

## Topics in Medical Anthropology (ANTH 438)

# Aftermaths, Afterlives

Fall 2020

Meeting time: Fridays 11:30—14:30

Location: Remote teaching

Professor Todd Meyers

Email address: **TBA**

Office location: 3647 Peel Street

Office hours via Zoom: Fridays 15:30—17:30 and by appointment

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### Course Description

*Topics in Medical Anthropology* focuses on the concepts of *aftermaths* and *afterlives* as a way to explore what emerges in the wake of an event and the traces left behind. Two questions guide course inquiry: “what is life in aftermath?” and “what new and inventive forms of living might we find there?” The course considers the topic in anthropological and historical perspective. The readings and lectures invite students to consider *aftermaths* and *afterlives* at the levels of the therapeutic, traumatic, atmospheric, and embodied.

### Class Format

During the Fall 2020 semester, the course will be offered remotely. 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 **Zoom**. Each week I will send a secured link to the group. The class will begin with a lecture in which I tie the readings to central questions of the course. After a short break, students will divide into pre-assigned break out groups of no more than six students each. I will provide guiding questions to help facilitate discussion. During the break out sessions, I will pop in and out of the groups and join in the small group discussions. After a second short break, we will reconvene as a class and representatives of the break out groups will highlight parts of their small group discussion. Not every group member is expected to report each time, but by the end of the semester I would like everyone to have added to the larger class discussion. Finally, we will wrap up and discuss plans for the coming week.

The breakdown of our class time is as follows:

11:30-11:40	Introduction, general housekeeping, outline of class
11:40-12:10	Lecture
12:10-12:15	Short break
12:15-13:15	Break out sessions
13:15-13:20	Short break
13:20-14:20	Discussion and Presentation from break our groups
14:20-14:30	Wrap-up and planning for the following week

## **Coursework, Assessment, and Expectations**

Each week students will write a 500-word précis on the weekly readings. Each student will meet 1:1 via Zoom with the professor once every two weeks. This is in addition to (not a substitute for) office hours. A schedule of open 1:1 meeting times will be shared via Google doc. The meetings are an opportunity to discuss the response papers and questions that arise from the readings or class discussion. There will be a 1500-word mid-semester paper. Near the end of the semester, students will write a 1000-word “deep dive” into the work of one of the authors we are reading. In the final week of class, students will write a 300-word encyclopedia entry for “Aftermaths/Afterlives.”

Students enrolled in the course are expected to participate fully in each class session, having read the assigned chapters/articles for the session. Students are not expected to reproduce every detail from the readings in our discussion; however, it is essential that students read works critically and openly. The dual emphasis of the course is on creative and grounded engagement with the course materials as well as the concepts that orbit around and pass through these materials. If problems with the readings arise, students are encouraged to seek help during office hours or during an arranged meeting with the professor.

While not a substitution for attendance and participation, lectures and full class discussion will be recorded each week and made available to students who miss class. Break out groups will not be recorded. Attendance is expected. If a student misses more than four class sessions, they will not receive attendance credit. If a student misses two classes in a row, they are encouraged to meet with the professor via Zoom. Participation is assessed not on how much a student speaks in class, but on a broad understanding that students are “present” and attentive in discussion and group activities.

### **Late Assignment**

No late assignments will be accepted

### **Incomplete Grade Policy**

No “incompletes” will be issued for late work

### **Grading Rubric**

#### Written Assignments

#### **A (Excellent)**

The paper demonstrates excellent composition skills including a clear and thought-provoking thesis, appropriate and effective organization, lively and convincing supporting materials, effective diction and sentence skills, and perfect or near perfect mechanics including spelling and punctuation. The writing accomplishes the objectives of the assignment through synthesis, analysis, and attention to scholarly detail. The paper follows the formatting and length requirements. The paper is turned in on time.

**B (Good)**

The paper contains above average composition skills including a clear and thought-provoking thesis, although development, diction, and sentence style may suffer minor flaws. Shows careful and acceptable use of mechanics. The writing effectively accomplishes the goals of the assignment. The paper follows the formatting and length requirements. The paper is turned in on time.

**C (Satisfactory)**

The paper demonstrates competent composition skills including adequate development and organization, although the development of ideas may be trite, assumptions may be unsupported in more than one area, the thesis may not be original, and the diction and syntax may not be clear and effective. Minimally accomplishes the goals of the assignment. The paper fails to follow formatting and length requirements. The paper is turned in on time.

**D (Poor)**

Composition skills may be flawed in either the clarity of the thesis, the development, or organization. Diction, syntax, and mechanics may seriously compromise clarity. Minimally accomplishes the majority of the goals of the assignment. Fails to follow formatting and length requirements. The paper is turned in on time.

