

ANG 6737 Medical Anthropology

Tuesdays, 1:55 – 4:55 p.m.
Turlington Hall, 2303

Dr. Clarence C. Gravlee

Office: Turlington B370

Student Hours: Tues, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. ([Zoom](#)); Wed, 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. (TUR B370 or [Zoom](#))

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In reality, if medicine is the science of the healthy as well as of the ill human being (which is what it ought to be), what other science is better suited to propose laws as the basis of the social structure, in order to make effective those which are inherent in man himself? Once medicine is established as anthropology, and once the interests of the privileged no longer determine the course of public events, the physiologist and the practitioner will be counted among the elder statesmen who support the social structure. Medicine is a social science in its very bone and marrow....

Rudolph Virchow, *Die Einheitsbestrebungen*, 1849

I should perhaps briefly state the reasons that have progressively led me—a microbiologist not trained in medicine—to explore some of the biological and social implications of man's response to his total environment. My concern with such problems emerged from an increasing awareness of the fact that the prevalence and severity of microbial diseases are conditioned more by the ways of life of the persons afflicted than by the virulence and other properties of the etiological agents. Hence the need to learn more of man and of his societies in order to try to make sense of the patterns of his diseases.

René Dubos, *Man Adapting*, 1965

Course Description and Objectives

Medical anthropology is a broad and vibrant discipline that draws on the four traditional subfields of anthropology—cultural, biological, linguistic, and archaeology—to examine the biocultural basis of health and to understand the cultural dimensions of illness experience and treatment. This seminar examines the major theoretical frameworks and key areas of empirical research in contemporary medical anthropology. We will focus on three broad topics: (1) the biocultural basis of health; (2) critical and interpretive analysis of sickness, health, and healing; and (3) applications of anthropology in medicine, nursing, and public health.

Teaching Philosophy

The aims of graduate school are fundamentally different from those of undergraduate education. Undergraduate education is concerned primarily with instilling the essential knowledge in a field and—at its best—with preparing students for a lifetime of learning. Graduate education is about turning students into professional researchers and teachers. These different aims correspond to distinct responsibilities for both teachers and learners at the graduate and undergraduate levels. As aspiring professionals, you are responsible for taking initiative to master the key ideas and literature in the field and for seeking out the resources you need. My role is to facilitate your learning and professional development as independent scholars by introducing you to pertinent literature, by challenging you to evaluate and

synthesize the material, and by rewarding individual initiative. The course format, assignments, and evaluation of your performance are designed to meet these aims.

Course Format

In practice, my teaching philosophy means that you will be actively engaged in mastering the course material. The course will be conducted as a seminar. You will be required to complete assigned readings before class and come prepared to discuss and analyze the issues the readings address. Each week, one or two students will be assigned to lead our discussion and synthesize the material.

Course Materials

Required Readings

Brewis, Alexandra, and Amber Wutich. 2019. *Lazy, Crazy, and Disgusting: Stigma and the Undoing of Global Health*. Baltimore: JHU Press.

Caduff, Carlo. 2015. *The Pandemic Perhaps: Dramatic Events in a Public Culture of Danger*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Davis, Dana-Ain. 2019. *Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth*. New York: NYU Press.

Jusionyte, Ieva. 2018. *Threshold: Emergency Responders on the US-Mexico Border*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kenner, Alison. 2018. *Breathtaking: Asthma Care in a Time of Climate Change*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Livingston, Julie. 2019. *Self-Devouring Growth: A Planetary Parable as Told from Southern Africa*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

The books are available locally at the UF Bookstore. Additional required readings will be made available electronically on the e-Learning website (elearning.ufl.edu).

