

## **Anthropology of Global Health**

Special Topics in Medical Anthropology Fall 2015 | ANTH 6506

Tuesdays 7:10-9:00pm | Seminar Room, 2110 G. St (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

Instructor: Sarah Raskin, MPH, PhD

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### **Course Overview:<sup>1</sup>**

This course approaches “global health” and various problems framed by global health actors through the theoretical and methodological lenses of sociocultural anthropology. The nascent field of global health is typically defined by its commitment to understand not just the manifestations and patterns of illness around the world, but the social, political and economic forces that place certain individuals and populations at greater risk of illness, suffering, and untimely death. In this course, we too will understand global health – global disparities in disease, treatment, and prevention – by paying attention to these forces. Taking a critical stance, we will also interrogate our own understandings of the structural precursors to health disparities, primarily the ways that the global health complex can, itself, also reproduce inequalities – in the privileging of certain diseases over others, in distributing care, in representing its work, and in determining what constitutes knowledge, evidence, appropriate intervention, efficacy, and more.

This course takes a case study approach in which, after an initial introduction to medical anthropological understandings of global health, course content will comprise book-length ethnographies on a variety of illnesses, in a variety of locations, around which a number of transnational interventions have been developed and mobilized. While course content is of interest to students of medical anthropology, global health, and the medical humanities, students from a broad array of fields will find this course engaging and productively challenging, for example development anthropology and political ecology; clinical and service fields including medicine, nursing, and social work; and international relations, policy, and regional studies. Among the practical skills highlighted in this class, aside from critical thinking, short- and long-form writing, and class facilitation, is *how* to read book-length ethnographies. In this way, this course may hold particular interest to students of social science who use qualitative and ethnographic methods, as well as advanced undergraduates (with instructor permission) who anticipate entering a graduate program in anthropology.

Case studies comprise three major themes. We will open with ethnographies of topics now standard in global health and its precursor international public health: HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis; pregnancy, labor, and delivery; vaccine-preventable illness; and hygiene. These topics will introduce foundational concepts such as structural violence, suffering, medical pluralism, local knowledge, and the roles of race and geopolitical legacies in contemporary global health. The second theme will seek to raise hard questions about provocative topics including the ambiguities and tensions of humanitarianism; toxic exposures and the un-naturalness of disasters; and if (and how) to consider domestic public health topics, in this case diabetes, through a global lens. The final theme will focus on topics of particular interest in the present moment including mental health, dengue fever (with some attention to Ebola virus), and cancer. Through these case studies the concept of global health will be framed at different times as a human right, a foreign or domestic policy, a science, a charitable agenda, and an industry. By critically examining these various frameworks for understanding illness and interventions around the world, the class will explore the potentials and challenges of improving health and healthcare. Students will exit the class with an advanced vocabulary about some major controversies and scientific concepts in the field of global health, and be able to ask critical questions about global burdens of diseases, popular global health

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<sup>1</sup> Course developed from Lauren Carruth’s original ANTH6505 syllabus, with her permission.

campaigns, and global health disparities. Additionally, this class aims to demonstrate the value of anthropology to the field of global health and to efforts to solve global health problems. Students will be urged to think about “global health” as a dynamic cultural artifact and cultural system; and likewise, to think about ethnography as an important methodological tool, both to understand global health agendas, as well as to investigate the subjects and elisions of global health interventions.

**Required Texts (12):**

**A note about required texts:** I have selected only ethnographies that are available in the Washington Research Library Consortium catalog which includes but is not limited to the GWU library. All but two of these books are available in multiple copy throughout our area, and one of those is available as an electronic book. Almost all of these ethnographies are available for purchase as high quality used copies, at a reduced fee – often, a significantly reduced fee – through retailers like Amazon.com. I have also aimed to select books that I consider valuable long-term resources, so as to stock your shelves with texts to which you may return repeatedly throughout your career as an anthropologist, global health worker, clinician, policy analyst, etc. It is important to me that book cost alone not deter anyone from participating in this class. If that is the case, please contact me privately at seraskin@gmail.com

