

Medical Anthropology

HUMA 2636

3 credits

Instructor Name: Giulio Ongaro

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Class Schedule: Wednesdays 16:30 –18:20 (Room 4619)

Tutorial Schedule: T1: Fridays 12:30 – 13:20 (LG426)

T2: Fridays 16:30 – 17:20 (LSK1033)

Office Hours: Fridays 13:30 – 15:30 (Room 2354). By appointment.

Course Description

This course explores illness and healing through an anthropological lens. Bipartite in structure, it begins with an introduction to sociocultural anthropology, focusing on its methods and core concepts, including fieldwork, culture, and ‘apparently irrational beliefs’ (weeks 1–3). This foundational knowledge will equip us to engage with the second part (weeks 4–13), which applies anthropological analysis to health and healing. While keeping a focus on the social dimensions of biomedical practice and technology, the course also ventures beyond the biomedical sphere to discuss phenomena such as shamanism, spirit possession, and the efficacy of ritual healing. Each lecture will include insights from the instructor’s own fieldwork on these topics among the Akha people of highland Laos. Through theoretical readings and ethnographic case studies, the course shows how culture and power shape the experience of illness and provides essential tools for understanding the interplay between medicine, health, and society.

The course structure consists of a two-hour lecture and a one-hour tutorial each week. The primary course textbook is *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (1997) by Anne Fadiman. Alongside the required readings, each class will discuss one or two chapters of this book.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Analyze the interplay between culture, society, and medicine with the help of anthropological tools
2. Critically assess the strengths and limitations of biomedicine and alternative medical systems through an anthropological lens
3. Examine the role of power and inequality in shaping illness narrative and health experiences as well as the social and cultural dimensions of caregiving
4. Compare and contrast medical practices and beliefs across cultures, and understand biomedicine in a refined comparative perspective

Assessment and Grading

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided below, outlining the criteria used for evaluation.

Assessments:

Assessment Task	Contribution to Overall Course grade (%)	Due date
Model seminar 1 participation	25%	N/A
Model seminar 2 participation	25%	N/A
Final exam	50%	University's exam period (exam date TBC)

* NOTE: Assessment marks for the final exam will be released within two weeks of the due date.

Mapping of Course ILOs to Assessment Tasks

Assessed Task	Mapped ILOs	Explanation
Participation in model seminar 1 and 2	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	<p>As this is expected to be a large class, arranging standard seminars to discuss readings and test critical thinking and participation is difficult. To overcome this, the course will use a 'Model Seminar' approach to assess participation. Here's how it works:</p> <p>Each week, following a one-hour lecture, a selected group of 8–10 students will come to the front of the class to discuss an assigned reading related to the day's lecture topic during the second hour. The selected group of will change every week. Your participation in the seminar will be assessed based on the following criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Demonstrated understanding of the reading: How well you comprehend the content and main arguments.2. Critical commentary: Your ability to provide thoughtful and analytical insights, especially if you can draw connections to your own experiences, secondary readings, or broader themes.3. Engagement with others: Your ability to respond meaningfully to other participants, pose additional questions,

		<p>and contribute to maintaining the flow of the discussion.</p> <p>While I will guide and prompt the discussion as needed, I expect each participant to actively contribute, share their insights, and engage meaningfully with the conversation.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the rest of the class is expected to listen attentively and take notes.</p> <p>As the seminar concludes, the discussion will be opened to the entire class. Audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions or share their thoughts on the topic. Outstanding contributions from the audience may also be taken into account when assessing participation grades.</p> <p>We will apply the exact same format for our tutorial class—model seminar 2—except that we will have a different article to discuss and a smaller group of discussants (5-8).</p> <p>I expect that by the end of the course each of you will have participated in at least one Model Seminar 1 and one Model Seminar 2.</p>
Final exam	ILO1, ILO2, ILO3, ILO4	<p>The exam will include a set of multiple-choice questions to assess general knowledge of the course topics and a few open-ended questions to evaluate argumentative skills that will test ILO1-4.</p> <p>Full instructions for the exam will be released in week 7</p>

Grading rubric for Model Seminar participation

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A 90-100	Excellent	Consistently contributes to discussions with insightful comments and questions for other participants; encourages participation from others and fosters a collaborative environment. Demonstrates thorough preparation, presenting well-argued perspectives on the readings. Keeps the discussion flowing.
B 80-89	Good	Regularly chips in discussions with relevant comments, showing a good understanding of the course material. Listens to peers and responds appropriately.

C 70-79	Satisfactory	Participates in discussions but may need prompting. Demonstrates basic understanding of the readings. Listens to others but contributes minimally.
D 50-69	Marginal Pass	Rarely participates in discussion. Shows little preparation or understanding of the material.
F 0 - 49	Fail	Barely if ever participates in class discussion. Shows very little to no preparation or understanding of the material.