Supplementary Resources

Baer, H. A., Singer, M. & Susser, I. (1997). *Medical anthropology and the world system: a critical perspective*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Joralemon, D. (2010). *Exploring medical anthropology*, 3rd edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

McElroy, A. & Townsend, P.K. (2009). *Medical anthropology in ecological perspective*, 5th edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Trostle, J. A. (2005). *Epidemiology and culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Sargent, C. F., and Johnson, T. M., eds. (1996). *Handbook of medical anthropology: contemporary theory and method*, Revised edition. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Singer, M., & Erickson, P. I. eds. (2011). *A companion to medical anthropology*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Wiley, A. S. & Allen, J. S.. (2009). *Medical anthropology: A Biocultural approach*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Course Outline

1. Introduction
2. History and scope of medical anthropology
3. Ecology, adaptation, and evolution
4. Culture, political economy, and health
5. Medical anthropology in the time of COVID-19—Part 1
6. Medical anthropology in the time of COVID-19—Part 2
7. *Pandemic Perhaps*
8. *Lazy, Crazy, and Disgusting*
9. Embodiment, local biologies, and syndemics
10. *Reproductive Injustice*
11. Workshop
12. *Threshold*
13. *Self-Devouring Growth*
14. Thanksgiving break—no class
15. *Breathtaking*
16. Presentations

Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade has three components: class participation (25 percent), seminar moderator (25 percent), and a research paper (40 percent). Final grades will be A (90-100), A- (87-89), B+ (84-86), B (80- 83), B- (77-79), C+ (74-76), C (70-73), C- (67-69), D+ (64-66), D (60-63), D- (57-59), E (<57).

1. *Class participation (25%)*. I expect you to attend each class meeting and to take an active part in discussions and activities. Active participation requires that you read all assigned readings, take notes on the readings, and prepare thoughtful questions and critical discussion points. I will evaluate your class participation on the quality of your contributions, not just on how often you speak in class. The purpose of evaluating your participation is to facilitate your grasp of the material by encouraging you to prepare for class and by promoting thoughtful analysis and discussion.
2. *Seminar moderator (25%)*. Each week one or two students will be assigned to moderate the seminar. Your job is to stimulate and guide thoughtful discussion about the concepts and arguments relevant to the week's reading. If you and another student are assigned to the same week, you are expected to meet ahead of the class time to coordinate your presentation

of the material. The purpose of serving as seminar moderator is to enhance your skills in critical reading and interpretation, oral presentation, active listening, and synthesis and evaluation of arguments and ideas.

- a. *Discussion questions.* You (and your partner, if assigned) should develop 5–10 thought-provoking questions for seminar participants to address during class. You must distribute these questions by email to the course listserv at least **48 hours** before we meet for class (i.e., by Sunday afternoon at 2:00). The questions should be designed to stimulate discussion and debate.
 - b. *Discussion leader.* You (and your partner, if assigned) will be responsible for facilitating our discussion in class meetings. You should begin with a brief (≤ 10 -minute) summary of the key ideas and debates from the week's readings. You should have a flexible plan for guiding our discussion through the important elements of the week's readings, using the questions you posted to the listserv. Be prepared to share your own insights about the readings.
3. *Research Paper (50%).* The research paper is an opportunity for you to develop expertise in an area of interest to you. The project may be (1) a review paper or critical essay on a theme related to medical anthropology, (2) an analysis of secondary data, or (3) primary research. The paper should be approximately 6000 words in length and should be written in the form of a journal article. The paper is due on **December 13**. I encourage you to discuss your plans for the paper with me as soon as possible. To be successful, you should make steady progress on the paper throughout the semester (e.g., identify a topic by the third week of the semester, generate a working bibliography by the fourth week, and start writing the first draft by the sixth week). You should be prepared to make a brief (~15-minute) oral presentation about your project on the final day of class.
4. *Course web site.* You are responsible for all materials posted on the course web site (elearning.ufl.edu), including required readings, announcements, details on assignments, and other supplementary material.

