**Course Philosophy**

Hunger, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, - we live in a world fraught with social problems. Social change, in many instances, is the only avenue for building a healthy world; in other cases, it is a precursor to the process of building healthy cities, healthy villages and healthy neighborhoods. The willingness and the intent to make positive changes in society bring us together in this course. Although intellectual fervor and critical thinking are the essential tools to the process of social change, a commitment to apply the knowledge in different social change settings lies at the heart of our endeavor. Application is especially critical in the context of serving the at-risk populations of society. These are often the populations that are left out of academic and practitioner discourse. Culture, Communication and Health ultimately strives toward theory-based development of health applications targeted toward addressing health disparities. The topic of the course demands that we approach the classroom with openness and mutual respect. I call upon you to actively participate toward creating a climate that is mutually rewarding and intellectually stimulating.

**Course Overview**

This course explores the intersection of culture, communication and health. The production, exchange, maintenance, propagation and metamorphosis of cultural symbols are explored in depth here, with special focus on health-based meanings. Organized around the fundamental questions “How does culture construct health and illness? How do communicative practices vary across cultures?” this course seeks to understand health communication from a cultural perspective. Particular emphasis is laid on understanding preventive behaviors and the different interpretations of such behaviors across cultures. Based on the review and synthesis of the literatures on cross-cultural communication and the cultural aspects of health, the student will engage in building a theory of cross-cultural health communication. Issues discussed in class will include AIDS, unhealthy eating, cancer, drug consumption, heart disease, mental illness, sexual abuse, and domestic violence.
Course Objectives

The student is expected to attain the following goals in this course:

• Understand the role of culture in the construction of communication.
• Examine existing theories of cross-cultural, development and international communication.
• Understand the relationship between culture and health, with particular emphasis on the meanings of preventive behaviors
• Compare, contrast and synthesize the different theoretical foundations of cross-cultural research with the aim of developing “new knowledge.”
• Develop an understanding of methodological tools that illuminate the epistemology of cross-cultural research.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Course Readings & Effective Class Participation (10% = 100): Effective class participation is based upon thorough engagement with the assigned course readings and is not automatically guaranteed. Special attention must be paid to understanding the objectives of the individual paper, the research methodology, and the presentation of the results. Since we will be discussing a wide range of topics on each day, synthesis will be highly valued in the class.

   In addition, each of you will post a blog entry on the topic of discussion for the upcoming week by noon on the Friday preceding the class. For instance, for the week of January 24, the questions are due by Friday, January 21. There are no exceptions to this policy. Please be prepared to discuss your blog responses with the class. Also, please be prepared to be individually called on to answer a question related to the course content.

2. Proposal (30% = 300): Each student will write a proposal for a research project. The proposal should examine how a particular aspect of culture plays out in the realm of health communication. It should include a) introduction of the problem, (b) literature review, and (c) research questions you are going to ask.

3. Research Paper (40% = 400): After the development of an appropriate approach that fits the problem (in the proposal), students are required to design and implement a research project that enhances current understanding of health campaigns. The research paper will address a relevant social change problem, for instance substance abuse, unsafe sex, reproductive rights, aging etc. and will build upon the proposal, implementing the methodology laid out in the proposal, reporting results and discussing them. The choice of topic must be relevant to the concept of culture. The end product is a high quality critical or synthesis paper that may be presented at a professional conference.
4. Final Examination (10% = 100): A take-home final will test your ability to compare, analyze, synthesize and apply the content discussed in class. The emphasis here will be on your ability to effectively criticize the current knowledge of cultural issues in the construction of health, disease, and medicine.

**Academic Misconduct**
As a student in this course, it is assumed that you have read and imbibed the official position of Purdue University on matters of academic misconduct (see the University Regulations booklet). If misconduct occurs in the context of this course, it will be handled according to the procedures specified in the University Regulations booklet.

**Course Policies**
Late assignments will **not** be accepted except in case of documented emergency situations. The student is responsible to contact me and make other arrangements in case of an emergency. This is a graduate class and a key indicator of your performance is your ability to maintain and manage deadlines.

**Required Texts**

**Course Readings**
The readings are divided into two components. The first Volume of readings provides the foundation to culture, communication, and health (Weeks One through Four). The second Volume of readings provides substantive insights into the different content domains where culture interacts with issues of health.

**Preparation Week: Introductions**

**Week One: Culture: Epistemology & Ontology**

**Required**

1. Airhihenbuwa, Chapters 2 & 5
2. Dutta, Communicating health, Introduction & Chapters 1, 2, & 3
5. Darby, R., et. al., A Rose by Any Other Name? Rethinking the Similarities and Differences between Male and Female Genital Cutting. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* v. 21 no. 3 (September 2007) p. 301-23


**Suggested**


Week Two: Culture, Experience, & Identity

Required

1. Airhihenbuwa, Chapters 1, 2, & 3.

2. Dutta, M. Communicating health, Chapter 4.


Suggested


**Week Three: Culture, Modernist Paradigm, and Health**

**Required**


**Week Four: Culture, Health, & Pain**

**Required**

1. Postcolonial disorders, Introduction, Part 3, Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15


**Suggested**


**Week Five: Culture and Suffering**

**Required**

1. Dutta, Communicating health, Chapter 6

2. Postcolonial Disorders, Introduction, Part 1, Chapters 1, 3, 4, & 5


**Suggested**


**Week Six: Culture, Structure, and Health**

**Required**

Dutta, Communicating health, Chapters 7 and 8

Postcolonial disorders, Part 2, Chapters 6, 7, & 8

New horizons, Chapters 2, 5, 7, 10, 11


Warr, D. J. (2004). Stories in the flesh and voices in the heart: Reflections on the context and impact of research with disadvantaged populations. *Qualitative Health Research, 14*, 578-587.

**Suggested**


**Week Seven: Narratives and health**

Airhihenbuwa, Chapter 7

New horizons, Chapters 2, 5, 7, 10, 11


**Week Eight: Culture, Health, and Ways of Knowing**

**Required**

Airhihenbuwa, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13

Dutta. Chapters 5


Suggested


Week Nine: Alternative ways of healing and knowing

Required

New Horizons in Medical Anthropology, chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, & 9


Suggested


Week Ten: Agency in Health Contexts

Required


Wayland, C. Contextualizing the Politics of Knowledge: Physicians' Attitudes toward Medicinal Plants. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* v. 17 no. 4 (December 2003) p. 483-500


Ugent, D. Medicine, myths and magic: the folk healers of a Mexican market [with appendixes]. *Economic Botany* v. 54 no. 4 (October/December 2000) p. 427-38.


**Week Eleven: Culture, Health, and Resistance**

**Required**

Dutta, Chapter 9

Postcolonial disorders, Chapter 9


Suggested


**Week Twelve: Culture and Sexuality**

**Required**


**Suggested**


**Week Thirteen: Culture and Prevention**

**Required**


**Suggested**


**Week Fourteen: Culture and Prevention**

**Required**


**Suggested**


**Week Fifteen: Culture, Health, & Social Change**

Communicating health, Chapters 11 & 12.


