SYLLABUS

“Illness, Healing, Culture” ANTH 3504
Spring 2014 | TR 12:45-2pm
Funger Hall, Room #223 (2201 G St. NW)

Instructor Information:

Lauren Carruth, MS PhD
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30-4pm
1957 E St NW/Office #501P
carruth@gwu.edu

Course Summary:

This course is an upper-level undergraduate course in medical anthropology focused on diverse experiences and meanings of illness and healing. The course is divided into four parts: the first part provides a history and grounding in the field of medical anthropology and critically deconstructs the terms, “illness,” “health,” and “healing.” The second part of the class outlines methodologically different perspectives on “disease,” health disparities, and clinical biomedicine. In so doing, we will trace different scales and trajectories of disease causation, from infection by microbes to political-economic systems of injustice. We will also look critically at the practice of clinical biomedicine and the education of physicians. The next part of class applies what we’ve learned from these critical approaches to re-think – and see how others are re-thinking – healing and medical care in the United States. Our case study will be ethnographic portrayals of genetic cancer screenings and prophylactic breast surgeries. This will allow us to examine how healing and health are differentially defined and desired by persons experiencing heightened risk of cancer, cancer diagnoses, death, death of loved ones, and remission. The final part of the class considers what “culture” means and demonstrates why the study of culture is important to the scholarly and applied fields of medicine, public health, and global health policy, both in the U.S. and abroad. Students will take three short, in-class quizzes at the conclusion of the first three parts of class, and one final examination. Students will also conduct one ethnographic interview with a person of their choosing on a topic related to personal experiences of illness and healing.

Course Requirements:

(1) Participation in discussions and online forums is required. I won’t hesitate to call on you during class, and I expect you to come to class each day with questions prepared about the readings. There will be two avenues for you to demonstrate your engagement with course materials: during class and contributions you make to online discussions or forums, organized through Blackboard. Additionally: this course engages both contemporary public debates as well as elements of popular culture and popular science—if you read or see something of relevance to the course material, please bring copies to class or post it on Blackboard so we can all take a look.

(2) One ethnographic interview and a 4-page write-up of the interview. You will be required to conduct a semi-structured ethnographic interview with one person about their experience of a serious illness or injury, and their healthcare-seeking ventures. More information on the interview assignment will be provided.

(3) Three short, in-class quizzes. The quizzes will only have 4-5 questions each, mostly short-answer, and you will be required to handwrite paragraph answers to 1-2 questions about the main ideas discussed in class and in the texts. Quizzes will take a maximum of one hour to complete.
(4) **One final exam.** The final exam will be approximately twice as long as the quizzes, and will focus on the final part of class, but will also require you to know and think through issues we dealt with earlier in the semester. There will be one essay question that will require you to synthesize ideas from throughout the course.

**Grading Equation:**

- In-class quiz #1 – 10%
- In-class quiz #2 – 10%
- In-class quiz #3 – 10%
- Write-up of one ethnographic interview – 20%
- Final examination – 30%
- Class participation in discussions, online forums, and attendance – 20%

**Required Texts:**

1. Electronic readings of journal articles, book chapters, and other .pdf texts on Blackboard
2. Kleinman, Arthur  
3. Lowy, Ilana  
4. Farmer, Paul  
5. Whyte, Susan Reynolds, Sjaak van der Geest, and Anita Hardon  

**Class Policies**

**Attendance Policy:** I will not take attendance every day, but I will take attendance some days, unannounced, especially when I notice there are empty seats. If you know you will miss class for illness or personal emergency, please send an email to me (carruth@gwu.edu) beforehand, and be prepared to provide a written or otherwise official excuse. Students should notify me during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance – these absences are excused. **BEWARE: I will deduct two points from your final grade for every unexcused absence.** Please email or come talk to me if you are struggling with anything outside of class that makes attendance impossible.

**Missed Quizzes and Final Exam:** You are required to inform me before January 20, 2014 if you have any planned trips or absences on the days of the quizzes. In all such cases, you will be required to take the quiz beforehand. If you have a very serious personal emergency on the day of a quiz or the final exam, you must inform me as soon as possible and prepare to provide documentation of your emergency (a note from the hospital, etc.). If I decide to allow, make-up quizzes will be taken during my office hours, and will not be the same as those taken by your classmates. Otherwise, if you fail to arrive for class on the day of the exam, you will receive a ‘0.’ For the final exam, **I will not grant permission for anyone to take the final exam early,** under any circumstances.

**Electronic Device Policy:** All electronic devices must be silenced AND PUT AWAY during class, except for laptops, e-readers, or tablets when we are discussing the assigned texts and you’re reading them on the screen.
It’s simple: every time you’re using devices for anything except for class work, I will deduct two points from your final grade.