**F (Fail)**

Composition skills are flawed in two or more areas. Diction, syntax, and mechanics are excessively flawed. Fails to accomplish the goals of the assignment. Fails to follow formatting and length requirements. The paper is not turned in on time.

**Grade Distribution**

Précis (5% each x 8 sessions = 40%); mid-semester paper (20%); deep-dive assignment (15%); encyclopedia entry (15%); participation (5%); attendance (5%)

**Course Materials**

There is one book that students are required to purchase for the course:

Hugh Raffles, *Book of Unconformities: Speculations on Lost Time* (Pantheon, 2020), available after August 25, 2020

Otherwise, all books, book chapters, articles, and other materials will be available on MyCourses [HERE](#)

**Language of Examinations and Assignments**

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le

cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

### Assignment Due Dates

September 11 **précis** due via email prior to class  
September 18 **précis** due via email prior to class  
September 25 **précis** due via email prior to class  
October 2 **précis** due via email prior to class  
October 9 **no précis** due  
October 16 **mid-semester paper** due via email prior to class  
October 23 **précis** due via email prior to class  
October 30 **précis** due via email prior to class  
November 6 **no précis** due  
November 13 **deep-dive assignment** due via email prior to class  
November 20 **précis** due via email prior to class  
November 27 **précis** due via email prior to class  
December 4 **encyclopedia** entry due via email prior to class

### Course Outline

Week 1. (September 4)

Course introduction, syllabus review and course outline, practice break out sessions

In-class reading: Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, translated by Ann Smock (University of Nebraska, 1986), 1-9.

Week 2. (September 11) **Traces**

Robert Desjarlais and Khalil Habrigh, *Traces of Violence: Writings on the Disaster in Paris, France* (University of California, forthcoming): *Avant-propos*; "Preface"; "Counter-preface"; "Graffs"; "A Trace is the Mark of Something Not There"; Notes

Ulrich Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (MIT, 2002): "To Give Memory a Place" (61-86).

Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*, translated by Shane B. Lillis (University of Chicago Press, 2003): "Four Pieces of Film Snatched from Hell" (3-47); Notes.

Week 3. (September 18) **Atmospheres and elements**

[Guest speaker: Nick Shapiro]

Nick Shapiro, "Persistent Ephemeral Pollutants," In *Being Material*, edited by Marie-Pier Boucher, Stefan Helmreich, Leila W Kinney, Skylar Tibbits, Rebecca Uchill and Evan Ziporyn, (MIT, 2019), 154-161.

Nick Shapiro, "Surreal," in the series "Fieldsights: Lexicon for an Anthropocene Yet Unseen," *Cultural Anthropology* (2017) (access on-line [here](#)).

Michelle Murphy, "Alterlife and Decolonial Chemical Relations," *Cultural Anthropology* 2017; 32 (4): 494-503.

Timothy Choy, *Ecologies of Comparison: An Ethnography of Endangerment in Hong Kong* (Duke, 2011): "Problems of a Political Nature" (1-22); "Endangerment" (23-30); Notes.

Timothy Choy, "Distribution," in the series "Fieldsights: Lexicon for an Anthropocene Yet Unseen," *Cultural Anthropology* (2017) (access on-line [here](#)).

Suggested reading: Andrea S. Ballesteros, *A Future History of Water* (Duke, 2019) (open access [here](#)).

Week 4. (September 25)                    **Recovery**

Georges Canguilhem, *Writings on Medicine*, translated by Stefanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers (Fordham, 2012): "Is a Pedagogy of Healing Possible?" (53-66); Notes.

Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, translated by Carolyn R. Fawcett (Zone Books, 1991): "Disease, Cure, Health" (181-202); Notes.

Margaret Lock, "Recovering the Body," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 2017; 46: 1-14.

Week 5. (October 2)                    **Event**

[Guest speaker: Anne M. Lovell]

Richard Keller, *Fatal Isolation: The Devastating Paris Heat Wave of 2003* (Chicago, 2015): "Introduction" (1-23); "Anecdotal Life: Isolation, Vulnerability, and Social Marginalization" (57-86); Notes.

Anne M. Lovell, "Debating Life After Disaster: Charity Hospital Babies and Bioscientific Futures in Post-Katrina New Orleans," *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 2011; 25 (2): 254-277.

Suggested reading: Nancy Tuana, "Viscous Porosity: Witnessing Katrina," in *Material Feminisms*, edited by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Indiana University Press, 2018), 188-213.

Suggested viewing: Spike Lee, *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (HBO, 2006, available [here](#)).

Week 6. (October 9)

***Meantime***

Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road* (Princeton, 1996): “Prologue” (3-12); “Unforgetting: The Anecdotal and the Accidental” (67-89); “Chronotopes” (90-116); Notes.

Suggested reading: T Fleischmann, *Time is the Thing the Body Moves Through: An Essay* (Coffee House, 2019) (access excerpt on-line [here](#)).