Grade rubric for final exam

The final exam consists of two sections: **Multiple-Choice Questions** and **Open-Ended Questions**. The grading rubrics below outline how marks are assigned for each section.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Grade	Short Description	Percentage of correct answers
A	Excellent	90-100 %
B	Good	80 – 89%
C	Satisfactory	70 - 79%
D	Marginal Pass	60 – 69%
F	Fail	0 – 59%

Open-Ended Questions

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A 90-100	Excellent	Demonstrates a deep understanding of the topic in question, with insightful and original analysis, and integration of relevant theories. Original answers that show strong research skills and the effective use of a wide range of sources that go beyond the syllabus and the lectures. The answers are persuasively argued, coherent and well-organized.
B 80-90	Good	Shows a solid grasp of the topic. The answers are well-executed, using a variety of sources. They are organized and with clear arguments. Writing is mostly coherent, with few errors.
C 70-80	Satisfactory	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the topic, with limited analysis and minimal integration of theories. The answers are adequate but may rely on fewer sources in support of the arguments therein. There is some organization, but arguments may be unclear.
D 60-70	Marginal Pass	Shows little understanding of the topic, with inadequate analysis and poor integration of theories. Limited use of sources. The answers lack organization, and arguments are unclear. Writing is incoherent, with many errors
F 0-60	Fail	Demonstrates no meaningful understanding of the topic. Lacks analysis, coherence, and use of relevant theories. Answers are disorganized and with unsupported arguments.

		Writing is barely readable, failing to meet basic academic standards.
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NOTE: While this counts as a general grading rubric, please refer to the more specific instructions on the final exam that will be uploaded on Canvas after week 7.

Course AI Policy

The use of AI to prepare both seminar and exam is strongly discouraged because the assignments require students to draw connections across specific case-studies and theories, and to demonstrate independent thinking. Simply put, the more your contribution relies on AI, the less original it will be. Using AI to fix grammar and syntax in preparation for the exam is fine. However, expressing thoughts in your own way, rather than relying on run-of-the-mill AI generated text, will make your writing more interesting.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for the exam will be communicated via Canvas within 2 weeks. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Required Texts and Materials

Throughout the course, students are required to read the entirety of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (1997) by Anne Fadiman, which is freely available on Canvas. One or two chapters of the book will be discussed during each tutorial, alongside the other required reading(s). Both this book and the required readings listed for each week—essential for the Model Seminars—are accessible on Canvas. All the other secondary readings, which can be useful for the Model Seminar and for preparing the final exams, should be easily accessible online or through the library website. Please contact the instructor if you encounter any problem in finding these texts.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST's Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to [Academic Integrity | HKUST – Academic Registry](#) for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

Course outline and readings

WEEK 1. ANTHROPOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

Required readings:

Chapters 1-2 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*.

Model seminar 1: Not happening on week 1.

Model seminar 2: Abu-Lughod, L. (1986). Guest and daughter. In *Veiled sentiments: Honor and poetry in a Bedouin society* (Chapter 1). University of California Press.

Suggested readings:

Singer, M., & Baer, H. (2007). What medical anthropologists do. In *Introducing medical anthropology: A discipline in action* (pp. 35–64). Plymouth, UK: Altamira Press.

Geertz, C. (2008). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In P. Hubbard, R. Kitchin, & G. Valentine (Eds.), *The cultural geography reader* (pp. 41–51). Routledge.

Kleinman, A. (1988). 'The personal and social meanings of illness,' and 'Mini-ethnography'. In *The illness narratives: Suffering, healing, and the human condition* (pp. 31–55; 230–236). New York: Basic Books.

Long, D., Hunter, C. L., & van der Geest, S. (2008). When the field is a ward or a clinic: Hospital ethnography. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 15(2), 71–78.

Malinowski, B. (1922). Introduction. In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Rosaldo, R. (2004). Grief and a headhunter's rage. In A. C. G. M. Robben (Ed.), *Death, mourning, and burial: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 167–178). Blackwell Publishing.

WEEK 2. CULTURE AND EMBODIMENT

Required reading:

Chapters 3-4 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Lock, M. (1993). The politics of mid-life and menopause. In S. Lindenbaum & M. Lock (Eds.), *Knowledge, power, and practice: The anthropology of medicine in everyday life* (pp. 330-363). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Model seminar 2: Frank, G. (1986). On embodiment: A case study of congenital limb deficiency in American culture. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 10(3), 189-219.

Suggested readings:

Bourdieu, P. (1997). Bodily knowledge. In *Pascalian Meditations*, Chap. 4, pp. 138-161.

