

Department of Anthropology
Anthropology 2228G-650: Special Topics in Anthropology
Medical Anthropology
PROVISIONAL COURSE OUTLINE
Winter 2024

Version: January 6, 2024

Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Dr. Lindsay Bell
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Credit Value: 0.5
Antirequisites: None

Course Description:

Medical Anthropology is a critical and people-centered investigation of affliction and therapeutics. This course provides an overview of the changing field of medical anthropology and its common tools of enquiry. It does so by taking a very selective and sustained focus on the anthropology of addiction and mental health. These subfields offer a unique vantage point on the social, cultural, and structural dimensions of health, illness and well-being. Our goal will be to recognize the centrality of the social world as a force that defines and drives the incidence, occurrence, and course of mental illness and addictions¹. We will explore different categories of experience using cross-cultural and historical perspectives to identify how personal experiences of suffering and flourishing emerge out of sociocultural forces. **If you would like a more comprehensive overview of the field of medical anthropology, then I suggest Anthro 2290B-650: Cultures of Health, Illness, Disability and Healing, also offered asynchronously this term.**

Format:

This course is offered online, asynchronously. This means there will be weekly material available for you to work through. That said, engagement with others drives deeper understanding. The course has components that require working with small groups. It is designed using principles of active learning. This approach puts a greater degree of responsibility on the learner than more passive styles of teaching. This style may not be for everyone. You may have chosen asynchronous in the hopes of being disengaged or doing more solitary work. If so, you may want to reconsider your choice to enroll in this course. I encourage everyone to read this syllabus carefully and decide if it is the best choice for their needs and capacity at this time.

There will be four synchronous meetings which are mandatory. For each meeting there are four time slots to choose from. If none of these fit in your schedule, you will need to find another course.

1. Tuesdays at 2:00 (January 23, February 13, March 12, April 2)
2. Wednesdays at 1:00 (January 24, February 14, March 13, April 3)
3. Wednesdays at 3:15 (January 24, February 14, March 13, April 3)
4. Thursdays at 5:30 (January 25, February 15, March 14, April 4)

¹ Like all writing, syllabi are indebted to the works of others who inspire. For me this includes course outlines by Aulino 2021, Raikhel 2013, and Block 2023.

Required Textbooks:

Addiction Trajectories. Edited by E. Raikhel and W. Garriott. 2013. Duke UP. [Available at UWO Bookstore](#) and via Weldon.

You will be required to buy (or borrow) one additional popular book which should cost no more than 20\$ and likely would be available through your public library.

Evaluation:

Comprehension Questions	25
Wellness Museum (850)	25
Book Product (850)	25
Embodied (Un)Learning (850)	25

Comprehension Questions

There will be 4-5 open-book, comprehension questions most weeks starting in Week 1. The purpose of the questions is to encourage you to do the week's tasks and assess whether you have understood the main points of the readings/lectures. The questions will be multiple choice or true/false. If it asks for your opinion, then the grade will come from having given any response.

Questions will be open from Tuesday night and be due Mondays at 8 a.m. There is a 48-hour grace period where you can do the questions late without penalty (by Wednesday at 8 a.m.).

No make-ups or extensions beyond the grace period will be offered on the comprehension questions, but the lowest three questions will be dropped.

Wellness Museum

Collectively, we will investigate the concept of 'wellness' as it appears in North American culture in general, and on college campuses in particular. We will have a 'wellness workshops' where we think anthropologically about the concept and experience of wellness. To this end, each student will bring in 1-3 artifacts or descriptions of an experience that could be part of an emerging archive of campus wellness. This could be historical photos of physical education programs on campus, posters about wellness, social media posts, or participating programs aimed at student well-being. We will analyze these artifacts and experiences as a group to speculate about how these initiatives define, in part, what it means to be well. In groups of five you will create a virtual "wellness museum" which will "make strange" some of the taken-for-granted aspects of contemporary wellness culture. This assignment receives a group grade out of 20 plus a grade out of 5 for your contribution (peer and self-assessed).

Book Club and Product

In groups of five you will read a popular book (memoir) that relates to course themes. As a team, you will read the book and participate in a structured discussion. Together you will make connections between the book and the course materials. Collectively, you will create a "knowledge product" that shares what you can learn from casting an anthropological eye on a contemporary account of addiction/mental health.