Policy on Late Assignments

You are required to complete all assignments by the stated due dates. Late assignments will lose one half-letter grade for each day past the deadline. There are no make-up opportunities for any assignment, as you will have ample time to complete each requirement. I will not assign grades of "incomplete" except in the most unusual, extreme circumstances of incapacitating illness, death of family members, or other university-approved excuses. You must provide documentation of such circumstances from a medical doctor, funeral home, or other appropriate authority.

Academic Honor Code

Unless it is specifically connected to assigned collaborative work, all work should be individual. Evidence of collusion (working with someone not connected to the class or assignment), plagiarism (use of someone else's published or unpublished words or design without

acknowledgment) or multiple submissions (submitting the same paper in different courses) will lead to the Department's and the University's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the university's Honor Code (available online at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/students.html>).

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. *Please make any requests by the second week of class.*

UF Counseling Services

Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling
- Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1 (Aug. 24) Introduction and overview

- Expectations—mine and yours
- Teaching and learning in the time of COVID-19

Week 2 (Aug. 31) History and scope of medical anthropology

Required reading

Holtz, T. H., Holmes, S., Stonington, S., & Eisenberg, L. (2006). Health is still social: contemporary examples in the age of the genome. *PLoS Medicine*, 3(10), e419.

Leslie, C. (2001). Backing into the future. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 15(4), 428-439.

Hemmings, C. P. (2005). Rethinking medical anthropology: How anthropology is failing medicine. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 12(2), 91-103.

Sobo, E. (2011). Medical anthropology in disciplinary context: Definitional struggles and key debates (or answering the cri du coeur). In M. Singer & P. I. Erickson (Eds.), *A Companion to Medical Anthropology* (pp. 9-28). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Meek, Laura A.. (2021) "Knowing Better? Epistemological Bounds in MAQ from 1975-2021." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly Reading the Archive Blog Series*, Accessed August 22, 2021. <http://medanthroquarterly.org/?p=1900>.

Briggs, Charles L. 2020. "Beyond the Linguistic/Medical Anthropology Divide: Retooling Anthropology to Face COVID-19." *Medical Anthropology* 39 (7): 563-72.

Further reading

Joralemon, *Exploring Medical Anthropology*

Lieban, R. W. (1977). The field of medical anthropology. In D. Landy (Ed.), *Culture, disease, and healing: studies in medical anthropology*. (pp. 13-31). New York: Macmillan.

Inhorn, M., C. (2007). Medical anthropology at the intersections. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 21(3), 249-255.

Week 3 (Sept. 7) Ecology, adaptation, and evolution

- Biocultural adaptation
- Disease ecology
- Evolutionary medicine

Required reading

Trevathan, W. R., Smith, E. O., & McKenna, J. J. (2007). Introduction and overview of evolutionary medicine. In W. R. Trevathan, E. O. Smith, & J. J. McKenna (Eds.), *Evolutionary Medicine and Health: New Perspectives* (pp. 1-54). New York: Oxford University Press.

Townsend, P. K. (2011). Ecology of disease and health. In M. Singer & P. I. Erickson (Eds.), *A Companion to Medical Anthropology* (pp. 181–197). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

McDermott, R. (1998). Ethics, epidemiology and the thrifty gene: biological determinism as a health hazard. *Social Science and Medicine*, 47(9), 1189-1195.

Singer, M. (1996). Farewell to adaptationism: unnatural selection and the politics of biology. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 10(4), 496-515.

Further reading

Wiley, A. S. (1992). Adaptation and the biocultural paradigm in medical anthropology: a critical review. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 6(3), 216-236.

Nesse, R. M. & Williams, G. C. (1998). Evolution and the origins of disease. *Scientific American*, 279(5), 86-93.

