

## **Topics in Food, Health and Disease: CULTURE AND HEALTH 11:374:437**

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### **Course Description**

This junior/senior seminar will provide an overview of the rapidly growing area of culture and health. The course will be grounded in medical anthropology, but it is relevant for students in a wide range of health-related disciplines. The course readings are drawn from three comprehensive texts and from other in-depth studies of culture and health. There are no prerequisites for the seminar.

As the U.S. grows more diverse, issues of culture and cultural competence have become more important to health care institutions and providers. 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.

In 2022, the global Covid-19 pandemic continues to be the paramount concern of public health. During the semester, we will examine and analyze issues of culture and health as they relate to the real-world case of Covid-19, focusing specifically on ways in which the public health response to the pandemic is shaped by culture.

### **Course Objectives**

Students are expected to be active participants in the seminar, present the readings to the class, work in groups to lead discussions, and follow the media and the scientific literature to keep up with new developments over the semester. In addition, the goals of this junior/senior seminar are for students to develop

- a deep appreciation for and understanding of the role of culture in health and health care; and
- a clear sense of how cultural competence efforts can improve health care.

### **Course Format and Content**

Temporary situations requiring a rapid pivot from in-person to online classes (i.e., evolving COVID conditions or inclement weather). Whenever class meets remotely, we will use all the tools available in Canvas and the Zoom web conferencing platform to replicate the classroom

environment. Online classes will always meet in real time and the format will be a synchronous/asynchronous hybrid. The first part of every class will be synchronous and may last from one to two hours; the second part will be asynchronous and will be primarily post-class discussion.

Most of the course reading will be from ***Culture, Health, and Illness***, by Cecil Helman, a text that provides an excellent introduction to the broad array of issues in culture and health. For discussion of additional topical issues in culture and health, we will read chapters from a supplemental text, ***Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective***, by McElroy and Townsend. These supplemental chapters will be provided for you and available in digital format in the Canvas Reading List. Later in the semester, we will read two additional books: ***The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down***, by Anne Fadiman, a book that provides an in-depth examination of the collision of cultures between a Hmong immigrant family and the U.S. health care system; and ***Ebola: How a People's Science Helped End an Epidemic***, by Paul Richards, about the 2013-15 Ebola outbreak in West Africa and how local knowledge helped to control the epidemic.

Finally, we will read about and examine public health-related topics about the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of culture and cultural competence in health care systems. Readings for this topic, including articles from the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and other periodicals, will be provided for you and posted on Canvas.

**Required Texts and Technology** (available at the Rutgers Barnes & Noble Bookstore and other sources)

- Cecil Helman. 2007. *Culture, Health and Illness, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Anne Fadiman. 2012. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.
- Paul Richards. 2016. *Ebola: How a People's Science Helped End an Epidemic*. Zed Books.

As some classes will meet remotely for the reasons described earlier in the syllabus, students need to be prepared to participate in Zoom meetings and must have access to the following technology: a computer with an internet connection, mic, and webcam.

Please visit the Rutgers Student Tech Guide page (<https://it.rutgers.edu/technology-guide/students/>) for resources available to all students. If you do not have the appropriate technology for financial reasons, please contact the Dean of Students ([deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu)) for assistance.

### **Attendance and Absence Policy**

Attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to attend all classes. Absences without excuse will affect your grade.

If you will be absent from a class for any reason, please use the Absence Reporting Website, <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>, to inform me about the date and reason for your absence. Please note that reporting your absence does not mean that your absence is automatically considered "excused." In some instances, you may need to get further documentation excusing your absence.

### **In-class Electronics Policy**

Phones and laptops are not to be used during class. Exceptions include the use of laptops for student-led discussions and for the PPT presentation. Class lecture notes will be posted to Canvas after each class, so your focus in class should be on participating in the discussion rather than on note taking.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

**1. Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend each class, actively participate, and complete class assignments. **20%**

In addition to regular participation during class, the participation grade will include:

- Student-led discussions (2)
- Post-class discussions (in Canvas) in response to videos, readings, and/or relevant RU presentations (4-6)

**2. Reaction Papers to Assigned Readings:** Seven reaction papers will be assigned during the semester. Students will write 2-page (double-spaced) reaction papers to assigned readings. These will highlight the author's key ideas, articulate your own questions and reactions, and critically assess the work rather than summarize the readings. Reaction papers will always be due at noon on the Friday before the next Monday class meeting. Late papers will receive a partial grade. **30%**

**3. Research Project:** Students will write a final term paper of about 5-7 pages [see separate description of final project]. **50%**  
Students will share a PPT presentation of their project with the class. **(20% oral report)**  
[see separate description of the PPT presentation]. **(30% written report)**

***Due dates and assignments are subject to revision or change. Students are responsible for regular attention to email and Canvas announcements and should check both regularly, as this is how updates and changes will be announced.***

## **Rutgers Code of Student Conduct**

The University's policy on Academic Integrity is available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>. The policy applies to behavior both in in-person classes and online. The sanctions for violating the Code of Student Conduct also apply equally to behavior in-person and online and will be enforced.