Conklin, B. A. (1995). "Thus are our bodies, thus was our custom": Mortuary cannibalism in an Amazonian society. *American Ethnologist*, 22(1), 75-101.

Csordas, T. J. (2002). Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology. In *Body/Meaning/Healing* (pp. 58-87). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Csordas, T. (1993). Somatic modes of attention. *Cultural Anthropology*, 8(2), 135-156.

Das, V., and R. K. Das. 2007. "How the Body Speaks: Illness and the Lifeworld of the Urban Poor." In *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, edited by J. Biehl, B. Good, and A. Kleinman, 66–97. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Geertz, C. (1972). Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight. *Daedalus*, 101(1), 1-37.

Henry, D. 2006. "Violence and the Body: Somatic Expressions of Trauma and Vulnerability During War." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 20(3): 379–398.

Lock, M. (1986). Ambiguities of aging: Japanese experience and perceptions of menopause. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 10(1), 23-46.

Lock, M. (1993). Cultivating the body: Anthropology and epistemologies of bodily practice and knowledge. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 22, 133-155.

Lock, M., & Kaufert, P. (2001). Menopause, local biologies, and cultures of aging. *American Journal of Human Biology*, 13(4), 494-504.

Mauss, M. (1973). Techniques of the body. *Economy and Society*, 2(1), 70-88.

Scheper-Hughes, N., & Lock, M. M. (1987). The mindful body: A prolegomenon to future work in medical anthropology. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 1(1), 6-41.

Throop, C. J. (2017). Despairing moods: Worldly attunements and permeable personhood in Yap. *Ethos*, 45(2), 199-215.

WEEK 3. APPARENTLY IRRATIONAL BELIEFS

Required readings:

Chapter 5 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Favret-Saada, J. (1980). *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Model seminar 2: Lewis, G. (2024). Revealed by illness: aspects of the Gnau people's world and their perception of it. In *Cosmos and society in Oceania* (pp. 165-188). Routledge.

Suggested readings:

Amrami, G. P. (2016). Competing etiologies of trauma and the mediation of political suffering: The disengagement from the Gaza Strip and West Bank in secular and religious therapeutic narratives. *Ethos*, 44(3), 289-312.

Benedict, R. (1934). Anthropology and the abnormal. *Journal of General Psychology*, 10, 59-80.

Comaroff, J. (1980). Healing and the cultural order: The case of the Barolong boo Ratshidi of southern Africa. *American Ethnologist*, 7(4), 637-657.

Erickson, B. E. (2007). Toxin or medicine? Explanatory models of radon in Montana health mines. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 21(1), 1-21.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. ([1937] 2010). The notion of witchcraft explains unfortunate events. In B. Good et al. (Eds.), *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities* (pp. 18-25). New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

Foster, G. M. (1976). Disease etiologies in non-Western medical systems. *American Anthropologist*, 78, 773-782.

Good, B. (1994). Medical anthropology and the problem of belief. In *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience* (pp. 1-24). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hallowell, I. A. (1955). The Ojibwa self and its behavioural environment. In *Culture and Experience* (pp. 172-182). New York: Schocken Books.

Janzen, J. M. (1978). The comparative study of medical systems as changing social systems. *Social Science & Medicine. Part B: Medical Anthropology*, 12, 121-129.

Kamat, V. (2009). Cultural interpretation of the efficacy and side effects of antimalarials in Tanzania. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 16(3), 279-292.

Kleinman, A. (2022). Indigenous systems of healing: Questions for professional, popular, and folk care. In *Alternative Medicines* (pp. 138-164). Routledge.

Lindenbaum, S. (1979). *Kuru Sorcery*. Mayfield Publishing.

Ongaro, G. (2024). Outline for an externalist psychiatry (2): an anthropological detour. *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, 31(3), 285-300.

Rivers, W. H. R. ([1926] 2010). Massage in Melanesia. In B. Good et al. (Eds.), *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities* (pp. 16-17). New York: Wiley-Blackwell.

WEEK 4. THE BIOMEDICAL ONTOLOGY

Required readings:

Chapter 6 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Good, B. 1993. "Learning Medicine': The Construction of Medical Education at Harvard Medical School." In *Knowledge, Power, and Practice: The Anthropology of Medicine and Everyday Life*, edited by S. Lindenbaum and M. Lock. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Model seminar 2: Mol, A. 2003. *The Body Multiple*. Durham: Duke University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Suggested readings:

Browner, C. H., and N. Press. 1996. "The Production of Authoritative Knowledge in American Prenatal Care." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 10(2): 141–156.

Dumes, A. A. 2020. "Lyme Disease and the Epistemic Tensions of 'Medically Unexplained Illnesses.'" *Medical Anthropology*, 39(6): 441–456.

