



ANTHROPOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS (ANTH 218:10 & HLTH 218)
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY
COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2024

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Rashed Alam (he/him)

Office: JBB 335G

E-mail: ralam@stfx.ca

Office Hours: Sept 04 – Dec 06 (except for Fall Study Break); Tuesdays 10-12 PM; Thursdays 4-6 PM; Fridays 12-2 PM.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Wednesdays 4:00-5:15 PM

Fridays 2:30-3:45 PM

Classroom: BB 337

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the key concepts and domains of medical anthropology through an examination of health and illness from a cross-cultural perspective. The goals of the course are (1) to understand the relationship between biology, culture, health and illness, (2) to study health and illness in cross-cultural perspective, and (3) to place biomedicine in a cultural

context. The course examines health and illness from a variety of perspectives, including those of biocultural anthropology, political economy, cultural ecology, feminism, settler-colonialism, and biopolitics. It utilizes the body as a key framework to analyze how biopolitics and discrimination intersect. Ethnographic case studies investigate the continuities and conflicts between traditional healing practices and biomedicine. The course materials provide advanced knowledge and understanding of how growing, rapid sociopolitical changes (including globalization, armed conflicts, and neoliberalism) affect health rights and healing practices. Students completing the course will have a basic understanding of the theoretical issues informing medical anthropological research and they will have learned how this work can be applied to individuals and communities.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Understand and define core concepts, methods, and theoretical approaches in medical anthropology
2. Analyze the social, cultural, political and economic influence on the perception and management of health, illness, and healing
3. Recognize the significance of ethnographic research in revealing the limitations of standard biomedical understandings and practices
4. Identify how health care has been weaponized as a tool of biopolitics, structural violence, and settler-colonialism
5. Demonstrate the ability to apply anthropological ideas and perspectives to current events and everyday life
6. Develop crucial skills in public speaking, podcasting, academic writing, and challenging epistemological hegemonies
7. Hone their competencies in developing and presenting critical ideas and performing teamwork

COURSE MATERIALS

All course readings are available to registered students via Kwe' (Moodle), the StFX library's electronic database, and open-access internet resources. Students are not required to purchase any textbooks.

COURSE EVALUATION

<i>Assessment</i>	<i>Grade (%)</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Active Learning & Participation	05	Throughout the term
Healing Autoethnography	10	September 27
Mid-term Exam	25	October 11
Health Podcast	10	November 6
Essay	25	November 29
Final Exam (Take-home)	25	Dec 16

ACTIVE LEARNING & PARTICIPATION (5%)

The course administers several active learning activities throughout the term. Active learning activities promote student engagement through informal and formal exercises. Participation in such learning events encourages students to critically reflect on course materials and engage in problem-solving activities. Furthermore, active learning transforms students from passive to active learners, sharing agency between the instructor and students. Students will be able to express creative and critical ideas through writing, teamwork, and technology tools.

Students will participate in different individual and group active learning exercises each week. They are primarily low-stakes, ungraded thinking and writing exercises. Some examples include discussing course materials with your peers, summarizing the author's arguments in one sentence, designing a poster highlighting a community event, and participating in collective brainstorming. These crucial exercises will prepare students to perform better in high-stakes writing assignments and exams. Students who attend class regularly (at least 80% of classes) and participate in these activities will get full marks (5% grade).

HEALING AUTOETHNOGRAPHY (5%)

This thinking and writing assessment intends to connect your knowledge of course topics and your subjective experience. It will allow you an opportunity to explore if/how the arguments from course readings help you re-examine your perception of health, care, healing, and illness. Choose an item that's important to you (or your family) for health, care, and healing. It can be an object, a script or holy text, a charm, plant roots, a recipe, an ornament, herbs, a song, an assistive technology, or spiritual symbols that help you heal your body and mind. Create a poster or pamphlet describing the item and visualizing it with a drawing or a photograph. Using no more than 500 words, explain the relevance of the item in your health and healing perspectives. Cite at least two peer-reviewed sources in your poster. You can review course

materials or additional texts for the poster. More details about the assignment and a rubric will be provided closer to the due date (Sept 27).