**Academic Dishonesty:** If you are caught plagiarizing or copying anything from anyone else or any other source, including in your weekly responses, you will automatically fail the course. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For the remainder of the code, see: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html)

**Support for Students Outside the Classroom:** Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at (202) 994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. If you will need extra time to write answers to the quizzes and final exam, please make sure you contact this office first, and we will make all appropriate arrangements. For additional information please refer to: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/](http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/). University Counseling Center (202-994-5300) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations, confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. See: [http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices)

**Goals of the Course**

- Students will gain a nuanced understanding of what “health,” “disease,” “healing,” “medical care,” and “care-giving” mean for different people in different settings;
- Students will understand the relevance of “healing” to the field of medicine;
- Students will understand the relevance of “culture” to the fields of health policy and clinical medicine;
- Students will understand the concept of “risk” as it relates to our health and bodies;
- Students will practice ethnographic interviewing about a topic regarding illness and/or healing;
- Students will have concrete examples of what anthropological perspectives and ethnographic research can bring to the table during public controversies or policy debates regarding health or health care.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Students will gain a nuanced understanding of what “culture” means;
- Students will understand the difference between illness and disease, and why this matters;
- Students will recognize and have concrete example of the diversity of human experiences of illness, health, disease, healing, and health care;
- Students will understand the difference between medical treatment, cure, and healing;
- Students will be able to recognize and trace multiple causes of disease and illness, from the microbial to the social, economic, and political;
- Students will have a greater understanding of what it means to be “at-risk” of a health condition; and
- Students will be able to apply what they learn about risk and medical treatments for breast and ovarian cancers to other health-related issues.
# SCHEDULE OF READINGS

## PART 1. CRITICAL APPROACHES TO ILLNESS AND HEALING

### Introduction

**Tuesday January 14, 2013 ~ Course Introduction and Review of the Syllabus and Requirements**

No assigned readings.

### Thursday January 16 ~ Foundations of medical anthropology

Young, Allan  

Lock, Margaret and Vinh-Kim Nguyen  

Taylor, Janelle  

### Deconstructing “Normality,” “Health,” “Medicine,” and “Illness”

**Tuesday January 21**

Lock, Margaret  

Kleinman, Arthur  

**Thursday January 23**

Lock, Margaret and Vinh-Kim Nguyen.  

Kleinman, Arthur  

### Semantic Illness Networks & Explanatory Models (Major Medical Anthropological Approaches)

**Tuesday January 28**

Good, Byron J.  

Poss, Jane, and Mary Ann Jezewski  
What is “Healing”?  
**Thursday January 30**
Comaroff, J.
Becker, Gay

The Significance of Healing and Illness  
**Tuesday February 4**
Sax, William
Csordas, Thomas J.

**Thursday February 6**
Garro, Linda, and Cheryl Mattingly
Hunt, Linda
  2000 Strategic Suffering: Illness Narratives as Social Empowerment among Mexican Cancer Patients. *In, The Meaning and Experience of Illness*. Found here: 

**Tuesday February 11**
IN-CLASS QUIZ #1

**CRITICAL APPROACHES TO DISEASE AND CLINICAL BIOMEDICINE**

The Biology of Poverty  
**Thursday February 13**
Leatherman, Thomas
Brown, Peter J. et al
**Health Disparities Research: Political-Economic Approaches to Illness & Disease**

*Tuesday February 18*

Farmer, Paul  
Both prefaces and Part I, pp. xi-58.

*Thursday February 20*

Farmer, Paul  

**Clinical Medical Anthropology**

*Tuesday February 25*

Good, Byron J. and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good  
1993  “Learning Medicine”: The Constructing of Medical Knowledge at Harvard Medical School.  

Davenport, Beverly Ann  

*Thursday February 27*

Whyte, Susan Reynolds, Sjaak van der Geest, and Anita Hardon  
Cambridge University Press.

*Tuesday March 4*

**IN-CLASS SKYPE CONVERSATION with Dr. Cheryl Ritenbaugh, former director of Family & Community Medicine Research at the U of Arizona College of Medicine, and nutritional and biological anthropologist**

Kleinman, Arthur  

Kleinman, Arthur  
2008  Catastrophe and care-giving: the failure of medicine as an art. The Lancet. 371(9606)22-23.

*Thursday March 6*

**IN-CLASS QUIZ #2**

***SPRING BREAK***
RETHINKING HEALING AND MEDICINE IN THE U.S.

Placebo Response  
**Tuesday March 18**  
Thompson, Jennifer J., Cheryl Ritenbaugh, and Mark Nichter  
Kaptchuk, Ted  
Ostenfeld-Rosenthal, Ann  

Complementary and Alternative Medicine  
**Thursday March 20**  
In-class SKYPE PART 2 with Dr. Cheryl Ritenbaugh.  
Sutherland, Elizabeth G. and Cheryl K. Ritenbaugh  
Pylypa, Jennifer  

Risk and The Biotechnology to Manage It  
**Tuesday March 25**  
Lupton, D.  
Rapp, Rayna  

Genetic Testing, Cancer Screenings, and Living “At-Risk”  
**Thursday March 27**  
Ilana Lowy  
*In-class film: “In the family”* [http://inthefamily.kartemquin.com/content/brca-101](http://inthefamily.kartemquin.com/content/brca-101)

**Tuesday April 1**  
Ilana Lowy  
TBA: short reading update on MYRIAD court cases on BRCA1 & 2 genetic testing
Thursday April 3
IN-CLASS QUIZ #3

WHY “CULTURE” MATTERS, HERE AND EVERYWHERE

Hunger, Food, and Health
Tuesday April 8
Messer, Ellen and Parker Shipton
Chen, Nancy

Pharmaceuticals
Thursday April 10
Oldani, Michael J.
Carruth, Lauren

HIV/AIDS & Tuberculosis
Tuesday April 15
Nichter, Mark
Kalofonos, Ippolytos Andreas

Global Health Tourism
Thursday April 17
Nichter, Mimi
Kangas, Beth
The Value of “Culture” in Global Health Policy

Tuesday April 22
Adams, Vincanne, Thomas E. Novotny and Hannah Leslie

Nichter, Mark

Thursday April 24
WRITE-UP OF ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW DUE
Class conclusions & potential make-up day

FINAL EXAM – SCHEDULE TBA