Good, B. 1994. "How Medicine Constructs Its Objects." In *Medicine, Rationality, and Experience*, 65–87. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gordon, D. R. 1988. "Tenacious Assumptions in Western Medicine." In *Biomedicine Examined*, 19–56. Dordrecht: Springer.

Kleinman, A. 1995. "What Is Specific to Biomedicine?" In *Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine*, 21–40. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lock, M. M., & Nguyen, V. K. (2018). *An anthropology of biomedicine*. John Wiley & Sons.

Luhrmann, T. M. 2000. *Of Two Minds: The Growing Disorder in American Psychiatry*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Mol, A. 2000. "Pathology and the Clinic: An Ethnographic Presentation of Two Atheroscleroses." In *Intersections: Living and Working with the New Medical Technologies*, edited by M. Lock, A. Young, and A. Cambrosio, 82–102. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salhi, B. 2016. "Beyond the Doctor's White Coat: Science, Ritual, and Healing in American Biomedicine." In *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*, 204–212. New York: Routledge.

Street, A. 2016. "The Hospital and the Hospital: Infrastructure, Human Tissue, Labour and the Scientific Production of Relational Value." *Social Studies of Science*, 46(6): 938–960.

WEEK 5. BIOPOLITICS AND MEDICALIZATION

Required readings:

Chapter 7 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Watters, E. 2010. "The Rise of Anorexia in Hong Kong." In *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche*, 1–30. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Model seminar 2: Zeiderman, A. 2013. "Living Dangerously: Biopolitics and Urban Citizenship in Bogotá, Colombia." *American Ethnologist* 40(1): 71–87

Suggested readings:

Behrouzan, O. 2020. *Prozak Diaries: Psychiatry and Generational Memory in Iran*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Introduction and Chapter 1.

Biehl, J. 2013. "The Judicialization of Biopolitics: Claiming the Right to Pharmaceuticals in Brazilian Courts." *American Ethnologist* 40(3): 419–436.

Conrad, P., and D. Potter. 2000. "From Hyperactive Children to ADHD Adults: Observations on the Expansion of Medical Categories." *Social Problems* 47(4): 559–582.

Ecks, S. 2005. "Pharmaceutical Citizenship: Antidepressant Marketing and the Promise of Demarginalization in India." *Anthropology & Medicine* 12(3): 239–254.

Feierman, S., A. Kleinman, K. Stewart, P. Farmer, and V. Das. 2010. "Anthropology, Knowledge-Flows and Global Health." *Global Public Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice* 5(2): 122–128.

Foucault, M. 1973. *The Birth of the Clinic*. London: Tavistock Publications. Chapter 1

Hanna, Bridget, and Arthur Kleinman. 2013. "Unpacking Global Health." In *Reimagining Global Health: An Introduction*, edited by Paul Farmer, Jim Yong Kim, Arthur Kleinman, and Matthew Basilico, 15–32. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Illich, Ivan. 1976. "The Medicalization of Life." In *Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis, the Expropriation of Health*, 39–48. London: Marion Boyars.

Lang, Claudia, and Eva Jansen. 2013. "Appropriating Depression: Biomedicalizing Ayurvedic Psychiatry in Kerala, India." *Medical Anthropology* 32(1): 25–45.

Marsland, R., and R. Prince. 2012. "What Is Life Worth? Exploring Biomedical Interventions, Survival, and the Politics of Life." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 26(4): 453–469.

Martin, Emily. 2006. "The Pharmaceutical Person." *BioSocieties* 1(3): 273–287.

Rogers, E. L. 2022. "Recursive Debility: Symptoms, Patient Activism, and the Incomplete Medicalization of ME/CFS." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 36: 412–428.

Young, A. 1993. "A Description of How Ideology Shapes Knowledge of a Mental Disorder (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder)." In *Knowledge, Power, and Practice: The Anthropology of Medicine in Everyday Life*, edited by S. Lindenbaum and M. Lock, 108–128. Berkeley: University of California Press.

WEEK 6. ILLNESS NARRATIVES AND IDIOMS OF DISTRESS

Required reading:

Chapters 8-9 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Yarris, K. 2011. "The Pain of 'Thinking Too Much': Dolor de Cerebro and the Embodiment of Social Hardship among Nicaraguan Women." *Ethos*, 39: 226–248.

Model seminar 2: Jain, S. L. 2007. "Cancer Butch." *Cultural Anthropology*, 22(4): 501–538.

Suggested readings:

Good, B. J. 1977. "The Heart of What's the Matter: The Semantics of Illness in Iran." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 1: 25–58.

Banks, C. G. 1992. "'Culture' in Culture-Bound Syndromes: The Case of Anorexia Nervosa." *Social Science & Medicine*, 34(8): 867–884.