MID-TERM EXAM (25%)

The mid-term test will take place during the regular class time on October 11 in JBB337. It covers all course materials from Sept 6 to Oct 4 classes. The exam is based on short and long answers.

HEALTH PODCAST (10%)

A podcast is a creative and engaging medium to express opinions and ideas. It enhances teamwork, critical analysis, public speaking, and digital literacy skills. Students will be divided into teams. Each team will be given a topic related to the course themes to create a podcast on that topic. The team members will review at least two peer-reviewed journal articles related to the topic and record a 5-10-minute audio conversation session discussing the materials as experts. This assessment intends to demonstrate students' knowledge of the subject, scholarly collaboration, and critical thinking competencies. Each team will be required to provide a summarized 2-page script of the podcast. All podcasts and scripts will be made available in Kwe' for the entire class. More details about the assessment and a grading rubric will be provided closer to the due date (Nov 6).

ESSAY (25%)

One of the main goals of the course is to strengthen students' analytical skills in investigating health, healing, and biopolitics from a cross-cultural perspective. In this writing assignment, you will demonstrate how the course materials made you rethink health, healing, and illness. Students are required to facilitate a literature-based research project and write a 1500-word essay. The focus of the research should be relevant to course themes, such as illness and healing, Indigenous healing, body politics, health inequity, structural violence, the medicalization of conflicts, and the continuity and conflict between traditional healing practices and biomedicine. It is strongly advised that you visit during my office hours if you require assistance in deciding on your research topic. The paper should clearly outline and support a central thesis and ideally focus on a case study. The central thesis of the essay must be supported by a critical review of 5-7 peer-reviewed sources. More details about the essay, including a rubric, will be provided closer to the due date (Nov 29).

FINAL EXAM (25%)

The take-home final exam will be based on what you have learned throughout the course. It will be composed of essay questions and critical questions. The exam questions will be available on Kwe' on the first day of the exam period (Dec 9: 9 AM) and will be due on Dec 16 (9 AM). We will discuss the detailed exam instructions and a rubric in the final weeks of the semester, particularly in the last class. Please do not purchase a travel ticket before the end of the official examination period.

WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS

SEPT 4: INTRODUCTION

Course orientation

Syllabus discussion

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Sept 6. Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, and Margaret M Lock. 1987. "The Mindful Body: A Prolegomenon to Future Work in Medical Anthropology." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 1 (1): 6–41. [Required pages 6-28]

Sept 11. Trundle, Catherine, and Tarryn Phillips. 2024. "Which Ethnography? Whose Ethnography? Medical Anthropology's Epistemic Sensibilities Among Health Ethnographies." *Medical Anthropology* 43 (4): 295–309.

ILLNESS & HEALING

Sept 13. Chapter 3: Recognizing Biological, Social, and Cultural Interconnections: Evolutionary and Ecological Perspectives on a Cholera Epidemic. [Joralemon, Donald. 2017. *Exploring Medical Anthropology*. London; Routledge.]

Sept 18. Simpson, Nikita. 2022. "Kamzori: Aging, Care, and Alienation in the Post-pastoral Himalaya." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 36 (3): 391–411.

Sept 20. Chapter 6: Healers and the Healing Professions. [Joralemon, Donald. 2017. *Exploring Medical Anthropology*. London; Routledge.]

Sept 25. Halliburton, Murphy. 2023. "Hegemony versus Pluralism: Ayurveda and the Movement for Global Mental Health." *Anthropology & Medicine* 30 (2): 85–102.

Sept 27. Chautems, Caroline. 2024. "'I Felt Like I Was Cut in Two': Postcesarean Bodies and Complementary and Alternative Medicine in Switzerland." *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 48 (2): 329–49.

