Spring 2017
Anthropology of Infectious Disease

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ANG6930: 2490. 3 credit hours
Meeting Times: Monday 6-8pm
Location: Matherly Hall, room 0012

Description: This graduate seminar advances a critical medical anthropology perspective on infectious disease emergence, transmission, prevention and control. The course broadly investigates how complex interactions between social, cultural, political, economic, and ecosystem dynamics influence the natural history of infectious disease and public health efforts to understand and control them. The seminar will focus on contemporary problems and issues, with a strong emphasis on inter-disciplinary thinking, methodological innovation, social justice and activism. The first part of the seminar will explore general theoretical and conceptual trends in anthropological research on the emergence and transmission of infectious disease, including expert and local understandings of infection and spread and broader political economy drivers. The second part will focus on the discourses and biopolitics of medicine and public health intervention as they relate to systems of surveillance, treatment, prevention and epidemic containment. We will explore counter-narratives to the hegemony of science and technology, including the role of local communities and the need to address health inequalities and structural factors, such as water, hygiene, sanitation and housing. Lastly, the course will turn to broader questions of policy and governance, including challenges with vertical initiatives, the elimination narrative and efforts to prevent the next global pandemic. The seminar will provide a forum for students in anthropology, geography, sociology, development studies, public health, medicine and other disciplines to critically reflect on the social and political lives of infectious diseases, and to explore pathways for novel anthropological engagement.

Course Objectives:
• Generate conceptual and theoretical insight into the study of infectious disease from an critical anthropological perspective;
• Further student knowledge and learning of how infectious diseases are interwoven into broader social, cultural, political, economic and ecosystem dynamics, and the implication for such understandings;
• Further student knowledge and learning on the biopolitics of public health interventions, policies and systems for both endemic and emerging diseases;
• Build insight into the importance of anthropological research as a pathway for health activism and social justice.
**Seminar Structure:**
The course is organized as a graduate seminar and students are expected to critically engage with the weekly readings and be actively involved in class discussion. Each week the seminar will follow the same general format: it will begin with a short introductory presentation by the instructor on the major theme of the week, followed by a general class discussion (led by a student) and, finally, a student presentation on a specific pathogen.

All students will be expected to write a two-page (double-spaced) critical reflection of the readings each week. This will be handed in at the end of each class. The weekly personal reflection should draw upon at least two of the weekly readings and raise two questions for general discussion; these can include critiques of the readings, methodological questions, broader considerations, etc. These should not be exhaustive – the more specific and focused, the better. One student will then lead the discussion of the weekly reading and the class will participate in the general discussion that follows (this student does not need to submit the personal reflection that week). The course readings will be cumulative and it is expected that students will draw upon previous readings in the general discussion to make connections between course content (students can draw upon past readings in the weekly personal reflection, if relevant).

The general class discussion will be followed by a student PowerPoint presentation each week. These presentations should be brief (about 20 minutes) and focus on a broad overview of a specific infectious disease, as understood by conventional biomedicine. The presentation should include a short discussion of the ecology, biology, clinical features and epidemiology of the infectious disease. It should then be followed by a more detailed analysis of a) how these are influenced by the social determinants of health and illness; and/or b) challenges in current approaches to diagnose, treat, prevent and/or control the pathogen. The presentation should end with 2 to 3 questions for the class to discuss, with some relevance to the week’s reading. The student should distribute a 2-page outline of the presentation, with at least 5 references, to the class beforehand. Feel free to contact the instructor for suggestions and further guidance.

**Grading Methods:** The assessment will include an individual course paper, class participation, weekly writing reflections and the class presentation.

In consultation with the instructor, each student will identify a research topic that meets his/her professional goals and objectives, and intersects with the objectives and content of this course. This paper will be between 5,000 and 6,000 words, excluding references and figures. The paper will be due on the last day of class.

Students will also be graded based on their weekly writing reflection, which will be handed in after each class. Student grades for this component will be based solely on the top 8 weekly reflections provided by the student. Class participation will be assessed based on class attendance, the level of class dialogue and the level of preparedness shown during the week the student leads class discussion. Lastly, the student will be
evaluated based on the individual oral presentation. This will be explained in more detail in class.

