1. Course Overview

Western medicine—or biomedicine, as we will refer to it in this course—is seen as offering quick, effective, and technologically advanced solutions to pain and suffering. Biomedicine is a medical system that privileges the physiological and biological causes of disease. As a clinical science, biomedicine is usually seen as culture-less, as universally effective on all bodies. But what happens when Western medicine encounters cultural values or beliefs that conceptualize illness, healing, or the body in different ways? Is medicine itself "cultural," and if so, how? In this course, we will examine how people in Latin America experience, encounter, confront, and use biomedical health interventions, and we will appreciate why an anthropological approach to health is critical to help improve these interventions.

In this class we will learn from a wide variety of sources – from ethnographies to public health reports to interviews with practitioners and patients. Our goal is to understand how conceptions of the body, the causes and meanings of illness, and encounters with health institutions, vary and shift over time and across different contexts. One of the takeaways from this course is that it is possible—indeed, imperative—to understand health, illness, and medicine, not only by looking inside individual bodies, but by situating individual lives within broader social, historical, and political contexts. This course will focus especially on forms of illness and healing among rural and urban Indigenous communities in Latin America. Students will learn about the complexities of urban and rural indigenous healing settings and their sociopolitical significance in contexts of state biomedical interventions. We will consider one current trend in the contemporary medical landscapes called "intercultural health systems", where patients encounter a mix of – and sometimes a conflict between -- indigenous and Western medicine. Under what circumstances does this new social "experiment" produce increased health and wellbeing? Can such projects accomplish the “decolonization” of medicine?

Course Requirements:
1. **Readings and class meetings**: All readings will be uploaded to a TritonEd site in advance of the seminar period, and hard copy readers will also be available. Students are expected to read all the required readings prior to our class meetings, and participate in class discussions.
2. **Learning Community**: This will be a small class, and one in which collegiality and openness are critical. I will suggest guidelines for creating a safe and open learning community, and we will collectively agree to the expectations.
3. **Individual student responsibilities:** Each student will make a presentation of one of the readings to the class, outlining the argument, and facilitating discussion by providing some questions for the group. In addition, students will submit a 3 page critical response paper to one of the readings.

4. **Core Group Projects:** Students will be grouped into 4-5 small core groups, and each group will choose a particular topic to focus on for the seminar. At the end of week 3 (Quito) and week 5 (Shuar), groups will make presentations of their topics to the whole class. These presentations will link class readings to the guests and experiences of the seminar in Ecuador.

5. **Grades** will be calculated as follows:
   - Participation in Class: 30%
   - Reading Presentation: 20%
   - Critical Response Paper: 20%
   - Group presentation: 30%

**Class and Readings Schedule:**

**Week One (Quito): Biomedicine as a Dominant Model**

**Class Meeting 1: Introduction**

**Guest Lecture: Ecuador’s Health System**

**Class Meeting 2: Biomedicine and its colonial legacies**

**Class Meeting 3: Modernity, Science, and the other**

**Week 2 (Quito): What Makes People “Sick”?**
Class meeting 4: Structural violence

Class Meeting 5: Guest Lecture re “Social Determinants of Health, Opportunities and Barriers” (making decisions in underserved contexts)

Class Meeting 6: Narrating Illness, Finding the Causes

Class Meeting 7: Roundtable discussion with Medical Director and students about medical training and services in Ecuador

Week Three (Quito and Nanegalito): Rural and Tropical Medicine

Class Meeting 7: Public Health Inequities

Class Meeting 8: Rural Healthcare in Ecuador
**Guest Lecture:** Introduction to Nanegalito: Immunization programs: Malaria, Dengue, Chicunguya

Week Four (Otavalo): Intercultural Health

Class Meeting 9: Traditional Healing Practices

**Guest Lecture:** Ancestral Healing Practices (Otavalo); Health Indicators and Barriers to Healthcare.

Class meeting 10 : *Yambi Huasi* clinic in Otavalo

**Guest Lecture:** Yambi Huasi’s practices combining *medicina naturalista* or traditional medicine with western modalities.

### Week Five (Shuar): Healing and Challenges in the Amazon

#### Class Meeting 11: Indigenous Health in a Rapidly Changing environment

#### Class Meeting 12: Decolonizing Indigenous Health?