INDIGENOUS HEALING

Oct 2. Waldram, James B. 2013. "Transformative and Restorative Processes: Revisiting the Question of Efficacy of Indigenous Healing." *Medical Anthropology* 32 (3): 191–207.

Oct 4. Film: *Spirit Doctors*

Oct 9. Mid-term Exam Review

OCT 11. MID-TERM EXAM

OCT 16 & 18. FALL STUDY BREAK

Oct 23. Marquina-Márquez, Alfonso, Jorge Virchez, and Raúl Ruiz-Callado. 2016. "Postcolonial Healing Landscapes and Mental Health in a Remote Indigenous Community in Subarctic Ontario, Canada." *Polar Geography* 39 (1): 20–39.

Oct 25. Film: *Cree Hunters of Mistassini*

BODY POLITICS

Oct 30. Fassin, Didier, and Estelle D'Halluin. 2005. "The Truth from the Body: Medical Certificates as Ultimate Evidence for Asylum Seekers." *American Anthropologist* 107 (4): 597–608.

Nov 1. Basmajian, Alyssa L. 2024. "Reproductive Gerrymandering, Bureaucratic Violence, and the Erosion of Abortion Access in the United States." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 38 (2): 179–92.

Nov 6. Lau, Ting Hui. 2023. "The Afterlife of 'Doing Medicine': Birth Planning, Chronic Illness, and Regeneration among the Lisu on the China–Myanmar Border." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 37 (4): 354–66.

INTERSECTIONALITY & HEALTH INEQUITY

Nov 8. Baker, Kelly, and Brenda Beagan. 2014. "Making Assumptions, Making Space: An Anthropological Critique of Cultural Competency and Its Relevance to Queer Patients." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 28 (4): 578–98.

Nov 13. Muller, Megan K. 2022. "Colonial Geographies: Indigenous Access to Primary Care in British Columbia." *Medical Anthropology* 41 (3): 359–72.

BIOPOLITICS

Nov 15. Comaroff, Jean. 2007. "Beyond Bare Life: AIDS, (Bio)Politics, and the Neoliberal Order." *Journal of Popular Culture* 19 (1): 197–219.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MEDICINE

Nov 20 & 22. Chapter 10: Marketing Medicine. [Manderson, Lenore, ed. 2016. *The Routledge Handbook of Medical Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.]

VIOLENCE AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Nov 27. Ticktin, Miriam. 2011. "The Gendered Human of Humanitarianism: Medicalising and Politicising Sexual Violence." *Gender & History* 23 (2): 250–65.

Nov 29. Farmer, Paul. 2004. "An Anthropology of Structural Violence." *Current Anthropology* 45 (3): 305–25.

THE ANTHROPOCENE

Dec 4. Hirschfeld, Katherine. 2020. "Microbial Insurgency: Theorizing Global Health in the Anthropocene." *The Anthropocene Review* 7 (1): 3–18.

DEC 6: COURSE REVIEW

A brief review of the Final Exam

Q&A sessions on the course/Final Exam

COURSE POLICIES

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Anthropology encourages collaboration and peer discussions. Therefore, class attendance is mandatory to engage students with course materials and class discussions. Students must register class attendance in Kwe'. The in-class active learning activities will also document class attendance. Students present in at least 80% of classes will get the full Active Learning and Participation marks (5% grade). If you miss three or more classes, whether for illness or any other reason, your ability to pass will be severely compromised. Inform me or the Dean's office if you must miss classes.

SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments must be submitted to Moddle. Assignments submitted by email will not be accepted. It is also important that you always retain a copy of your assignments.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

5% off per day late unless an extension has been granted. Late assignments will not be accepted after five days (including weekends) beyond the original deadline without appropriate documentation from the Dean's office. All deferred or makeup assessments will be essay-based.