1. ELECTRONIC MATERIALS POSTED ON THE PORTAL & LISTED ON THE SYLLABUS
2. Farmer, Paul  
2001 Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues. University of California Press.
3. Allen, Denise Roth  
2002 Managing Motherhood, Managing Risk: Fertility and Danger in West Central Tanzania. University of Michigan Press.
4. Closser, Svea  
2010 Chasing Polio in Pakistan: Why the World's Largest Public Health Initiative May Fail. Vanderbilt University Press.
5. Anderson, Warwick  
2006 Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines. Duke University Press.
6. Abramowitz, Sharon  
2014 Searching for Normal in the Wake of the Liberian War. University of Pennsylvania Press.
7. Petryna, Adriana  
2013 (2006) Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl. Princeton University Press.
8. Zhan, Mei  
2009 Other-Worldly: Making Chinese Medicine through Transnational Frames. Duke University Press
9. Mendenhall, Emily  
2013 Syndemic Suffering: Social Distress, Depression, and Diabetes among Mexican Immigrant Women. Left Coast Press.
10. Ecks, Stefan M.  
2013 Eating Drugs: Psychopharmaceutical Pluralism in India. NYU Press.
11. Nading, Alex M.  
2014 Mosquito Trails: Ecology, Health, and the Politics of Entanglement. University of California Press.
12. Livingston, Julie  
2012 Improvising Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic. Duke University Press

**Grading Scheme:**

Ten weekly responses:	50% (5% each)
Class facilitation:	20% (10% each)
Final paper:	30%

**Course Requirements and Assignments:**

**(1) Participation in discussions and engagement in the course:** I expect you to come to class each week with questions and opinions about the readings. There will be different opportunities for you to demonstrate your engagement with course materials: during class, through the weekly responses, and through contributions you make to online discussions or forums, organized through Blackboard. So, 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) Weekly written responses** conveying your own critical response to that week's course materials: Your response must be turned in every week, in class, in hard copy, and it must directly respond to that week's assigned text. (Exceptions where noted in schedule of readings, below.) Responses should be no more than one single-spaced page or 400 words in length. *Please adhere to these limits.* Though you are expected to complete all required reading, **your response should not be a summary**. Moreover, your response does not need to address the entire set of readings or entire book. Choose a specific theme, focus, or question to guide you in crafting a thoughtful and critical response. Your response may lightly touch on prior week's readings or topics, but should primarily focus on the assigned reading for the week they are due. I encourage you to use these written responses as inspiration for our weekly seminar discussions; you are welcome (and encouraged) to bring an extra copy of your written response to class, to remind you of observations or questions you'd like to raise. Each written response will be 5% of your final grade.

**(3) Class facilitation:** This seminar aims to help graduate students develop the scholarly skill of small group facilitation. To that end, each student will be responsible for facilitating the half (usually, the first half) of two different class sessions. Session sign will be available at the first class session. Please review this syllabus in advance and identify a couple of topics of interest, so that at sign up everyone can secure at least one of her first or second choice topics. Facilitators on days when no weekly written response is due may elect to write a written response *\*for that day\** to guide discussion, and then skip the next response due. Additional details TBA.

**(4) A final individual research paper:** The final, original paper is meant to allow you to explore your own global health interests and to encourage you to assess the potential contributions of an anthropological approach to it. The paper should focus on a specific case study that may be inspired by our work this semester but is distinct from it, for example global sanitation (a contemporary response to Anderson's historic study), vaccine controversies (taking a different approach than Closser, in a different setting), interpersonal/state violence (taking inspiration from Abramowitz's study of Liberia to think about intimate partner violence or police brutality), or healthcare systems (perhaps in discussion with Livingston's work). Alternatively, the case study may be a topic we have not covered this semester, for example hunger and malnutrition, addiction, in/fertility, sexuality, occupational hazards, traffic-related injury, disability, religion and spirituality, or dental caries. In exploring your case—a particular global health challenge, problematic, or innovative solution—you are expected to engage in original research, though the approach will vary depending upon your topic, experience, opportunities, and goals, for policy analysis, a critical analysis of popular media, auto-ethnography based on your own experience, or other approaches. All students will be expected to draw on the multidisciplinary scholarly literature of global health. The paper should be 12-15 double-spaced pages in 12-point Times/TRN font, using a 1" margin all the way around. You must propose your paper topic to me, by e-mail, by November 17, though you are welcome to propose it earlier. The final paper is **due by e-mail, by midnight December 12, 2015.** Those students who are preparing for undergraduate honors, Masters, doctoral, or post-grad milestones (e.g. a thesis, qualifying or

