Converst, Critics and Interlocutors:
Locating Medical Anthropology in Theory and Practice

Anthropology 615 (CRN 17661)
FALL 2020
Prof. Sandra Teresa Hyde

Lecture and Discussion - Wednesdays 9am-11:15am on Livestream Zoom
Office Hours – After class in Parc Jeanne Mance (coin Mt Royal and Rue Jeanne Mance) or sign up on Google doc appointments TRs 3-5pm

OVERVIEW
Social scientists have investigated and responded to studies of illness, suffering, healing and recovery, incorporating how these contexts shape aspects of our lived experience from the local to the global. With the aim of understanding the complexities of such configurations in cultural, biological and technological processes, this course is designed to introduce a range of theoretical approaches that focus on just what the ethnographic is in medical anthropology. In addition to asking how we might practice and write ethnography, we look beyond ethnography as a method so as to consider how communities and their critics have shaped medical anthropology’s theories and practices. Unlike more quantitative methods, ethnographic research is less defined and leads to a diverse set of expectations, complexities, and contradictions; the knowledge it produces is both a way of knowing (epistemological) and a way of being (ontological). Ethnography can be experimental, embodied, empathetic, and it leads us to what Clifford Geertz in 1974 described as “how we explain ourselves to ourselves”. We will examine recent ethnographic work on: global health and science and technology studies; the anthropology of addiction; environmental violence; sex, trauma, aid and dehumanization; the anthropology of pandemics; rethinking kinship; the anthropology of grief; and most of all, writing ethnography.

As a graduate seminar, this course moves through seven multi-disciplinary ethnographies, bridging the fields of medical and sociocultural anthropology, urban studies, history, philosophy, poetry and public health. The first part of the course is devoted to a genealogical view of the field, then to the long durée view of how anthropologists began to first question health and healing in the historical context of Margaret Mead’s work in the South Pacific in the 1920s, through post-war industrial society to philosophical reflections on the production of medical knowledge and the alleviation of human
suffering. The course pivots around three key approaches: critically interpretive medical anthropology, public anthropology, and science and technology studies.

COURSE GOALS

- We will engage with theoretical and ethnographic concerns at the intersection of medical anthropology, urban studies, sociocultural anthropology, science and technology studies, philosophy, history and public health.
- To position certain debates within larger historical frameworks, such as the debate on genital cutting.
- To move through ethnographic writing in order to comprehend its sub-fields and debates in global sites of inquiry in North America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and Europe.
- This course is open to graduate students and U3/U4s who have completed the Medical Anthropology course series. For this COVID term, there will be no auditors.

CLASS FORMAT

During the Fall 2020 semester, the course will be offered over livestream zoom. We will not try to reproduce the in-person classroom experience; instead we will work together to create a lively and productive atmosphere for thought and exchange online. We will meet over Livestream Zoom and that link will be on the MyCourses for ANTH 615.

The class will begin with a mini-lecture where I link the readings and themes to central questions in medical anthropology. We will take a short coffee/tea break. And when we return, students will begin reading their downloaded précis, from MyCourses assignment tool, in order to then launch into a fruitful and engaging online discussion. Finally, we will wrap up and discuss plans for the coming week.

The breakdown of class time (keeping in mind fluidity and flexibility):

- 9-9:05 Introduction, announcements, housekeeping
- 9:05-9:45 Mini-Lecture
- 9:45-9:50 Short break
- 9:50-11:10 Read each other’s précis and launch into a discussion
- 11:10 -11:15 Wrap-up and plan for the following week

READINGS

Books will be available in 2 formats, as an E-book through McGill Worldcat or McLennan library and links are also provided on this syllabus, OR as a hard copy through Paragraphe Books on 2220 McGill College (https://paragraphbooks.com/collections/textbooks/ANTH). All supplemental and optional readings are available online on MyCourses.


Hodžić, Saida. 2017. The Twilight of Cutting: African Activism and Life After NGOs, Berkeley, CA:
WEEK 1: SEPTEMBER 9

INTRODUCTION, LOGISTICS, FOOD FOR THOUGHT

WEEK 2: SEPTEMBER 16

ETHNOGRAPHY IS AND ETHNOGRAPHY AIN’T


WEEK 3: SEPTEMBER 23

WHAT IT MEANS TO WRITE MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

♦ Margaret Caffrey and Patricia Francis. 2006. To Cherish the Life of the World: Selected Letters of Margaret Mead – Forward and Introduction xiii-xxxiii (skim)

WEEK 4: SEPTEMBER 30

ANTHROPOLOGY OF POSTCOLONIALISM, PRECARITY AND GLOBAL HEALTH


WEEK 5: OCTOBER 7

RETHINKING URBAN ETHNOGRAPHY AND MASCULINITY

WEEK 6: OCTOBER 14 - No class for Thanksgiving Break – please start reading Hodzic and Murphy Article

WEEK 7: OCTOBER 21  ANTHROPOLOGY OF GOVERNMENTALITY, FEMINISM AND WOMEN’S BODIES
♦ Michelle Murphy, 2015. Unsettling Care: Troubling Transnational Itineraries of Care in Feminist Health Practices Social Studies of Science Vol. 45(5) 717–737

Supplemental:
♦ https://culanth.org/fieldsights/388-saida-hodzic-on-global-health-governance - AnthroPod cast with Prof. Saida Hodzic

WEEK 8: OCTOBER 28  PUBLIC HEALTH, STS AND PANDEMICS

WEEK 9: NOVEMBER 4  LIMITS OF WRITING LIFE AND DEATH

WEEK 10: NOVEMBER 11  ANTHROPOLOGY OF GRIEF
♦ In conversation with Manchester University Group in Debates in Anthropological Theory – “There is no such thing as the good,” 2013.

WEEK 11/12: NOVEMBER 18 & 25 RETHINKING KINSHIP IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY
Supplemental:

**REQUIREMENTS**

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<tr>
<th>Précis</th>
<th>75%</th>
<th>(7) 2 Page précis (single-spaced, maximum 1000 words), that is a reaction paper zeroing in on your questions and points of clarification that serves as a comparison of the readings.</th>
<th>Due 7/12 weeks before class on MyCourses Assignment tool – these will be shared and read by all of us before we begin discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>(1) Active participation</td>
<td>Every week online</td>
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**PARTICIPATION AND WEEKLY PRÉCIS: 75%**
Your participation grade will be determined by your weekly seminar participation (25%) in combination with your seven 1000-word max. weekly précis (75%). Please come to class having uploaded your précis to the assignment tool on MyCourses.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

**ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** I do my best to accommodate students with disabilities. If this pertains to you, I encourage you to contact the Office for Students with Disabilities (514-398-6009 or 1010 Sherbrooke Ouest, suite 410) so that we can provide the necessary accommodations as soon as possible. ([https://www.mcgill.ca/osd](https://www.mcgill.ca/osd)).

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) ([http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)) Please note the syllabus may also change in accordance with the needs of the students taking this class.

**WRITTEN LANGUAGES:** In accordance with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students have the right to submit all written assignments in English or in **French**.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT:** McGill University is located on unceded indigenous territory. The Kanien’kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of territory and waters on which McGill stands. Tiotiá:ke/Montreal is historically a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population and we respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationship with the Indigenous and diverse populations that live here.