REAPPRAISALS OF ASSIGNMENTS

If you are concerned or confused about the grading of your assignment after you get it back, please see me during my office hours. All grade-related issues must be discussed during the office hours. If you would like me to reappraise your work, please submit the original paper with a maximum 300-word explanation of why you think you deserve a higher score. This must be done within seven calendar days of the release of your grade. Although I will review your grade, it may stay the same or even decrease.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Please note that the use of artificial intelligence aids (e.g., chatGPT) is not permitted in any course assessment.

COURSE DROP INFORMATION

Students may drop a course, online in Banner, on or before the relevant deadline. See the calendar of events in the StFX Academic Calendar for the drop-date. Please keep in mind that the permission to drop or change a course after the course change deadline can only be granted by the Dean's office and that informing the professor, or merely ceasing to attend class is not sufficient.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

You can use a laptop in class, but turn off/silence your cell phone. The use of electronic devices in class for purposes not related to the course is not allowed. Please do not tape/video record the class.

COPYRIGHT & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Course materials designed for use in this course at StFX University are the property of the instructor, unless otherwise stated by the instructor. Copying this material for distribution, online posting, or selling of this material to third parties without permission is subject to Canadian Copyright Law and is strictly prohibited.

EMAIL AND COMMUNICATION

Office hours are strongly recommended for course-related discussions. However, feel free to email me on weekdays. I will respond within 48 hours. Please put the course number in the subject line of your email and include your name and student number at the end of all correspondence. Please note that I will be offline during weekends. You are requested to use StFX credentials for all academic correspondence.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the appropriate authorities and proven cases will result in a mark of zero for the assignment.

See the University's policy on plagiarism and cheating at <https://www.mystfx.ca/registrars-office/academic-integrity>. Not intending to plagiarise is not a legitimate excuse. Know what is included in the definition and ensure that the paper you submit meets acceptable academic standards according to the policy. When in doubt, consult with me.

RESPECT: ACADEMIC DISCOURSE, CLASS CLIMATE, AND INCLUSIVITY

A core social value in anthropology is respect. In this classroom, you are likely to encounter ideas that you find surprising or even unsettling. You should feel free to voice your opinions; at the same time, you should feel free to respectfully challenge ideas with which you disagree. When engaging in discussion, I encourage you to listen — to be attentive to the experiences and views of others before formulating your own arguments, reactions, and critiques. One of the most important things I hope you will learn in this class is that a diversity of backgrounds and opinions is not a threat but an opportunity for thinking about and addressing social issues that concern us all.

EQUITABLE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space — both real and virtual — that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, nondiscrimination and respect for diversity. Please feel free to contact the Human Rights and Equity Advisor, Megan Fogarty if you have questions or concerns about equity in the classroom or in the StFX Community in general. Megan can be contacted by email at mfogarty@stfx.ca or by telephone at 902-867-5306.

INFORMATION ABOUT REQUESTING AN ACCOMMODATION AT STFX

If you have a disability and would like to request accommodations, please contact me during the first week of the semester so that your accommodations may be provided in a timely manner. The Trumble Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) provides assistance in determining and facilitating appropriate accommodations for students with verified disabilities. The Trumble Centre for Accessible Learning welcomes students with documented permanent disabilities and offers them a student-centred program of support. Located in Room 108 of the Angus L MacDonald Library, new and returning students meet with program staff to discuss options for support. The deadline for registering with the Centre is two weeks prior to the end of classes each semester and three business days' notice is required for booking all accommodated tests

and exams. To book an appointment, go to the Tramble Room website:
<https://www.mystfx.ca/accessible-learning/>

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to the requirements of this course as well as the academic regulations outlined in Chapter 3 of the Academic Calendar. I am responsible for maintaining the academic standards of St Francis Xavier University as well as of my discipline as I transmit knowledge about the course subject to the students and foster the development of critical academic reading, researching, analytical and writing skills.

Best of luck with the semester!