- Biehl, J., and A. Moran-Thomas. 2009. "Symptom: Subjectivities, Social Ills, Technologies." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 38: 267–288.
- Hamdy, S. F. 2008. "When the State and Your Kidneys Fail: Political Etiologies in an Egyptian Dialysis Ward." *American Ethnologist*, 35(4): 553–569
- Kaiser, B. N., and L. J. Weaver. 2019. "Culture-Bound Syndromes, Idioms of Distress, and Cultural Concepts of Distress: New Directions for an Old Concept in Psychological Anthropology." *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 56: 589–598.
- Kleinman, A. 1988. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition*. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–30). New York: Basic Books.
- Mattingly, C. (1994). The concept of therapeutic 'emplotment'. *Social science & medicine*, 38(6), 811-822.
- Nichter, M. 1981. "Idioms of Distress: Alternatives in the Expression of Psychosocial Distress: A Case Study from South India." *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 5: 379–408.
- Oths, K. S. 1999. "Debilidad: A Biocultural Assessment of an Embodied Andean Illness." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 13(3): 286–315.
- Simpson, N. 2023. "Ghar ki Tension: Domesticity and Distress in India's Aspiring Middle Class." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 29: 573–592.
- Singh, B., and P. Sharan. 2022. "The Contagion of Mental Illness: Insights from a Sufi Shrine." *Transcultural Psychiatry*.

WEEK 7. PLACEBO EFFECTS AND RITUAL HEALING

Required readings:

Chapter 10 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Lévi-Strauss, C. (1967). The sorcerer and his magic. In *Structural Anthropology* (pp. 167–185). New York: Anchor Books.

Model seminar 2: Chao, E. (1999). The Maoist shaman and the madman: Ritual bricolage, failed ritual, and failed ritual theory. *Cultural Anthropology*, 14(4), 505–534.

Suggested readings:

Csordas, T. J. (1988). Elements of charismatic persuasion and healing. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 2(2), 121–142.

Desjarlais, R. (1992). *Body and Emotion: The Aesthetics of Illness and Healing in Nepal*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Favret-Saada, J. (1989). Unbewitching as therapy. *American Ethnologist*, 16(1), 40–56.

Henkel, H. (2005). 'Between belief and unbelief lies the performance of salāt': Meaning and efficacy of a Muslim ritual. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 11(3), 487–507.

Kirmayer, L. J. (1993). Healing and the invention of metaphor: The effectiveness of symbols revisited. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 17(2), 161–195.

Kleinman, A., & Sung, L. (1979). Why do indigenous practitioners successfully heal? *Social Sciences and Medicine*, 13B, 7–26.

Laderman, C. (1987). The ambiguity of symbols in the structure of healing. *Social Science & Medicine*, 24(4), 293–301.

- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1963). The effectiveness of symbols. In *Structural Anthropology* (pp. 181–201). New York: Anchor Books.
- Moerman, D. E. (2002). *Meaning, medicine, and the 'placebo effect.'* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moerman, D. E., & Jonas, W. B. (2002). Deconstructing the placebo effect and finding the meaning response. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 136(6), 471–476.
- Ongaro, G., & Kaptchuk, T. J. (2019). Symptom perception, placebo effects, and the Bayesian brain. *PAIN*, 160(1), 1–4.
- Ostenfeld-Rosenthal, A.M. (2012). Energy healing and the placebo effect: An anthropological perspective on the placebo effect. *Anthropology & Medicine*, 19(3), 327–338.
- Thompson, J. J., Ritenbaugh, C., & Nichter, M. (2009). Reconsidering the placebo response from a broad anthropological perspective. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 33(1), 112–152.

WEEK 8 SPIRIT POSSESSION AND SHAMANISM

Required reading:

Chapter 11 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Boddy, J. (1988). Spirits and selves in Northern Sudan: The cultural therapeutics of possession and trance. *American Ethnologist*, 15(1), 4–27.

Model seminar 2: Chapin, B. L. (2008). Transforming possession: Josephine and the work of culture. *Ethos*, 36(2), 220–245.

Suggested readings:

De Castro, E. V. (2007). The crystal forest: Notes on the ontology of Amazonian spirits. *Inner Asia*, 9(2), 153–172.

Dupuis, D. (2022). The psychedelic ritual as a technique of the self: identity reconfiguration and narrative reframing in the therapeutic efficacy of ayahuasca. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 12(1), 198–216.

Furst, P. T. (1972). To find our life: Peyote among the Huichol Indians of Mexico. In P. T. Furst (Ed.), *Flesh of the Gods* (pp. 136–178). New York, NY: Praeger Publishers.