Brown, P. J., Inhorn, M. C., & Smith, D. J. (1996). Disease, ecology, and human behavior. In C. F. Sargent & T. M. Johnson (Eds.), *Handbook of medical anthropology: contemporary theory and method*. (Revised ed., pp. 183-218). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Week 4 (Sept. 14) Culture, political economy, and health

- Critical medical anthropology
- Critical biocultural approaches
- Thinking with the body
- Interpretive and meaning-centered approaches

Required reading

Singer, M., Valentin, F., Baer, H., & Zhongke, J. (1992). Why does Juan Garcia have a drinking problem? The perspective of critical medical anthropology. *Medical Anthropology*, 14(1), 77-108.

McElroy, A. (1996). Should medical ecology be political? *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 10(4), 519-522.

Leatherman, T., & Goodman, A. H. (2011). Critical biocultural approaches in medical anthropology. In M. Singer & P. I. Erickson (Eds.), *A Companion to Medical Anthropology* (pp. 29–48). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lock, M. & Scheper-Hughes, N. (1996). A critical-interpretive approach in medical anthropology: rituals and routines of discipline and dissent. In C. F. Sargent & T. M. Johnson (Eds.), *Handbook of medical anthropology: contemporary theory and method*. (Revised ed., pp. 41-70). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Week 5 (Sept. 21) Medical Anthropology in the Time of COVID-19—Part I

- Integrating theoretical frameworks
- Anthropology *of* and *in* medicine and public health
- Why medical anthropology matters

Required reading

Caduff, Carlo. 2020. "What Went Wrong: Corona and the World after the Full Stop." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34 (4): 467–87.

Ecks, Stefan. 2020. "Multimorbidity, Polyiatrogenesis, and COVID-19." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34 (4): 488–503.

Kirksey, Eben. 2020. "The Emergence of COVID-19: A Multispecies Story." *Anthropology Now* 12 (1): 11–16.

Iskander, Natsha. 2020. "Qatar, the Coronavirus, and Cordons Sanitaires: Migrant Workers and the Use of Public Health Measures to Define the Nation." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34 (4): 561–77.

Gravlee, Clarence C. 2020. "Systemic Racism, Chronic Health Inequities, and COVID -19: A Syndemic in the Making?" *American Journal of Human Biology* 32 (5): e23482.

Oyarzun, Yesmar. 2020. "Plantation Politics, Paranoia, and Public Health on the Frontlines of America's COVID-19 Response." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34 (4): 578–90.

Further reading

Palmquist, Aunchalee E. L., Ifeyinwa V. Asiodu, and Elizabeth A. Quinn. 2020. "The COVID-19 Liquid Gold Rush: Critical Perspectives of Human Milk and SARS-CoV-2 Infection." *American Journal of Human Biology* 32 (5): e23481.

Gomez-Temesio, Veronica. 2020. "Lives That Matter and Others That Don't — American Anthropologist." *American Anthropologist*. July 2, 2020. <https://www.americananthropologist.org/online-content/lives-that-matter-and-others-that-dont-thoughts-from-europe-about-this-new-pandemic>.

Ticktin, Miriam. 2020. "No Borders in the Time of COVID-19." *American Anthropologist*. July 2, 2020. <https://www.americananthropologist.org/online-content/no-borders-in-the-time-of-covid-19>.

Week 6 (Sept. 28) Medical Anthropology in the Time of COVID-19—Part 2

- Integrating theoretical frameworks
- Anthropology of and in medicine and public health
- Why medical anthropology matters

Required reading

Cohen, Lawrence. 2020. "The Culling: Pandemic, Gerocide, Generational Affect." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34 (4): 542–60.

Badone, Ellen. 2021. "From Cruddiness to Catastrophe: COVID-19 and Long-Term Care in Ontario." *Medical Anthropology* 40 (5): 389–403.

Hardy, Lisa J. 2020. "Connection, Contagion, and COVID-19." *Medical Anthropology* 39 (8): 655–59.

Rushforth, Alex, Emma Ladds, Sietse Wieringa, Sharon Taylor, Laiba Husain, and Trisha Greenhalgh. 2021. "Long Covid - The Illness Narratives." *Social Science & Medicine* 286 (August): 114326.

