Topics in Health, Food and the Environment:  
**CULTURE AND HEALTH**

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Spring 2013

Institute for Health, Health Care Policy & Aging Research  
Tuesdays 2:15-5:00  
112 Patterson St, Room 120

**Course Description**

This junior/senior seminar will provide an overview of the rapidly growing area of culture and health. As the U.S. grows more diverse, issues of culture and cultural competence have become more important to health care institutions and providers. The course will be grounded in medical anthropology, but is relevant for students in a wide range of health-related disciplines. There are a number of excellent texts and specific studies of culture and health.

We will begin with reading through Helman’s *Culture, Health and Illness* that provides an excellent introduction to the broad array of issues in culture and health. We will then read Kleinman’s *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture*, which is a classic study that proposed many of the core concepts of medical anthropology. Next we will read Fadiman’s *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* that provides an in-depth examination of the collision of cultures between a Hmong immigrant family and the U.S. health care system.

Students are expected to be active participants in the seminar, to present the readings to the class, and to follow the media and the scientific literature to keep up with new developments over the semester.

This junior/senior seminar is particularly relevant for Health and Health Communication students in the Environmental Policy, Institutions and Behavior major at SEBS and the Public Health major at Bloustein. It is of relevance to any students interested in health and medicine from a wide range of majors, including biology, biotechnology, genetics, and nutritional sciences, as well as pre-med students. There are no prerequisites for the seminar.

The goal of this junior/senior seminar is for all students leave with a deeper appreciation for and understanding of the role of culture in health and health care and a clearer sense of how cultural competence efforts can improve health care.

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**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 9:30-11:00 AM and by appointment (COB 206)
**Required Texts** (available at the Rutgers Barnes & Noble Bookstore)


**Course Requirements**

1. **Class Attendance & Participation**: Students are expected to come to each class and to actively participate. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.

2. **Reaction Papers to Assigned Readings**: Students will write 2 page (double-spaced) reaction papers to assigned readings. These should highlight key points, raise questions, and critically assess the work rather than summarize the readings.

3. **Research Project**: Students will write a final term paper of about 5-7 pages [see separate description of final project]. Students will share their project with the class.

**Course Schedule**

| Jan  | 22 | Introductions/Introduction to Course/ Culture & Ethnicity Worksheet  
*Individual Meetings with Students [3:30 – 5:00] |
|------|----|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 29   |    | What is Medical Anthropology?  
*Individual Meetings with Students [3:30-5:00] |
| Feb  | 5  | The Body in Medical Anthropology |
| 12   |    | Health Care Systems  
*Project Abstract Due |
| 19   |    | Global Health  
Helman: Chaps 15,16,17,18 |
| 26   |    | Cross-Cultural Psychiatry  
Ataques de Nervios, Culture & DSM-IV  
Helman: Chaps 10,11 |
| Mar  | 5  | Orientations  
*Outline/Bibliography Due |

**Reading Assignments**

- 20%
- 30%
- 50%

(20% oral report)  
(30% written report)
Mar 12     Cultural Construction of Illness Experience  
            Kleinman: Chaps 4,5

19     NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

26     Family Based Health Care, Patients & Healers  
            Kleinman: Chaps 6-8
            Video: Journey to the West

Apr 2     Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down  
            Fadiman: Chaps 1-9

9     Interactions with the Health Care System  
            Fadiman: Chaps 10-19
            Video: Hmong Shaman in America

16     NO CLASS: Lectures in Texas

23/30 SHARING OF COURSE PROJECTS

May 6     FINAL PAPER DUE (Last Day of Classes)
REACTION PAPERS TO ASSIGNED READINGS

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For each class, I would like you to write a 2 page (double-spaced) reaction paper to the assigned readings. This paper will help you prepare for the class discussions and will give me a sense of what you are getting out of the course. The papers will be collected at the end of each class. These will be recorded but not given a letter grade. I expect you to use full sentences and paragraphs and to present a coherent discussion of the readings. At the same time, these do not have to be polished projects; they are thought pieces. I would prefer to have them typewritten, but will accept legible handwriting.

The paper should briefly address some of the following issues:

1. What are the key points the author is trying to make?
2. What did you learn from this particular reading assignment?
3. What new ideas did you derive from this reading?
4. What ideas are you critical of and why?
5. What insights, personal and/or scholarly, did you get into issues of health and illness from reading this assignment?

When I have more specific questions I want you to address concerning specific topics or readings, I will announce those in class.
FINAL COURSE PROJECT

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For the final course project, you will either: 1) read and review 1 or 2 books related to the course or 2) carry out an original research project on a related topic. Your project should yield a final paper of between 5-7 pages (double-spaced, typed) which applies concepts and approaches discussed in the class to the topic you are interested in. Students should select the project in consultation with me during individual meetings on 1/22 and 1/29, and should identify a topic in writing early in the semester. Students will be expected to present their project during class and to turn in the final paper at the last class.

The specific steps in carrying out the project are outlined below:

a. Abstract of the Proposed Project (1-2 pages double-spaced, typed): This should include a description of the topic, why it is important, and what aspects of it you will analyze. You are strongly advised to consult with me about your topic. [Due on 2/12]

b. Working Outline: The outline should include the major sections of the paper and some detail on the issues to be covered in each section. The bibliography should include 10-15 key references in books, research journal articles and popular media. [Due 3/5]

c. Oral Presentation of Your Project: Presentations will go for between 10-15 minutes with time for a few questions. [Due either 4/23, 30]

d. Written Presentation of Your Project (5-7 pgs. double-spaced, typed): Your written paper will follow on your oral presentation and incorporate any suggestions or additions after you present it orally. [Due 5/6]