**Evaluation:**
Weekly writing reflection = 20% (top 8 included in the assessment)
Individual oral presentation = 15%
Class participation = 15% (Based on in class dialogue)
Research paper = 50%

**Course Schedule:** The course will meet Mondays from 6 to 8 pm.

**Text/Readings:** Readings will be assigned from the anthropology, social science and public health literature. These will be posted on Canvas, but most readings will be journal articles available online through the UF library system. Students are expected to read at least 3 of the assigned readings per week. Selected students will be required to critique an article and lead a discussion each class. The format for this will be explained in class.

General texts (recommended, but not required; available on Amazon) include:

**Grading:** The grading scale for this course consists of the standard scale below:

90% - 100% = A  
85% - 89.9% = B+  
80% - 84.9% = B  
75% - 79.9% = C+  
70% - 74.9% = C  
65% - 69.9% = D+  
60% - 64.9% = D  
Below 60% = E

**Class Attendance:** Class attendance is mandatory for students. Excused absences follow the criteria of the UFL Graduate Catalogue (e.g., illness, serious family emergency, military obligations, religious holidays), and should be communicated to the instructor prior to the missed class day when possible. UFL rules require attendance during the first two course sessions, and students also must attend the final two course sessions of student presentations for this class. Missing three scheduled sessions will result in a failure. Regardless of attendance, students are responsible for all material presented in class and meeting scheduled due dates for class assignments. Finally, students should read the assigned readings prior to the class meetings, and be prepared to discuss the material except for the first class session.

**Policy on Make-Up Work:** Students are allowed to make up work as the result of illness or other unanticipated circumstances warranting a medical excuse and resulting in the student missing a homework or project deadline, consistent with College policy. Documentation from a health care provider is required. Work missed for any other reason will receive a grade of zero.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students requiring accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students' Office. The Dean of Students' Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the faculty member when requesting accommodation. The College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to assist students in their coursework.

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**Seminar Outline and Reading Assignments**

**January 9: Seminar Introduction**
- Overview of the course and syllabus
- Discussion of grades and student expectations
- Discussion of student goals and career objectives

**January 16: No classes** – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
January 23: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives on the “Pathogenic World”

- Introduces key themes and issues from the anthropological literature
- Discusses the variable “narratives” and “regimes” in global health
- Introduces the role of applied anthropology in infectious disease control

Readings:


January 30: Human Behavior and the Social Determinants of Infection

- Explores the role of human behavior in infectious disease transmission
- Discusses the importance of exposure, clustering and social difference
- Deconstructs the notion of “risk factor” in epidemiological models

Readings:


Wolf, M. Rethinking Urban Epidemiology: Natures, Networks and Materialities. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.

**February 6: Structural Violence and Political Economy**
- Discusses the concept of “structural violence”
- Introduces the scholarly work on the political economy drivers of infectious disease
- Discusses practical policy options and challenges

Readings:


**February 13: Ethnographies of illness**
- Introduces the importance of local illness categories
• Discusses the role of local understandings for public health

Readings:


February 20: Vectors, Reservoirs and the Environment

• Introduces ecosystems approaches to public health, and the implications for anthropology

Readings:


**February 27: Local Responses to Interventions**

- Introduces anthropology literature on local resistance to biomedical interventions
- Discusses the shortcomings of current public health campaigns, and the contribution of anthropology

Readings:


**March 6: No classes – Spring Break**
March 13: The Hegemony of Magic Bullets and Positivist Science

- Discusses the continued dominance of technological solutions to infectious disease
- Discusses the shortcomings of positivist science in addressing the challenges of prevention and control

Readings:


March 20: The “Forgotten Foundations” of Health

- Introduces efforts to address the social determinants of infectious disease
- Discusses the promise and challenges with scaling-up such interventions


March 27: Treatment, Compliance and Markets

- Introduces the complex social and political processes involved in medication and treatment, including issues of patient compliance
- Discusses the turn towards the private sector in global health, and the implications of pharmaceutical markets for infectious disease

Readings:


April 3: Health Systems, Vertical Initiatives & Elimination Narratives

- Introduces the longstanding debate between vertical and horizontal approaches to infectious disease control
- Discusses challenges of policy and practice related to large-scale elimination programs, and the role of ethnographic research as ‘critique’

Readings:


**April 10: Biosecurity and Pandemic Preparedness**
- Discusses the priorities and scholarly critiques associated with the global health security agenda
- Introduces the notion of pandemic prevention

**Readings:**


**April 17: Methodological Reflections and Activist Anthropology**
- Reflects on the course content, with particular focus on ‘activist anthropology’
- Discusses student learning experiences and future career/scholarly trajectories and possibilities
- Research paper is due.