

Medical Anthropology & Global Health

Kevin P. Groark

This is an interdisciplinary undergraduate course exploring the role of medical anthropology in the field of global or international health, focusing on the serious health problems facing populations in marginalized and resource-poor societies around the globe. The course is structured around the following ten thematic areas: 1) critical approaches to world systems theory and global health; 2) the political ecology of infectious disease; 3) evolutionary medicine and emerging diseases; 4) child survival; 5) women's reproductive health; 6) men's health under "modernization"; 7) mental health and globalization; 8) pharmaceutical culture and patent medicines in non-Western settings; 9) intellectual property, ethnomedicine, and bioprospecting; and 10) biomedicine and the US health care system.

At a broader level, the course emphasizes three different anthropological approaches to global health: 1) Anthropology in Global Health (introduction to the principles, methods, and approaches of applied anthropology in global health settings, focusing on attempts to develop effective public health education and interventions); 2) Anthropology of Global Health Problems (the ways in which anthropologists attempt to understand global health problems within broader cultural, historical, ecological, evolutionary, and politico-economic contexts, but without intervening to develop intervention and/or control programs); 3) Anthropological Critiques of Global Health (a critical examination of the very concept of global health, "modernization," and "development," focusing on anti-globalization movements in the "underdeveloped" world and their implications for defining desirable and effective goals in global health. The goal of the course is to develop students' awareness and understanding of the political, socioeconomic, ecological, and cultural complexity of health problems in "developing" nations, and the consequent need for anthropological participation in the field of global health.

Possible Texts:

Baer, H.A., Singer, M. & Susser I. 1997. Medical Anthropology and the World System: A Critical Perspective. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey (selected chapters)

Desjarlais, R., Eisenberg, L. Good, B.J., & Kleinman, A. (eds). 1995. World Mental Health: Priorities, Problems, and Responses in Low-Income Countries. New York: Oxford University Press (selected chapters)

Nesse, R. 1996. Why We Get Sick: The New Science of Darwinian Medicine. Vintage Books. (selected chapters)

Hahn, R. 1999. Anthropology in Public Health: Bridging Differences in Culture and Society. New York: Oxford University Press

Fadiman, Anne. 1998. The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down. Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

(plus a course reader with select journal articles and book chapters)