Further reading

Sadrudin, Aalyia Feroz Ali, and Marcia C. Inhorn. 2020. "Aging, Vulnerability and Questions of Care in the Time of COVID-19." *Anthropology Now* 12 (1): 17–23.

Barchas-Lichtenstein, Jena. 2021. "The Limits of Official Statistics." American Anthropologist Online Content. American Anthropologist. April 14, 2021. <https://www.americananthropologist.org/online-content/the-limits-of-official-statistics>.

Chen, Chuan Hao (alex). 2020. "Topologies of the Mask." American Anthropologist. July 2, 2020. <https://www.americananthropologist.org/online-content/topologies-of-the-mask>.

Week 7 (Oct. 5) *Pandemic Perhaps*

Required reading

Caduff, *The Pandemic Perhaps*

Further reading

Caduff, Carlo, and Yarimar Bonilla. 2020. "Covid, Twitter, and Critique — American Anthropologist." American Anthropologist. July 2, 2020. <https://www.americananthropologist.org/online-content/covid-twitter-and-critique-an-interview-with-carlo-caduff>.

Week 8 (Oct. 12) *Lazy, Crazy, Disgusting*

Required reading

Brewis and Wutich, *Lazy, Crazy, and Disgusting*

Further reading

Brewis, Alexandra, Amber Wutich, and Pardis Mahdavi. 2020. "Stigma, Pandemics, and Human Biology: Looking Back, Looking Forward." *American Journal of Human Biology* 32 (5): e23480.

Week 9 (Oct. 19) Embodiment, local biologies, and syndemics

- Embodiment across disciplines
- The *body* in embodiment
- Developmental origins of adult health

Required reading

Lock, M. (1998). Menopause: lessons from anthropology. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 60(4), 410-419.

Niewöhner, Jörg, and Margaret Lock. 2018. "Situating Local Biologies: Anthropological Perspectives on Environment/human Entanglements." *BioSocieties* 13 (4): 681–97.

Krieger, Nancy, and George Davey Smith. 2004. "'Bodies Count,' and Body Counts: Social Epidemiology and Embodying Inequality." *Epidemiologic Reviews* 26 (January): 92–103.

Gravlee, Clarence C. 2009. "How Race Becomes Biology: Embodiment of Social Inequality." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 139 (1): 47–57.

Singer, Merrill, Nicola Bulled, Bayla Ostrach, and Emily Mendenhall. 2017. "Syndemics and the Biosocial Conception of Health." *The Lancet* 389 (10072): 941–50.

Sangaramoorthy, Thurka, and Adia Benton. 2021. "Intersectionality and Syndemics: A Commentary." *Social Science & Medicine*, February, 113783.

Further reading

Willen, S. S., Knipper, M., Abadía-Barrero, C. E., & Davidovitch, N. (2017). Syndemic vulnerability and the right to health. *The Lancet*, 389(10072), 964–977.

Csordas, T. J. (1990). Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology. *Ethos*, 18(1), 5-47.

Krieger, N. (2005). Embodiment: a conceptual glossary for epidemiology. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 59(5), 350-355.

Dressler, W. W. (1995). Modeling biocultural interactions: examples from studies of stress and cardiovascular disease. *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology*, 38, 27-56.

Week 10 (Oct. 26) *Reproductive Injustice*

Required reading

Davis, *Reproductive Injustice*

Week 11 (Nov. 2) *Workshop*

Week 12 (Nov. 9) *Threshold*

Required reading

Jusionyte, *Threshold*

Week 13 (Nov. 16) *Self-Devouring Growth*

Required reading

Livingston, *Self-Devouring Growth*

Week 14 (Nov. 23) *Thanksgiving break—No class*

Week 15 (Nov. 30) *Breathtaking*

Required reading

Kenner, *Breathtaking*

Week 16 (Dec. 7) Presentations