

Special Topics in Sociology and Anthropology (SA)

Sociology and Anthropology 360

Section: D100

Term: 2004 Spring

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Discussion Topics: "Many cost-effective interventions achieve less than their predicted effectiveness because of the limitations imposed by failures of systems or the behaviour of people."*

As this understated quote suggests, it is easier to plan international health programs than it is to implement them effectively. Every year, millions of people around the world die - and many more suffer pain and grief - due to health conditions that are, from a technical point of view, preventable, manageable, or curable. How might we better understand the "failures of systems" and the "behaviour(s) of people (and groups)" in order to envision means of addressing this on-going crisis?

This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to efforts to improve the health of impoverished people in resource-poor areas of the world. We will look at:

- (1) changes in major strategies for health intervention that have been applied over the past century and the historical legacies of these models;
- (2) current conceptual frameworks for understanding the contextual factors influencing health status in specific settings (including gender and household organization; political-economic structures; socio-ecological conditions; social stratification; global policy trends, such as neo-liberalism; and cultural values and meanings);
- (3) varied "local" or "indigenous" perspectives on health problems and the means of handling them, including perceptions of development institutions and the interventions they promote.

In class, we will focus on three major concerns in international public health - malaria, population control, and maternal health. Students (working in small teams) will conduct independent research on other health issues for presentation to the class and for a final (individually authored) paper. Course readings present a variety of perspectives - historical, ethnographic, feminist, Marxist, policy-oriented, medical and epidemiological - from which we will explore different approaches to defining and analyzing health problems in their social context. Our emphasis is on both the application of knowledge about culture and social relations in international health, as well as a critical analysis of notions of "health development" and the institutional logics that promote them. Our aim is to combine applied and critical modes of analysis in order to understand the complexity of serious global health problems.

This course also aims to develop your research, problem-solving, and presentation skills.

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This means we will be working on synthesizing existing insights from research and applying these insights in problem-solving and/or generating further questions. Active student participation in class is therefore required. Although I will be making some presentations to provide you with background knowledge, your own discussion of readings and their implications for the issues is the backbone of the course.

*Janovsky and Cassels, 1996, cited in Kumaranakye and Walker "Cost-effectiveness analysis and priority-setting: global approach without local meaning?"

Grading: Mid-term exam: 20%

Article summary (written 3 pages): 10%

Article summary (short oral presentation): 10%

Article discussant: 10%

Group presentation: 20%

Final research paper (based on group presentation topic): 30%

*All the assignments in this course must be completed for a final grade to be assigned.

Required Texts: Justice, Judith Policies, Plans, and People: Culture, Health, and Development in Nepal. University of California Press 1987.

Hartmann, Betsy Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control. Revised Edition.

Recommended Texts: None

Materials/Supplies: None

Prerequisite/Corequisite: SA 101 and 150, plus one second year sociology (S), anthropology (A) or sociology/anthropology (SA) course.

Notes: With permission of instructor registration clearance may be given by seeing the advisor.

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