Week 7. (October 16)

***Exposure***

Aya H. Kimura, “Citizen Science in Post-Fukushima Japan: The Gendered Scientization of Radiation Measurement,” *Science as Culture* 2019; 28(3): 327-350.

Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens After Chernobyl* (Princeton, 2002): “2013 Introduction”; “Life Politics After Chernobyl” (1-33); “Biological Citizenship” (115-148); Notes.

Suggested reading: Jean-Luc Nancy, *After Fukushima: The Equivalence of Catastrophes*, translated by Charlotte Mandell (Fordham, 2014).

Week 8. (October 23)

***Madness, colony***

[Guest speaker: Camille Robcis]

Camille Robcis, “Frantz Fanon, Institutional Psychotherapy, and the Decolonization of Psychiatry,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2020; 81 (2): 303-325.

Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, translated by Haakon Chevalier (Grove Press, 1965): “Medicine and Colonialism (121-145).

Guillaume Lachenal, “Kin Porn,” *Somatosphere* January 21, 2013 (access on-line [here](#)).

Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 2003; 15 (1): 11-40.

Suggested reading: Camille Robcis, “Jean Oury and the Clinique de La Borde: A Conversation with Camille Robcis,” *Somatosphere* June 3, 2014 (access on-line [here](#)).

Week 9. (October 30)

***Splinters***

[Guest speaker: Sameena Mulla]

Sameena Mulla, *The Violence of Care: Rape Victims, Forensic Nurses, and Sexual Assault Intervention* (New York University, 2014): “Introduction: Sexual Violence in the City” (1-36); “Making Time: Temporalities of Law, Healing, and Sexual Violence” (57-75); Notes.

Nayanika Mookherjee, “The Raped Woman as a Horrific Sublime and the Bangladesh War of 1971,” *Journal of Material Culture* 2015; 20 (4): 379-395.

Suggested reading: Erin Manning, *A Perfect Mango* (3Ecologies, 2019) (open access [here](#))

Week 10. (November 6)            ***To display and apprehend***

“Kara Walker” (video segment, art 21, access online [here](#)) + artist studio website (access on-line [here](#))

Bettina M. Carbonell, “The Afterlife of Lynching: Exhibitions and the Re-composition of Human Suffering,” *Mississippi Quarterly* 2008; 62(1/2): 197-215.

Amy Louise Wood, “Lynching Photography and the Visual Reproduction of White Supremacy,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 2005; 6(3): 373-399.

Suggested reading: Tina M. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Duke 2017): “Haptic Temporalities: The Quiet Frequency of Touch” (69-100); Coda: Black Futurity and the Echo of Premature Death (101-116); Notes.

Week 11. (November 13)            ***Objects and ethers***

Leah Zani, *Bomb Children: Life in the Former Battlefields of Laos* (Duke, 2019): “Introduction: The Fruit Eaters” (3-36); “Ghost Mine” (64-97); Notes.

Lesley A. Sharp, “Commodification of the Body and Its Parts,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 2000; 29: 287-328.

Week 12. (November 20)            ***Limits, outside***

[Guest speaker: John Borneman]

John Borneman, *Cruel Attachments: The Ritual Rehab of Child Molesters in Germany* (University of Chicago, 2015).

Week 13. (November 27)            ***After the end***

[Guest speaker: Anthony Stavrianakis]

Anthony Stavrianakis, *Leaving: A Narrative of Assisted Suicide* (University of California, 2020): “Introduction” (1-8); “Near Death” (11-14); “Parazone” (15-39), “Peter” (59-81); Notes.

Robert Desjarlais, *Sensory Biographies: Lives and Deaths among Nepal’s Yolmo Buddhists* (University

of California Press, 2006): “Kuragraphy” (1-19); “Last Words” (329-351); Notes.

Akhil Gupta, “Reliving Childhood? The Temporality of Childhood and Narratives of Reincarnation,” *Ethnos* 2010; 67 (1): 33-55.

Week 14. (December 4)            ***Loss and its density***

Hugh Raffles, *Book of Unconformities: Speculations on Lost Time* (Pantheon, 2020).

### **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/>) Please note the syllabus may also change in accordance with the needs of the students taking this class.

### **Other Resources**

#### Student Wellness Hub

Phone: 514-398-6017, Monday to Friday from 10am—12:30pm and 2:00pm—3:30pm

Virtual Services (on-line access [here](#))

#### Accessibility | Office for Students with Disabilities

Phone: 514-398-6009, Monday-Friday, 9:00am—5:00pm

Email: [disabilities.students@mcgill.ca](mailto:disabilities.students@mcgill.ca)

#### McGill Writing Center

Register for online tutoring/appointment [here](#)

### **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.

Tiohtiá: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.