

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

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Peter J. Guarnaccia, Ph.D., Professor

Spring 2016

Tuesdays 2:15-5:00

Blake 131

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 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 to 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.

Learning Goals

1. To identify the cultural dimensions of health and health care
2. To understand the role of cultural competence in health care
3. To develop research skills in culture and health

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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 and other sources)

- Cecil Helman. 2007. *Culture, Health and Illness, 5th Edition*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Anne Fadiman. 2012. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.

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. 20%
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. 30%
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. 50%
(20% oral report)
(30% written report)

Course Schedule

Reading Assignments

Jan	19	Introductions/Introduction to Course/ Culture & Ethnicity Worksheet <i>Individual Meetings with Students [3:30 – 5:00]</i>	
	26	What is Medical Anthropology? <i>Individual Meetings with Students [3:30-5:00]</i>	Helman: Introduction
Feb	2	The Body in Medical Anthropology	Helman: Chaps 2,3,6,7,14
	9	Health Care Systems <i>Project Abstract Due</i>	Helman: Chaps 4,5,8,9
	16	Global Health	Helman: Chaps 15,16,17,18
	23	Cross-Cultural Psychiatry Ataques de Nervios, Culture & DSM-IV/5	Helman: Chaps 10,11

Mar	1	Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down <i>Outline/Bibliography Due</i>	Fadiman: Chaps 1-9
	8	Interactions with the Health Care System	Fadiman: Chaps 10-19 Video: Hmong Shaman in America
	15	NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK	
	22	Women's Health	Culhane-Pera: Chaps 2-4
	29	Mental Illness	Culhane-Pera: Chaps 10-12 Video: Shadows & Illuminations
Apr 5/12/19/26 SHARING OF COURSE PROJECTS			
May	3	FINAL PAPER DUE	

REACTION PAPERS TO ASSIGNED READINGS

Culture and Health

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. They should be uploaded to the Dropbox on our Sakai site by 5 pm on the day before class.

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

Culture and Health

For the final course project, you will read and review 1 or 2 books in medical anthropology and other fields related to the course. For the final project, students will be placed into small thematic groups to present these books to the class. As a group, students will develop a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes key aspects of the books, critiques the books (strengths and weaknesses), and identifies its contributions to culture and health issues. These presentations will allow us to learn from many more books than we could all read in class. 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 books in consultation with me during individual meetings on **1/19** and **1/26**, and should commit to those books in writing early in the semester.

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

- a. **Abstract of the Proposed Project** (1page double-spaced, typed): This should include a description of the book(s), why they are important, and what aspects of them you will analyze. You are strongly advised to consult with me about your topic. [**Due on 2/9**]
- 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 the book(s) you will read and some related articles such as book reviews or articles on the same topic. [**Due 3/1**]
- c. **Oral Presentation of Your Project**: Presentations will go for about 10-15 minutes per person with time for a few questions. [**Due either 4/5/12/19/26**]
- 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 5/3**]