Kopenawa, D., & Albert, B. (2023). *The falling sky: Words of a Yanomami shaman*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Luhrmann, T. M., Dulin, J., & Dzokoto, V. (2023). The shaman and schizophrenia, revisited. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*, 1–28.

Ongaro, G. (2025). 'When new shamans enter the stage: ecstatic healing and the neutralization of messianism among Akha in northwestern Laos'. In Stolz R. & Lutz P. D. (eds.) *Being Present: Emerging Ethnographic Perspectives and the Study of Laos*. NUS Press

Stephan, V. (2010). *Singing to the plants: A guide to mestizo shamanism in the upper Amazon*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press. Chapter 23.

Taussig, M. (1980). Reification and the consciousness of the patient. *Social Science and Medicine*, 14B, 3–13.

Taussig, M. T. (1987). *Shamanism, colonialism and the wild man: A study of terror and healing*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Turner, V. (1967). A Ndembu doctor in practice. In *The Forest of Symbols* (pp. 359–393). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

- Wallace, A. F. (1958). Dreams and the wishes of the soul: A type of psychoanalytic theory among the seventeenth-century Iroquois. *American Anthropologist*, 60(2), 234–248.
- Waldram, J. B. (2013). Transformative and restorative processes: Revisiting the question of efficacy of Indigenous healing. *Medical Anthropology*, 32(3), 191–207.
- Wolf, M. (1990). The woman who didn't become a shaman. *American Ethnologist*, 17(3), 419–430.

WEEK 9. CULTURAL PSYCHIATRY IN CHINA

Cultural psychiatry in China

Required readings:

Chapters 12-13 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Ng, E. 2020. “The Mind and the Devil: Porosity and Discernment in Two Chinese Charismatic-Style Churches.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 26(S1): 95–113.

Model seminar 2: Lin, Z. 2025. “Will Tomorrow Be Better? The Moral Experiments of Three Women with Mental Illness.” *Social Science & Medicine* 367: 117750.

Suggested readings:

Barnes, L. 1998. “The Psychologizing of Chinese Healing Practices in the United States.” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 22: 413–443.

Baum, E. 2019. *The Invention of Madness: State, Society, and the Insane in Modern China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Introduction and Chapter 7.

Bram, B. 2021. “Troubling Emotions in China’s Psy-Boom.” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 11(3): 915–927.

Chen, N. N. *Breathing Spaces: Qigong, Psychiatry, and Healing in China*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Farquhar, J. 1991. “Objects, Processes, and Female Infertility in Chinese Medicine.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 5(4): 370–399.

Farquhar, J. 2023. “Eating Chinese Medicine.” In *People’s Republic of China, Volumes I and II*, 479. London: Routledge.

Farquhar, J. 2018. *Knowing Practice: The Clinical Encounter of Chinese Medicine*. London: Routledge.

Kleinman, A., and J. Kleinman. 1985. “Somatization: The Interconnections in Chinese Society Among Culture, Depressive Experiences, and the Meaning of Pain.” In *Culture and Depression: Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder*, edited by A. Kleinman and B. Good, 429–490. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kuriyama, S. 1994. “The Imagination of Winds and the Development of the Chinese Conceptions of the Body.” In *Body, Subject, and Power in China*, edited by A. Zito and T. E. Barlow, 23–41. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee, S. 1999. “Diagnosis Postponed: Shenjing Shairuo and the Transformation of Psychiatry in Post-Mao China.” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 23(3): 349–380.

Ots, T. 1990. “The Angry Liver, the Anxious Heart, and the Melancholy Spleen: The Phenomenology of Perceptions in Chinese Culture.” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 14: 21–58.

Yang, J. 2017. *Mental Health in China: Change, Tradition, and Therapeutic Governance*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Zhang, L. 2018. "Cultivating the Therapeutic Self in China." *Medical Anthropology* 37(1): 45–58.

WEEK 10. REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Required readings:

Chapter 14 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Weston, K. 1997. Chapters 2 and 7–8 of *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. Columbia University Press.

Model seminar 2: Inhorn, M. C., D. Birenbaum-Carmeli, R. Yu, and P. Patrizio. 2022. "Egg freezing at the end of romance: A technology of hope, despair, and repair." *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 47(1): 53–84.

Suggested readings:

Carsten, J. 2004. Chapter 7 (pp. 163–183) of *After Kinship*. Cambridge University Press.

Clarke, M. 2007. "Closeness in the age of mechanical reproduction: Debating kinship and biomedicine in Lebanon and the Middle East." *Anthropological Quarterly* 80(2): 379–402.

Cromer, R. 2023. *Conceiving Christian America: Embryo Adoption and Reproductive Politics*. New York: NYU Press. (Ch. 1, Ch. 5, and pp. 71–73 from Ch. 3).

