








Anthropology (ANTH) 499

Medical Anthropology (Revision 5)

Status: Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode: **Individualized study online**  or **Grouped study**  with **Video component**  (Overseas students, please contact the University Library before registering in a course that has an audio/visual component)

Credits: 3

Areas of study: Arts or Social Science

Prerequisites: **ANTH 275** and at least one 300 level social/cultural anthropology course OR **ANTH 275** and a third year Health Science course OR permission of the course professor.

Precluded: None

Challenge: ANTH 499 is not available for challenge.

Faculty: [Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Notes:

Overseas students, please contact the **University Library** before registering in a course that has an audio/visual component.

Overview



ANTH 499 examines the notion that health and illness are not entities in themselves, but rather culturally constituted means of both representing and shaping human experience and reality. The course looks at different medical systems within particular cultural contexts. It also investigates several important themes including healers, medical pluralism, Indigenous medicine, the political economy of health and illness, the medicalization of social life, and the relationship between belief and the construction of clinical realities. The main theoretical approaches in medical anthropology are analyzed in the context of their strengths and weaknesses, which helps explain the ideologies and practices behind each system.

Outline


The course consists of the following eight units.

- Unit 1: Introduction to Medical Anthropology
- Unit 2: Theoretical Perspectives in Medical Anthropology
- Unit 3: Biomedicine as a Cultural Category
- Unit 4: Quantifying Health and Illness
- Unit 5: The Social and Political Determinants of Health
- Unit 6: Healers and their Patients in Ethnographic Context
- Unit 7: Magic, Religion, and Healing
- Unit 8: Cross-cultural Psychiatry


Evaluation


To **receive credit**  for ANTH 499, you must complete three telephone quizzes and four written assignments—two essays, a research paper proposal, and a final research paper and achieve an overall grade of **D (50 percent)**  for the entire course. There are no examinations in this course. The weighting of composite grade is as follows:


Activity	Weight
Quiz 1	5%
Essay 1	20%
Quiz 2	5%
Essay 2	20%
Quiz 3	5%
Research Paper Proposal	5%
Final Research Paper	40%
Total	100%


To learn more about assignments and examinations, please refer to Athabasca University's **online Calendar** .

Materials

Farmer, Paul. 2005. *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.  (Print)

Payer, Lynn. 1996. *Medicine and Culture: Varieties of Treatment in the United States, England, West Germany, and France*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.  (Print)

Trostle, James A. 2005. *Epidemiology and Culture*. Cambridge Studies in Medical Anthropology. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press. 
(Print)

Young, David, Grant Ingram, and Lise Swartz. 2003. *Cry of the Eagle: Encounters with a Cree Healer*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 
(Print)




Other materials

Student Manual (digital)

Study Guide (digital)

Course Readings (digital files linked to each unit in the study guide)

Important links

- > [Academic advising](#) 
- > [Program planning](#) 
- > [Request assistance](#) 
- > [Support services](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 5, November 10, 2020

Updated March 4, 2024

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