ANTH 667: Biomedicine and Culture

Meets: Monday and Wednesday from 1:30-2:45 in Saunders 242
Instructor: Dr. Eirik Sæthre
Email: saethre@hawaii.edu
Office: Saunders 306
Office Phone: 956-3995
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 12:30-1:30

Course Description
Although often represented as ‘science’ that is devoid of cultural assumptions, Western (or allopathic) medicine reflects and constructs social, political, economic and moral beliefs. This course will explore the social and cultural dimensions of biomedicine through an examination of etiologies, narratives, technologies, and treatments. Topics include: the construction of HIV risk categories, the immune system, public health laws and segregation, medical concepts of race, clinical trials, the marketing and use of pharmaceuticals, the role of medical technology in diagnosis, interpretations of amniocentesis, the commodification of fetal sonograms, the use of genetic databases, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Course Objectives
- Students will gain an understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of biomedicine.
- This course will explore local responses to, and interpretations of, biomedical ideas, technologies, and treatments.
- Through an examination of ethnicity, technology, and gender, this course will illustrate the way in which medical ideas and discourse are employed to construct and reflect their social environment.

Student Learning Outcomes
At the conclusion of this course, the student will be able to:
- Use appropriate research tools to formulate a scholarly argument within the context of medical anthropology.
- Understand the ways in which the medical sciences are socially and culturally constructed.
- Think critically about relations of power and meaning within biomedicine.
- Recognize the value of anthropological understandings in clinical care settings.

Required Texts:
Additional Readings:
All other readings for this course are posted as pdf documents on Laulima.

Grading and Student Evaluation

Group Presentations (100 points)
Students will be divided into groups for the duration of the semester. For each class, one group will be submit discussion questions in advance, while another answers them, and a third evaluates the questions. The group answering questions will be primarily responsible for presenting information to the class, evaluating the article or chapter, and moderating discussion.

Research Paper (200 points)
Throughout the semester, students will work to prepare a manuscript to submit to an anthropology or related journal for peer review. The paper must focus on a topic relating to biomedicine and conform to the formatting standards of your chosen journal. Students must submit a one paragraph abstract as well as a bibliography of at least fifteen sources that they will be using on 27 January. First drafts will be electronically distributed to the class on 17 March. Week 11 will be devoted to a peer review. Final drafts are due 28 April.

Grading Scale

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<td>300-290</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>289-280</td>
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Classroom Policies

- Be on time for class.
- Cell phones must be turned off. No computers are allowed in class.
- All course handouts, readings, and assignments can be found on Laulima.
- Students are responsible for all course content, whether or not they are in class.
- You are responsible for knowing about, and avoiding, academic dishonesty.
- For more information about writing resources on campus and online, go to http://www.mwp.hawaii.edu/writer_help.htm.
Class Schedule

Week 1 – Introducing Biomedicine
1/11 Introduction to the class

Week 2 – Cancer and Culture
1/18 No class

Week 3 – Constructing Knowledge

Week 4 – Risk Categories: HIV/AIDS

Week 5 – Race and Public Health
2/8 Introduction, Chapters 2 – 4
2/10 Chapters 6 & 7

Week 6 – The Immune System
2/15 No class
**Week 7 – Inventing PTSD**

2/22 Chapters 1 & 3
2/24 Chapter 6

**Week 8 – Pharmaceuticals**


**Week 9 – Pharmaceuticals: Clinical Trials**

3/8 Chapters 1 & 2
3/10 Chapters 3 & 4

**Week 10 – Technology and Medical Machines**


Keating, P. and Cambrosio, A. 2000. ‘Real compared to what?’: diagnosing leukemias and lymphomas. In M. Lock, A. Young & A. Cambrosio (Eds)


FIRST DRAFTS DUE

Spring Break 3/22 – 3/26

Week 11 – Critique Week
3/29 Peer Review
3/31 Peer Review

Week 12 – Race and Biomedical Research
4/5 Introduction – Chapter 4
4/7 Chapter 5 – 9

Week 13 – Women’s Reproductive Health: The Sonogram
4/12 Chapters 2 & 3
4/14 Chapters 5 & 6

Week 14 – Women’s Reproductive Health: Amniocentesis and Genetic Testing
4/19 Chapters 1 – 6
4/21 Chapters 7 – 11

Week 15 – Biomedicine and Agency

**FINAL DRAFT DUE**

**Week 16 – Genetics**


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<th>5/3</th>
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