Dempsey, D. 2013. "Surrogacy, gay male couples and the significance of biogenetic paternity." *New Genetics and Society* 32(1): 37–53.

Falu, N., and C. Craven. 2024. "Queer reproductive futures." Chapter 12 in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Reproductive Medicine and Technology*, edited by C. C. Van Hollen and N. S. Appleton.

Inhorn, M. C. 2003. "Global infertility and the globalization of new reproductive technologies: Illustrations from Egypt." *Social Science & Medicine* 56(9): 1837–1851.

Inhorn, M. C., and D. Birenbaum-Carmeli. 2008. "Assisted reproductive technologies and culture change." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 37(1): 177–196.

Jordan, B. 1993. Chapter 6, "The achievement of authoritative knowledge in an American hospital birth." In *Birth in Four Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Investigation of Childbirth in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States*, 151–168. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press.

Kahn, S. M. 2002. "Rabbis and reproduction: The uses of new reproductive technologies among ultraorthodox Jews in Israel." In *Infertility Around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies*, edited by M. Inhorn and F. Van Balen, 283–297. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Majumdar, A. 2023. "Conceptualizing surrogacy." Chapter 24 in *A Companion to the Anthropology of Reproductive Medicine and Technology*, edited by C. C. Van Hollen and N. S. Appleton.

Martin, E. 1991. "The egg and the sperm: How science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16(3): 485–501.

Mishtal, J. 2009. "Matters of conscience: The politics of reproductive healthcare in Poland." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 23(2): 161–183.

Strathern, M. 1992. Chapter 1 of *Reproducing the Future: Essays on Anthropology, Kinship and the New Reproductive Technologies*. Manchester University Press.

WEEK 11. STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Required readings:

Chapter 15 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Desjarlais, R. 1994. "Struggling Along: The Possibilities for Experience Among the Homeless Mentally Ill." *American Anthropologist* 96(4): 886–901.

Model seminar 2: Scheper-Hughes, N. 2023. Chapter 5, "Nervoso." In *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Suggested readings:

Berlant, L. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Chapter 3: Slow Death (Obesity, Sovereignty, Lateral Agency), 95–121.

Biehl, J. 2004. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Browne, A. J. 2007. "Clinical Encounters Between Nurses and First Nations Women in a Western Canadian Hospital." *Social Science & Medicine* 64: 2165–2176.

Caple James, E. 2015. "Culture, Trauma, and the Social Life of 'PTSD' in Haiti." In *Culture and PTSD*, edited by D. Hinton and B. Good, 359–386. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Farmer, P. 2004. "An Anthropology of Structural Violence." *Current Anthropology* 45(3): 305–325. (See Farmer's response on p. 323).

Fanon, F. 2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press. Chapters 1 and 2.

Fassin, D. 2007. "Critical Evidence: The Politics of Trauma in French Asylum Politics." *Ethos* 35(3): 300–329.

Fassin, D. 2025. *Moral Abdication: How the World Failed to Stop the Destruction of Gaza*. London: Verso Books.

Hansen, H., P. Bourgois, and E. Drucker. 2014. "Pathologizing Poverty: New Forms of Diagnosis, Disability, and Structural Stigma Under Welfare Reform." *Social Science & Medicine* 103: 76–83.

Luhrmann, T. M. 2007. "Social Defeat and the Culture of Chronicity: Or, Why Schizophrenia Does so Well Over There and so Badly Here." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 31(2): 135–172.

Pfeiffer, J., and R. Chapman. 2010. "Anthropological Perspectives on Structural Adjustment and Public Health." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39: 149–165.

Rock, M. 2003. "Sweet Blood and Social Suffering: Rethinking Cause-Effect Relationships in Diabetes, Distress, and Duress." *Medical Anthropology* 22(2): 131–174.

Scheper-Hughes, N. 2004. "Parts Unknown: Undercover Ethnography of the Organs-Trafficking Underworld." *Ethnography* 5(1): 29–73.

Smith, L., M. R. Anderson, and V. W. Sidel. 2005. "What Is Social Medicine?" *Monthly Review* 56(8).

Yates-Doerr, E. 2020. "Reworking the Social Determinants of Health: Responding to Material-Semiotic Indeterminacy in Public Health Interventions." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34(3): 378–397.

WEEK 12. CARE TAKING**Required reading:**

Chapters 16-17 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Aulino, F. 2016. "Rituals of Care for the Elderly in Northern Thailand: Merit, Morality, and the Everyday of Long-Term Care." *American Ethnologist* 43(1): 91–102.

Model seminar 2: Yates-Doerr, E., and M. A. Carney. 2016. "Demedicalizing Health: The Kitchen as a Site of Care." *Medical Anthropology* 35(4): 305–321.

