



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Medical Anthropology

2021-1-F0101R013

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#### Course title

Medical Anthropology

#### Topics and course structure

In this course, students will develop knowledge and critical understanding of social, cultural, political and economical dimensions concerning health and body issues. In what ways are health and illness matters of interpretation and belief in different societies? How do they involve and shape social interactions and social organization among individuals and groups? How do they reflect and influence political and economic relations? To answer such questions, this course focuses on ethnographic approaches on issues regarding health and illness in different contexts worldwide.

One theme that ties together the diverse topics of the course is the production of anthropological knowledge about health, suffering, and medicine. Particular attention will be dedicated to the anthropological analysis of global inequalities linked to the field of health, in order to better understand some of the most complex contemporary contexts and issues across ethnographic cases from the five continents.

The course will mainly focus on the following themes:

- Introduction to Medical Anthropology: Key Concepts, Theoretical and Methodological Approaches.
- Medical Systems as Cultural Systems.
- Anthropology of Epidemics.

- Public Health and Health Politics.
- Health, Migration, and Humanitarianism.
- Suffering, Violence and Health Inequalities.
- New Trends and Topics in Contemporary Medical Anthropology.

## Objectives

Through the analysis and comparison of ethnographic cases from various settings, students will reach a deeper understanding of medicine and health as systems of thought and practice, as well as exploring the possible ways to study the body as a bio-historical product. Students will learn how to consider health issues as individual forms of embodiment of broader social and historical processes within situated moral worlds.

## Methodologies

In the first part of the course, teaching will be mainly based on introductory lectures. In the second part, presentations by students and group discussions will be organized around central topics of the course, in the form of a workshop. In the third and final part of the course, students will discuss in the class the results of their short ethnographic work and guest speakers will present their ethnographic researches.

**PLEASE NOTE:** the organization of the course and its forms of evaluation may vary due to the university regulation for courses in presence. Please contact the teacher for updates.

## Online and offline teaching materials

### Programme and references for attending students

1. A Reader in Medical Anthropology. Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities, edited by Byron J. Good, Michael M.J. Fischer, Sarah S. Willen, e Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
2. A Companion to Medical Anthropology, edited by Merrill Singer and Pamela I. Erickson, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

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  - Csordas Thomas J., 2002, Body/Meaning/Healing, Palgrave.
  - Farmer Paul, 1992, AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame, University of California Press.
  - Farmer Paul, 1999, Infections and inequalities. The modern plagues, University of California Press.
  - Farmer Paul, 2003, Pathologies of power. Health, human rights, and the new war on the poor, University of

California Press.

- Fassin Didier, 2007, *When Bodies Remember. Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa*, University of California Press.
- Fassin Didier, 2018, *Life. A Critical User's Manual*, Polity Press.
- Fassin Didier and Rechtman Richard, 2009, *The Empire of Trauma. An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*, Princeton University Press.
- Kleinman Arthur, 1995, *Writing at the Margin: Discourse Between Anthropology and Medicine*, University of California Press.
- Inhorn Marcia C., 2003, *Local Babies, Global Science: Gender, Religion, and In Vitro Fertilization in Egypt*, Routledge.
- Lock Margaret and Nguyen Vinh-Kim, 2010, *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Lock Margaret, 2001, *Twice Dead: Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death*, University of California Press.
- Martin Emily, 1994, *Flexible Bodies. Tracking Immunity in American Culture - From the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS*, Beacon Press.
- Mattingly Cheryl, 1998, *Healing dramas and clinical plots. The narrative structure of experience*, Cambridge University Press.
- Mol Annemarie, 2003, *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*, Duke University Press
- Nguyen Vinh-Kim, 2010, *The Republic of Therapy: Triage and Sovereignty in West Africa's Time of AIDS*, Duke University Press.
- Petryna Adriana, 2002, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*, Princeton University Press.
- Ticktin Miriam, 2011, *Casualties of Care. Immigration and the politics of humanitarianism in France*, University of California Press.

## Programme and references for non-attending students

1. *A Reader in Medical Anthropology. Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities*, edited by Byron J. Good, Michael M.J. Fischer, Sarah S. Willen, e Mary-Jo DeVecchio Good. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.
2. *A Companion to Medical Anthropology*, edited by Merril Singer and Pamela I. Erickson, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

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  - Csordas Thomas J., 2002, *Body/Meaning/Healing*, Palgrave.
  - Farmer Paul, 1992, *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame*, University of California Press.
  - Farmer Paul, 1999, *Infections and inequalities. The modern plagues*, University of California Press.
  - Farmer Paul, 2003, *Pathologies of power. Health, human rights, and the new war on the poor*, University of California Press.
  - Fassin Didier, 2007, *When Bodies Remember. Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa*, University of California Press.
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Press.

- Martin Emily, 1994, *Flexible Bodies. Tracking Immunity in American Culture - From the Days of Polio to the Age of AIDS*, Beacon Press.
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- Tickin Miriam, 2011, *Casualties of Care. Immigration and the politics of humanitarianism in France*, University of California Press.

## Assessment methods

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These oral presentations will constitute the object of the evaluation.

Students not attending the lectures are required to contact the teacher to agree on the additional readings for the oral evaluation, in addition to the two mandatory readings.

**IMPORTANT** : the organization of the course and its forms of evaluation may vary due to the university regulation for courses in presence. Please contact the teacher for updates.

## Office hours

Please contact the teacher: [lorenzo.alunni\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:lorenzo.alunni[at]gmail.com)

## Programme validity

This program is valid for the 2020/2021 academic year.

## Course tutors and assistants

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