The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- make sure that all work submitted in a course, academic research, or other activity is the student's own and created without the aid of impermissible technologies, materials, or collaborations.
- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, images, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with the student's interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students ethically, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This principle requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the ethical standards and professional code of conduct in the field for which the student is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary to ensure that:

- proper credit for ideas, words, images, results, and other scholarly work, no matter the form or media, is attributed to the appropriate individual(s).
- all student research and work are fairly evaluated, and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity, ethics, scholarship, and professionalism is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community, therefore, bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

In this class, we will treat cheating very seriously. All suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism will be automatically referred to the Office of Student Conduct, and penalties appropriate to the gravity of the infraction will be recommended.

### **ACCOMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Please follow the procedures outlined at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. Full policies and procedures are at <https://ods.rutgers.edu>

## **STUDENT WELLNESS SERVICES**

**Just In Case Web App** <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

**Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)** (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

**Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)** (848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932- 1181.

**Disability Services** (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

**Scarlet Listeners** (732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space

## Course Schedule

## Reading Assignments

### **Introductions/Introduction to Course**

Assignments: Reaction paper #1, due 1/28  
Post-class discussion of video, due 1/26

**Video:** *The Anthropologist*

### **What is Medical Anthropology?**

#### **Culture Worksheet**

Due: *Student Information Card*  
*Sign up for Individual meetings*  
Assignment: Reaction paper #2, due 2/04

**Helman:** Introduction

### **The Body in Medical Anthropology**

Student-led discussions of the assigned chapters  
*Individual Meetings with Students* [10:15 – 11:30]  
Assignment: Reaction paper #3, due 2/11

**Helman:** Chaps 2,3,6,7

### **Health Care Systems**

Alternative and Complementary Medicine  
Student-led discussions of the assigned chapters  
*Individual Meetings with Students* [10:15 – 11:30]  
Assignment: Reaction paper #4, due 2/18

**Helman:** Chaps 4,5,8,9

### **Cross-Cultural Psychiatry**

Student-led discussions of the assigned chapters  
Due: *Project Abstract*  
Assignment: Reaction paper #5, due 2/25  
Post-class discussion of video, due 2/23

**Helman:** Chap 10

**McElroy & Townsend,** Reading list: Chap 10

**Video:** *Worlds Apart*

### **The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down**

Assignments: Reaction paper #6, due 3/04  
*Communicating*  
Post-class discussion of video, due 3/02

**Fadiman:** Chaps 1-7

**Video:**

*Effectively Through An Interpreter*

### **The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: Interactions with the Health Care System**

Due: *Book/Project Outline*  
Assignment: Post-class discussion of video, due 3/09

**Fadiman:** Chaps 8-13

**Video:** *Hold Your Breath*

**Cultural Competence  
In Health Care Systems**

Workshop on Chicago author-date style manual  
In-class discussion of Cultural Competence

**Fadiman:** Chap 14-Afterword

**Global Health: The Ebola epidemic in  
West Africa**

Due: *Project Reference List*  
Post-class discussion of book  
chapters/Video, due 3/30

**Richards:** Chap 1-4  
**Video:** *Outbreak*

**Community Responses to Ebola  
and COVID-19**

What is epidemiology?  
Student-led group discussions  
of Community response to Ebola and COVID-19

**Richards:** Chap 5-Conclusion  
Reading List articles: each group  
reads one assigned article (*Tribal  
Truce, We Know How to Curb the  
Pandemic, Of Vaccine Mandates,  
or The Vaccine Mandate Battle*)

**Globalization: Causes and Consequences of Rising  
Health Crises Around the World**

Information session about final project

**McElroy & Townsend, Ch.9**

**SHARING OF COURSE PROJECTS**

**FINAL PAPER DUE**

## REACTION PAPERS TO ASSIGNED READINGS

### ***Culture and Health***

Throughout the semester, you are required to write seven reaction papers. These are 2-page (double-spaced) reactions to the assigned readings. These papers will help you prepare for the class discussions and will give me a sense of what you are getting out of the assigned reading. These papers will be initially scored as 3, 2, or 1. Collectively, the numerical scores on the 7 papers will be tallied and converted into a single letter grade at the end of the semester. The reaction paper grade is worth 30% of the final course grade.

