

**Medical Sociology**  
**Spring 2008 SYO 3400**  
**Thursday 3:30 to 6:15**  
**Room: GL 100A**

**Professor: Dr. Jim Riach** [riachj@fiu.edu](mailto:riachj@fiu.edu)  
**Office Hours: 10:00AM to 1:00PM ECS 335**

**Course Description:**

Medical anthropology (sociology) deals with the study of human confrontations with disease and illness, and of the medicines and medical systems made by human groups for dealing with these dangers. This course introduces students to the field of medical anthropology as a comparative study of beliefs and practices related to sickness causation and healing strategies among human groups cultures from around the world. It emphasizes the importance of considering changes in health status as the result of changes in human-environment relations, whereby the environment is seen as comprised of cultural, as well as, biological and physical components. Students will learn about ancient medical practices and about the meaning and efficacy of contemporary ethnomedical systems according to the people who practice them. Finally, students will learn about how human activities and social inequality are threatening the people and places that are the most likely sources of remedies as-of-yet unknown to modern science.

The course will also include anthropological case studies in health. Special focus will be given to case studies of chronic pain as experienced in American culture and society. Students will learn about the effects of pain on the sufferer, the family, workplace, and the effect of culture across all aspects of the pain experience. Students will also analyze a case study about how conservation and development efforts in a forested region of Madagascar affected the health of the people who live there.

**Course Objectives:**

Upon completion of the course you should be able to:

1. Discuss the concept of culture and explain its role in health systems
2. Compare and contrast ethnomedical and biomedical health systems.
3. Identify and describe diverse health-influencing practices from around the world.
4. Explain the health impacts of environmental and cultural change.
5. Explain the role of social inequality in influencing health patterns.

**CE 6:**

This as a web-assisted course. All students will be assigned a CE 6 account for online access to the course, which will contain online reading materials, lecture supplements, professor e-mail access, assignment submission tools, and suggested links.

**Required Materials for the Course:**

Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective, Fourth Edition. 2003 Townsend, Patricia K. and Ann McElroy. Westview Press

Endangered Species: Health, Illness, and Death among Madagascar's people of the forest. 2002. Harper, Janice. Carolina Academic Press.

**Grading:**

In-Class Activities	25%
Exam I	25%
Exam II	25%
Exam III	25%

**In-Class Activities:**

Students will be asked to participate in several types of **unannounced** in-class activities throughout the semester for **25% of their final grade**. Therefore, regular attendance is critical for earning a good grade in this class. The activities may take place any time during the class period. Some of the activities may involve short quizzes about the readings due for that day. These should be very basic and simple if students do their required readings before coming to class. Other activities may involve group efforts in class. If you miss an unannounced in-class activity you will not be allowed to make it up.

**Exams:**

There will be three non-cumulative exams during the semester. Exams will cover material from the readings and lecture. Lectures will not duplicate the material found in the readings, so class attendance is essential for a good grade in the exams. Several movies may be shown in class. The movies may appear on the exams. If you miss class on a day a movie is shown, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and/or try to see it.

**Attendance, Conduct and Other Policies:**

Attendance is absolutely important for successfully completing this course with a passing grade. Students are expected to arrive for class on time, remaining for the duration of the class, keeping cellular phones turned off, and refraining from disruptive conversation during class time. Students who are discourteous or disruptive will be asked to leave the classroom, and may incur complete loss of credit for the scheduled assignments.

**Grades** are based on the following percentages

<b>A</b> = 94-100	<b>A-</b> = 90-93	<b>B+</b> = 87-89
<b>B</b> = 83-86	<b>B-</b> = 80-82	<b>C+</b> = 77-79
<b>C</b> = 73-76	<b>C-</b> = 70-72	<b>D+</b> = 67-69
<b>D</b> = 63-66	<b>D-</b> = 60-62	<b>F</b> = 0-59

## Readings and Course Schedule

**Week One – January 10**

Introductions and course overview  
History of medical anthropology

**Week Two - January 17**

Part 1 - Ecological Model of Sickness and Healing  
Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 1

Part 2 – Introduction to Pain  
Readings: Kleinman et al. – Pain as Human Experience

**Week Three – January 24**

Part 1 – Interdisciplinary Approach  
Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 2: Pp 32-48  
Dorfer et al. – A Medical Report from the Stoneage?

Part 2 – Madagascar: Introduction  
Readings: Harper – Chapter 1

## **Week Four – January 31**

Part 1 – Interdisciplinary Approach

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 2: Pp 48-69

Part 2 – Madagascar: Anthropology of Forest Medicine

Readings: Harper – Chapter 2

Video

## **Week Five – February 7**

Part 1 – Biological and Cultural Adaptations

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 3

Balick and Cox – From Hunters and Gatherers to Haute Cuisine

Part 2 – Expressing Pain

Readings: Good – A Body in Pain

## **Week Six – February 14**

**Part 1 – Exam 1**

Part 2 – Demographic Changes

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 4

Kennedy – In the Beginning

## **Week Seven – February 21**

Part 1 – Madagascar: Ethnographic Setting

Readings: Harper – Chapter 3

Part 2 – Madagascar: History of Environmental Changes

Readings: Harper - Chapter 4

## **Week Eight – February 28**

Part 1 – Ethnomedicine

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 7: Pp. 238-256

Part 2 - Video

## **Week Nine – March 6**

Part 1 – Ethnomedicine

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 7: Pp. 256-279

Janzen - Theories of Music in African Ngoma Healing

Part 2 – Meaning of Pain and the Pursuit of Relief

Readings: Garro – Chronic Illness and the Construction of Narratives

## **Week Ten – March 13**

**Part 1 – Exam II**

Part 2 – Cultural Changes and Health

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 8: Pp. 282-302

Hewlett - Culture, EHF and Conservation in Central Africa

## **Week Eleven - Spring Break March 17-22**

**Week Twelve – March 27**

Part 1 – Cultural Changes and Health

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 8: Pp. 302-323

Part 2 – Madagascar: Explanatory Models

Readings – Harper Chapters 7 and 8

**Week Thirteen – April 3**

Part 1 – Health Impacts of Development

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 9: Pp 328-347

Confaniolieri – Environmental Change and Human Health in the Brazilian Amazon

Part 2 – Reality of Pain

Readings: Jackson – After a While No One Believes You

**Week Fourteen – April 10**

Part 1 – Health Impacts of Development

Readings: McElroy & Townsend – Chapter 9: Pp 347-373

Part 2 - Madagascar: Health and Conservation

Readings: Harper – Chapter 9 & Epilogue

**Week Fifteen – April 17**

**Exam III**