comprehensive examinations, reflective rounds, original data collection, etc), or whose scholarship in this class crosses over into your employment (e.g. research assistantship) may use this paper as an opportunity to develop thought toward those applications, provided you have your Chair's permission to do so. Additional details TBA.

### **Class Policies**

**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. Please silence all devices and put them away prior to the start of class.

**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>

**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/>. 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>

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

### **PREAMBLE: FRAMING OUR SEMESTER**

#### **Tuesday September 1, 2014: Introduction**

*No response due.*

*No required readings prior to class. During class we will read and discuss the short toolkit “How to read an ethnography.”*

#### **Tuesday September 8: Histories of “Global Health” & Anthropological Approaches / Case study: Ebola virus**

*No response due.*

##### *Required Readings:*

Nichter, Mark

2008 Global Health: Why Cultural Perceptions, Social Representations, and Biopolitics Matter. University of Arizona Press. Introduction and Chapter 1: pp. 1-36.

Richey, Lisa Ann and Stefano Ponte (on the portal)

2008 Better (Red)<sup>TM</sup> than Dead? Celebrities, consumption and international aid. Third World Quarterly. 29(4):711–729.

Mills, Edward J. et al

2011 The financial cost of doctors emigrating from sub-Saharan Africa: human capital analysis. British Medical Journal. 2011;343:d7031(1-13)

Lakoff, Andrew

2010 Two regimes of global health

From the Somatosphere collection on the 2014 Ebola virus outbreak:

Abramowitz, Sharon

2014 Ten Things Anthropologists Can Do to Fight the West African Ebola Epidemic. Somatosphere. <http://somatosphere.net/2014/09/ten-things-that-anthropologists-can-do-to-fight-the-west-african-ebola-epidemic.html>

Beisel, Uli

2014 On Gloves, Rubber and the Spatio-Temporal Logics of Global Health. <http://somatosphere.net/2014/10/rubber-gloves-global-health.html>

Benton, Adia

2014 Race and the Immuno-Logics of Ebola Response in West Africa. <http://somatosphere.net/2014/09/race-and-the-immuno-logics-of-ebola-response-in-west-africa.html>

Other Ebola virus readings, to skim:

Mitman, Gregg

2014 Ebola in a Stew of Fear. NEJM. September 14, 2014.

Pfeiffer, James

2014 How the aid and development industry helped cause Africa’s Ebola outbreak. Podcast. <http://www.humanosphere.org/podcasts/2014/09/how-the-aid-and-development-industry-helped-cause-africas-ebola-outbreak/>

McKenna, Maryn

2014 The Mathematics of Ebola Trigger Stark Warnings: Act Now or Regret It. Wired Magazine. September 14, 2014.

*Resources (to skim)*

The World Health Organization

1978 Declaration of Alma-Ata [http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/declaration\\_almaata.pdf](http://www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/declaration_almaata.pdf)

Vernellia R. Randall

2010 The Human Right to Health.

<http://academic.udayton.edu/health/07HumanRights/health.htm>

Hesperian Foundation

Where There Is No Doctor. Front Matter, Introduction, and Chapters 1-5. Download here:

<http://hesperian.org/books-and-resources/>

**Tuesday September 15: The Social Determinants of Health & Health Inequalities**

*1<sup>st</sup> response due: May reflect on prior week's readings, as well as this week's readings.*

*Required Readings:*

Biehl, João and Adriana Petryna

2013 Critical Global Health. *In* When People Come First. Pp 1-22.

Farmer, Paul

2009 On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below. Race/Ethnicity.

Multidisciplinary Global Contexts. 3(1)11-28.

