

Department of Anthropology
Anthropology 2228F-650: Special Topics in Anthropology

The Anthropology of Addiction and Mental Health

PROVISIONAL COURSE OUTLINE

Summer 2025

Version: March 12, 2025

Instructor and course information:

Instructor: Dr. Lindsay Bell
Email: Lindsay.bell@uwo.ca
Credit Value: 0.5
Antirequisites: None

Course Description:

This course explores how experiences of individual suffering are shaped by social, cultural and historical contexts. We will explore connections between culture and mental health using case studies from around the world and through our own first-hand exploration of contemporary wellness culture. Students will gain hands-on experience with anthropological research skills and be introduced to key analytical strategies from the field of medical anthropology.

Format:

This course is designed using principles of active and experiential learning. The course has components that require students to explore concepts on their own, as a whole class and in small groups. By sincerely engaging with one another we set the stage for deeper understanding. This approach puts a greater degree of responsibility on the learner than more passive styles of teaching. This style may not be for everyone. I encourage everyone to read this syllabus carefully and decide if it is the best choice for their needs and capacity at this time.

Required Textbooks:

Addiction Trajectories. Edited by E. Raikhel and W. Garriott. 2013. Duke UP. [Available at UWO Bookstore](#) and via Weldon. (60\$)

You will be required to buy (or borrow) one of the following nonfiction books which should cost no more than 20\$ and are likely available through your public library.

Evaluation:

Exit Tickets	25
Wellness Museum	25
Book Product	25
Embodied (Un)Learning	25

Exit Ticket: At the end of each class, you will have an opportunity to synthesize the day's material. An "exit ticket" is a short free writing exercise where you articulate what you understood and what questions you may still have. These are as much for me as they are for you. They help us find the right pace for the course and make sure everyone is understanding the major themes. These are meant to take 5 minutes. You will be allotted 15 minutes.

As you can miss one exit ticket without penalty, make ups will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances. Students who notify me a week in advance of a planned absence (school trip, sports team travel) or who provide documented illness can write a 300-word review of the reading in lieu of the exit ticket (only after one has been missed).

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 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 four-five people 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 journal about your practice 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.