You are expected to use full sentences and paragraphs and to present a coherent discussion of the readings. At the same time, these papers do not have to be polished projects; they are meant to be thought pieces. They should be uploaded to the Assignment tab on Canvas by **noon on the Friday before the next Monday class meeting**.

Each paper should address the following:

1. What are the key points the author is trying to make?
2. How does the author support each key point (reasons, examples, case studies)?
3. What new ideas did you derive from this reading?
4. What insights, personal and/or scholarly, did you get into issues of health and illness from reading this assignment?



From time to time, I will 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***

The final course project includes two assignments, together worth 50% of the course grade. The basis of both assignments is a book in medical anthropology that is relevant to the material we cover in the course. You will read and review a book from a list I will provide early in the semester.

The first part of the final project, worth 20% of the course grade, is a PowerPoint that students will develop to present their books to the class. The presentation will summarize key aspects of the book, critique the book's strengths and weaknesses, and identify the work's contributions to culture and health issues. These presentations will allow us to learn from many more books than we could all read in class.

The second part of your final project is a final paper of between 5-7 pages, double-spaced and typed. Specifically, the paper is a book review of the book you selected. It will apply concepts and approaches discussed in the class, but it is, first and foremost, a review of the book.

Students should select the books in consultation with me during individual meetings on **2/7** and **2/14**, and by appointment during office hours, 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** (1 page double-spaced, typed): This should include a description of the book, why it is important, and how it relates to the course content. You are strongly advised to consult with me about your topic. **[Due on 2/21]**

b. **Outline:** The outline should be about one page and based on your reading so far. It is essentially a "working outline." It must include the following:

- Where the author's study took place (country, state, village, etc.);
- The subjects of the study (social group, culture, tribal group, individuals in a biomedical setting, etc.);
- The author's research method (e.g., participant-observation, interviews, etc.);
- The main issue and key ideas.

**[Due on 3/07]**

- **Project Reference List:** Your reference list will include the book itself, 3 or more book reviews from peer-reviewed journals, and any of the course texts. The list needs to follow the American Anthropological Association (AAA) guidelines for reference lists. More information about citation style will be posted in Canvas, but the link below will provide clear details and examples of AAA guidelines, which in turn use the Chicago citation/reference style.

<https://guides.lib.uconn.edu/anthropology/howtocite>

**[Due 3/28]**

**c. Oral Presentation of Your Project:** Presentations will be about 20-30 minutes per person with time for a few questions. I will use a specific rubric to grade the oral presentation, and this will be posted in Canvas prior to the April/May presentations.

**[Due on one of the following dates: 4/18, 4/25, or 5/02]**

**d. Final Research-based Book Review-- Written Presentation of Your Project:** Your written paper will be submitted a week or more following your oral presentation and should incorporate any feedback from the oral (PPT) presentation. I will use a specific rubric to grade the paper, and the rubric will be posted in Canvas later in the semester.

The focus of the paper is a book written about an area of health/medicine. The book must be written from a cultural perspective. In addition,

- The book should be written by a medical anthropologist.

- The subject of your research is a review of the book, not additional research into the topic of the book.
- Other reviews of the book (from peer-reviewed journals) will inform your own review of the book.
- The paper must demonstrate your knowledge of the relevant connections between the book and at least one of the course texts.
- At least **5 sources**: the book, 3+ book reviews of the book from peer-reviewed journals, 1+ course text.
- Final paper: 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font; papers must include a reference list & in-text citations and follow the AAA/Chicago Manual of Style.

The assignment follows the model of the Reaction Papers and should ask and answer the following:

1. What are the key points you learn about in the book?
  - Author's purpose for doing the research/writing the book
  - What is the book about?
    - Descriptions of the site/setting
    - Descriptions of the group/subject being studied
    - Descriptions of the illness or medical system
    - Descriptions of the author's method
  - Examples, details, specifics
2. How do other scholars (3+ book reviews) review the book? What are their opinions of the author's work? Are they critical? Do they support the work? How/why? What other information do these reviews provide?
3. Based on your complete reading of the book, the book reviews, and your knowledge of the course texts, what insights did you get into issues of health and illness from reading this book? What connections do you see between this author's work and at least one of the course texts?