia. 2006. "Chronicles of an Accidental Death." In *A Death Retold: Jessica Santillan, the Bungled Transplant, and Paradoxes of Medical Citizenship*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 1-16.
- Davis, Aaron C, Katie Zezima and Mark Berman. 2017. "Florida nursing home defends its actions in fatal tragedy." *The Washington Post*, September 15.

April 11

### **Pathologizing Poverty & Living through Injury**

- Frazier, LaToya Ruby. 2014. *The Notion of Family*. New York: Aperture.
- Benjamin, Ruha. 2016. "Racial Fictions, Biological Facts: Expanding the Sociological Imagination through Speculative Methods." *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, Technoscience* 2 (2): 1-28.

**Reading Response**

Submit a précis on *The Notion of Family* to this week's assignment folder on Blackboard by April 11<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

April 16

### **Visualizing Toxic Local Biologies**

- Lock, Margaret. 2017. "Recovering the Body." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 46:1-14.
- Guest Speaker: Jeff Himpele, Department of Anthropology, Princeton University

Optional Film:

- Film: *Semper Fi, Always Faithful* by Purcell Carson (USA)

April 18

### **The Pastoral Clinic**

- Garcia, Angela. 2010. *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Skype Conversation with Angela Garcia, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Stanford University

Optional Reading:

- Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schonberg. 2009. "Introduction." *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-23.

**Reading Response**

Submit a précis on *The Pastoral Clinic* to this week's assignment folder on Blackboard by April 18<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

April 23

### **Making Up [Pharmaceutical] People**

- Hacking, Ian. 1999. "Making Up People." *The Science Studies Reader* edited by Mario Biagioli. New York: Routledge, pp. 161-171.
- Healy, David. 2006. "The New Medical Oikomune." In *Global Pharmaceuticals: Ethics, Markets, and Practices* edited by Adriana Petryna, Andrew Lakoff, and Arthur Kleinman. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 61-84.
- Sarah Boseley with Photographs by Baptiste Lignel. 2015. "Generation Meds: The US Children Who Grow Up on Prescription Drugs." *The Guardian*, November, 26.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/nov/21/children-who-grow-up-on-prescription-drugs-us>
- Film: *The Medicated Child* by Marcela Gaviria (PBS/Frontline)

#### Optional Reading:

- Lakoff, Andrew. 2007. "The Right Patients for the Drug: Managing the Placebo Effect in Antidepressant Trials." *BioSocieties* 2(2): 57-71.
- Dumit, Joseph. 2012. "Conclusion: Living in a World of Surplus Health." In *Drugs for Life: How Pharmaceutical Companies Define Our Health*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp.197-218.

April 25

### **Facing Mortality & Time Warps**

- Kalanithi, Paul. 2014. "How Long Have I Got Left?" *The New York Times*, January 24 Sunday Review).  
[https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/25/opinion/sunday/how-long-have-i-got-left.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/25/opinion/sunday/how-long-have-i-got-left.html?_r=0)
- Kalanithi, Paul. 2015. "Before I go: Time warps for a young surgeon with metastatic lung cancer." *Stanford Medicine*, Spring.  
<https://stanmed.stanford.edu/2015spring/before-i-go.html>
- Youtube: "A Strange Relativity: Altered Time for Surgeon-Turned-Patient" (Paul Kalanithi)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5u753wQeyM>
- Youtube: "What makes life worth living in the face of death" (Lucy Kalanithi)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VacgRdKqjM>
- Chast, Roz. *Can't We Talk about Something More Pleasant?: A Memoir*. New York: Bloomsbury: 2016.

#### Optional Reading:

- Taylor, Janelle. 2008. "On Recognition, Caring, and Dementia." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 22 (4): 313-335.

#### **Reading Response**

Submit a précis on *Can't We Talk about Something More Pleasant?* to this week's assignment folder on Blackboard by April 25<sup>th</sup> at 11am.

April 30

### **The Art of Caregiving**

- Gigerenzer, Thalia. *A Sound Portrait: Violet*.  
<https://soundcloud.com/thaliagigerenzer/violet-sound-portrait>
- Kleinman, Arthur. 2008. "Catastrophe and Caregiving: The Failure of Medicine as an Art." *The Lancet* Vol. 371, pp.22-23.
- Kleinman, Arthur. 2009. "Caregiving: The Odyssey of Becoming More Human." *The Lancet*, Vol. 373, pp. 292-293
- Ralph, Laurence. 2017. "Becoming Aggrieved: An Alternative Framework for Care in Black Chicago." In *Unfinished: The Anthropology of Becoming* edited by João Biehl and Peter Locke. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 93-110.
- Baruch, Jay. 2013. "Creative Writing as Medical Instrument." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 34(4): 459-69.

#### Optional Reading:

- Sasha Roseneil. 2004. "Why We Should Care about Friends: An Argument for Queering the Care Imaginary in Social Policy." *Social Policy & Society* 3 (4):409-419.

May 2

### **Final Discussion | On the Open Road**

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

- Frankfurter, Raphael. "The Danger in Losing Sight of Ebola Victims' Humanity." *The Atlantic*, August 22, 2014.  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/08/the-danger-in-losing-sight-of-ebolavictimshumanity/378945/>
- Skype Conversation with Raphael Frankfurter '13, UCSF Medical School and Medical Anthropology PhD Program UCSF/UC Berkeley

**No response due this week**

**PRESENTATION OF POSTERS AND ARTWORKS (to be scheduled)**