Embodied UnLearning Essay

Each week you will be invited to try a somatic practice that asks you to practice being aware in your experience. We will discuss this at length in our first meeting. You need not be good at the exercises/activities. You can find them too awkward to attempt. What matters is that you pay attention to your experience with each one. You will post about your practice to the forum 4x in the semester. The better you document your experience, the easier it will be to craft a paper. You will be guided through a process of writing about the course themes in relation to these experiences. The essay will be roughly 1000 words.

Academic Statements and Policies:

Use of AI and other writing software

FOR THE LOVE OF ALL THINGS GOOD IN THE WORLD PLEASE DON'T PLAGIRIZE OR USE AI. It makes my job feel hopeless. When you use AI (**even Grammarly**) you strip away YOUR knowledge of the course context. This jeopardizes the quality of your assignment and devalues the learning. Thinking and writing are connected. When you don't do the writing, you lose the chance to think and experience ideas. This is sad to me.

I understand you may have concerns about spelling, grammar or organization. The best way to address those is 1) use the writing center. The staff are super qualified and will give you the skills you came here for 2) use basic spell check in word, it catches most things.

It is also important to note that I do NOT penalize papers for grammar/spelling or any writing styles that may seem colloquial. I am wanting to see how you are thinking not how much access you have had to prestigious forms of expression/education.

Academic Integrity - Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

Academic Rights and Responsibilities

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current [Academic Policies in the Academic Calendar](#) which include, but is not limited to, academic consideration for medical illness, accommodation for religious holidays, academic appeals, academic accommodation for students with disabilities, as well as scholastic discipline.

Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course:

In order to pass this course students must submit and pass the final essay.

Academic Consideration for Student Absences

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed comprehension questions or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

For students who have missed, or will miss, any course work, whether it be for medical related or non-medical related, please read the details and instructions on "[What is Academic Consideration](#)".

Accessible Education

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. Please see Accessible Education for information.

Tentative Calendar

Week	Dates	Theme	Important Details
1	Jan 8 (Mon) – Jan 15 (Mon)	Orientation: What is Medical Anthropology?	Week 1 Comprehension questions due Monday Jan 15 8 pm Forum Post: Intention Setting
2	Jan 16 (Tues) – Jan 22 (Mon)	Anthropology of Mental Health	Week 2 Comprehension questions due Monday 8 pm
3	Jan 23 (Tues) – Jan 29 (Mon)	Embodied (Un)Learning	Learning Community on Zoom Forum Post: Embodied Un(learning) Practice
4	Jan 30 (Tues) – Feb 5 (Mon)	Culture, Subjectivity & Experience	Week 4 Comprehension questions due Monday 8am Forum Post: Embodied Un(learning) Practice
5	Feb 6 (Tues) – Feb 12 (Mon)	Medicine, Knowledge, Power	Week 5 Comprehension questions due Monday 8am Forum Post: Embodied Un(learning) Practice
6	Feb 13 (Tues) – Feb 26 (Mon)	Wellness Museum	Learning Community on Zoom Museum due Monday Feb 26, 8pm
7	Feb 27 (Tues) – Mar 5 (Mon)	Anthropology of Addiction	Week 7 Comprehension questions due Monday 8pm Forum Post: Embodied Un(learning) Practice
8	Mar 5 (Tues) – Mar 11 (Mon)	Social determinants of health & Social suffering	Week 8 Comprehension questions due Monday 8pm Forum Post: Embodied Un(learning) Practice
9	Mar 12 (Tues) – Mar 18 (Mon)	Book Club I	Learning Community on Zoom Embodied Unlearning Essay Due, Monday Mar 18, 8pm
10	Mar 19 (Tues) – Mar 25 (Mon)	Therapeutics I: Talk therapy and Pharmaceuticals	Week 10 Comprehension questions due Monday 8pm
11	Mar 26 (Tues) – April 1 (Mon)	Therapeutics 2: Expertise, Care, Pluralism	Week 11 Comprehension questions due Monday 8pm
12	April 2 (Tues) – April 8 (Mon)	Book Club II	Learning Community on Zoom Book Products due Monday April 8, 8pm

End