Krieger, Nancy

2011 The Science and Epidemiology of Racism and Health: Racial/Ethnic Categories, Biological Expressions of Racism, and the Embodiment of Inequality—an Ecosocial Perspective.

Chapter 11. *In*, What's the use of race?: Modern governance and the biology of difference. Ian Whitmarsh and David Shumway Jones, Eds.

Krieger, Nancy

2003 Genders, sexes, and health: what are the connections—and why does it matter?

International Journal of Epidemiology. 32:652-657.

Black, Robert E. et al. (on the portal)

2010 Global, regional, and national causes of child mortality in 2008: a systematic analysis. The Lancet. 375(9730):1969-1987.

**THEME 1: CANONICAL ETHNOGRAPHIES, CLASSIC TOPICS**

**Tuesday September 22: HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and a Classic Whose Name Says It All**

*2<sup>nd</sup> response due*

*Required Reading:*

Farmer, Paul

2001 Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues. University of California Press.

**Tuesday September 29: Pregnancy, Delivery, and Knowledge Hierarchies**

*3<sup>rd</sup> response due*

*Required Reading:*

Allen, Denise Roth

2002 Managing Motherhood, Managing Risk: Fertility and Danger in West Central Tanzania. University of Michigan Press.

**Tuesday October 6: Vaccine-Preventable Illness and the Limitations of Technology**

*4<sup>th</sup> response due*

*Required Reading:*

Closser, Svea

2010 Chasing Polio in Pakistan: Why the World's Largest Public Health Initiative May Fail. Vanderbilt University Press.

**Tuesday October 13: Taking a Step Back: Historicizing Global Health**

*5<sup>th</sup> response due*

*Required Reading:*

Anderson, Warwick

2006 Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines. Duke University Press.

**THEME 2: PROVOCATIONS: ASKING THE HARD QUESTIONS**

**Tuesday October 20: The ambiguities and tensions of humanitarianism**

*No response due*

*Required Readings:*

Abramowitz, Sharon

2014 Searching for Normal in the Wake of the Liberian War. University of Pennsylvania Press.

-- 2014 How the Liberian Health Sector Became a Vector for Ebola. Cultural Anthropology. October 14, 2014. <http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/598-how-the-liberian-health-sector-became-a-vector-for-ebola>

*Suggested, not required reading:*

The Sphere Project

2011 The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. <http://www.sphereproject.org/content/view/720/200/lang.english/>

**Tuesday October 27: Unnatural disasters and toxic exposures**

*6<sup>th</sup> response due*

*Required Readings:*

Petryna, Adriana

2013 (2006) Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl. Princeton University Press.

**Tuesday November 3: Transnationalism and the domestication of global health (I)**

*7<sup>th</sup> response due*

*Required Readings:*

Zhan, Mei

2009 Other-Worldly: Making Chinese Medicine through Transnational Frames. Duke University Press

**THEME 3: TOPICS OF THE MOMENT**

**Tuesday November 10: Transnationalism and the domestication of global health (II)**

*8<sup>th</sup> response due*

*Required Readings:*

Mendenhall, Emily

2013 *Syndemic Suffering: Social Distress, Depression, and Diabetes among Mexican Immigrant Women*. Left Coast Press.

**Tuesday November 17: Global mental health: medical pluralization**

*No response due*

*Research paper proposal due*

*Required Readings:*

Ecks, Stefan M.

2013 *Eating Drugs: Psychopharmaceutical Pluralism in India*. NYU Press

***[American Anthropological Association annual meeting, November 18-22; See you there!]***

**Tuesday November 24: Climate Change, Ubiquity, and Anticipation: Dengue Fever**

*9<sup>th</sup> response due*

*Required Readings:*

Nading, Alex M.

2014 *Mosquito Trails: Ecology, Health, and the Politics of Entanglement*. University of California Press

**Tuesday December 1: Epidemiologic Transitions and Local Knowledge**

*10<sup>th</sup> response due*

*Required Readings.*

Livingston, Julie

2012 *Improvising Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic*. Duke University Press

**\*\*\*Final Paper Due December 12, 2014\*\*\***