Suggested readings:

Berry, N. 2008. "Who's Judging the Quality of Care? Indigenous Maya and the Problem of 'Not Being Attended.'" *Medical Anthropology* 27(2): 164–189.

Buch, E. 2015. "Anthropology of Aging and Care." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44: 277–293.

Buch, E. D. 2013. "Senses of Care: Embodying Inequality and Sustaining Personhood in the Home Care of Older Adults in Chicago." *American Ethnologist* 40(4): 637–650.

Downe, P. J. 2020. "The Hospital is Haunted: Maternal Health, Pandemics, and Collective Care Among Indigenous Women Affected by HIV." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*.

Fassin, D. 2008. "The Elementary Forms of Care: An Empirical Approach to Ethics in a South African Hospital." *Social Science & Medicine* 67: 262–270.

Han, C. 2012. *Life in Debt: Times of Care and Violence in Neoliberal Chile*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Kleinman, A. 2012. "Caregiving as Moral Experience." *Lancet* 380(9853): 1550–1551.

———. 2020. "Varieties of Experiences of Care." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 63(3): 458–465.

Mol, A. 2008. *The Logic of Care: Health and the Problem of Patient Choice*. London: Routledge. Chapters 1–2, 6.

Ongaro, G. Forthcoming. "'Whose Tribalism?'" In *New Questions of Anthropology*, edited by A. Gutierrez and F. Musallam. London School of Economics. *Social Anthropology Monographs*. LSE Press.

Simpson, N. 2022. "Kamzori: Aging, Care, and Alienation in the Post-Pastoral Himalaya." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 36: 391–411.

Stevenson, L. 2014. *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Taylor, J. 2008. "On Recognition, Caring, and Dementia." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 22(4): 313–335.

Trout, L., and L. Wexler. 2020. "Arctic Suicide, Social Medicine, and the Purview of Care in Global Mental Health." *Health and Human Rights* 22(1): 77.

Yates-Doerr, E. 2012. "The Weight of the Self: Care and Compassion in Guatemalan Dietary Choices." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 26(1): 136–158.

WEEK 13. PLANETARY HEALTH

Required readings:

Chapters 18-19 *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

Model seminar 1: Nading, A. 2012. "Dengue Mosquitoes Are Single Mothers: Biopolitics Meets Ecological Aesthetics in Nicaraguan Community Health Work." *Cultural Anthropology* 27: 572–596.

Model seminar 2: Moran-Thomas, A. (2019). (Chapters 1-2-3 in Part 1) *Traveling with sugar: chronicles of a global epidemic*. University of California Press.

Suggested readings:

Albrecht, G. (2005). 'Solastalgia'. A new concept in health and identity. *PAN: philosophy activism nature*, (3), 41-55.

Cartwright, E. 2019. "The Medical Anthropology of Climate Change: Eco-Risks and the Body Environmental." *Medical Anthropology* 38(5): 436–439.

Fearnley, L. 2020. *Virulent Zones: Animal Disease and Global Health at China's Pandemic Epicenter*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Horton, R., Beaglehole, R., Bonita, R., Raeburn, J., McKee, M., & Wall, S. (2014). From public to planetary health: a manifesto. *The Lancet*, 383(9920), 847.

Jörg, N., and M. Lock. 2018. "Situating Local Biologies: Anthropological Perspectives on Environment/Human Entanglements." *BioSocieties* 13(4): 681–697.

Lamoreaux, J. (2019). "Swimming in Poison": Reimagining Endocrine Disruption through China's Environmental Hormones. *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, 8(1), 195-223.

Lou, L. I. T. (2022). The art of unnoticing: Risk perception and contrived ignorance in China. *American Ethnologist*, 49(4), 580-594.

Manderson, L., and S. Levine. 2020. "COVID-19, Risk, Fear, and Fall-Out." *Medical Anthropology* 39(5): 367–370.

Nading, A. 2020. "Living in a Toxic World." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 49: 209–224.

Oyarzun, Y. 2020. "Plantation Politics, Paranoia, and Public Health on the Frontlines of America's COVID-19 Response." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 34(4): 578–590.

Shapiro, N. 2015. "Attuning to the Chemosphere: Domestic Formaldehyde, Bodily Reasoning, and the Chemical Sublime." *Cultural Anthropology* 30(3): 368–393.

Singer, M., Hasemann, J., & Raynor, A. (2016). "I feel suffocated:" Understandings of climate change in an inner city heat island. *Medical anthropology*, 35(6), 453-463.

Singer, M., and S. Clair. 2003. "Syndemics and Public Health: Reconceptualizing Disease in Bio-Social Context." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 17(4): 423–441.

Wardell, S. 2020. "The Naming and Framing of Ecological Distress." *Medical Anthropology Theory*.