

UC San Diego

ANSC 190GS

Medicine and Healing in Southeast Asia

Global Seminar, Summer Session I (July 3 - August 4, 2023)

T/Th 9:30am-12:30pm*

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* Some class days will extend into the afternoon to accommodate field outings



Course Overview

Illness and healing have been understood and experienced in very different ways across culture and time. In many parts of the world, physical and mental affliction are not seen simply as the result of a biological agent or single event. Rather, they are understood as linked to environment, social relationships, obligations to ancestors, and other unseen forces. According to the World Health Organization, 80% of the people living in the global south (and a not insubstantial number of people living in the global north) rely on traditional medicine for their primary care needs.

This course will explore paradigms of illness, distress, medicine and healing across South and Southeast Asia. Using local organizations and practitioners in Bali as a starting point, we will explore the histories, philosophies, rationales, similarities, and differences of a number of ethnomedical approaches from the region, and we will contrast these with the predominant western ethnomedical system: biomedicine. Some of the learning in this course will be experiential and place-based, with significant opportunity for framing, reflection, analysis and discussion. Students will visit local clinics and groups that support people living with schizophrenia, drug and alcohol addiction, and HIV/AIDS. They will meet and learn from a *Balian* (traditional healer). Finally, students will spend a few days in a rural village (brief homestay) and gain a sense of both the rhythms of life and conceptions of wellbeing as linked to the physical, the mental and the spiritual. We will reflect on the ways that notions of illness and healing “fit” within, and help to reproduce, the social structures, and cultural values and beliefs of the societies of which they are a part.

Course Goals

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Discern and describe the history, theory and practice of different ethnomedical approaches used across South and Southeast Asia;
- 2) Articulate the ways that all systems of medicine and healing (traditional or “modern”) both reflect and reproduce the beliefs, values and structures of the societies and cultural groups of which they are a part;
- 3) Recognize and appreciate the wisdom, logic and positive impacts of each of the ethnomedical systems we explore;
- 4) Utilize principles and practices from the different health and healing systems covered to improve their own health and well-being;
- 6) Feel an increased sense of curiosity, passion, mastery, and self-efficacy about course topics, and apply this deeper learning both to their own lives, and to the urgent societal questions and challenges we face today

Class Lecture, Activity & Assignment Schedule (subject to change)

WEEK	DATE	ACTIVITY	ASSIGNMENT DUE
Week One	July 4	Welcome, introduction to course and topic; overview of major paradigms used by people around the world to explain and address illness, disease and distress: magico-religious, holistic/naturalistic, biomedical/scientific	
	July 6 (extended class) Lunch & Learn	Cross-cultural perceptions of menarche, pregnancy, birth and menopause; case study: Balinese notions of pregnancy and birth <i>Lunch together, then visit to Bumi Sehat Midwifery Clinic</i>	
Week Two	July 11	Overview of Balinese beliefs about health, illness and healing; how these beliefs and practices reflect, reinforce and reproduce social structures and cultural values; Guest lecture: traditional Balinese healer (Balian)	
	July 13 (extended class) Lunch & Learn	Cultural idioms of distress; cultural psychiatry Case studies: understandings of mental illness and addiction in Bali; how they differ from, and align with western models Lunch, then visit to Rumah Berdaya (group supporting people with schizophrenia)	

Reading Response #1
(uploaded by 7/9)

Reading Response #2
(uploaded by 7/16)

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Week Three	July 18	What does it mean to say that illness is both socially produced, and culturally constructed? Structural contributors to disease; cultural systems to make sense of suffering; cross-cultural examples	Paper #1 7/22)
	July 20 (extended class) Lunch & Learn	Aurveda, Siddha and Unani medical systems: histories; underlying and unifying assumptions; Lunch, then visit to Yayasan Kesehatan Bali (Yakeba) (NGO providing outreach and support for people who grapple with drug and alcohol addiction, and HIV/AIDS)	
Week Four	July 25	Examination of biomedicine as a cultural system: overview of assumptions, theory and practice; can biomedical approaches be sensitively and effectively combined with traditional healing practices?	Reading Response #2 (uploaded by 7/30)
	July 27 (extended class)	Class in the field: Interviewing Balinese in Ubud How do locals understand illness and health? What are the folk models of suffering and healing in Bali? In what ways are different systems drawn upon?	
Week Five	Aug 1	Are illness and healing completely subjective and culturally-specific? Are any forms of distress or response universal? What happens in pluralistic societies, in which multiple cultural understandings and systems of inequity intersect?	Paper #2 (uploaded by 8/3)
	Aug 3	Critical reflection and analysis of different healing paradigms and practices; implications for our own physical, mental, social and spiritual health; lessons learned	

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated based on the following:

Active engagement in class and during community outings and field trips	Weekly	10 pts (10% of grade) (2 pts/week)
Reading Responses - one (single-spaced) page response to assigned reading for the week	July 9, 16, 30	15 pts (15% of grade) 5 pts each
Paper #1 (5-7 pgs) Students will examine the concepts of disease as culturally constructed and as socially produced; Specific prompts and guidelines forthcoming	Uploaded by July 22	35 pts (35%) of grade
Paper #2 (5-7 pgs) Students will offer an analysis of different ethnomedical systems, and discuss lessons that might be applied to the biomedically-rooted m paradigm in the U.S. Specific prompts and guidelines forthcoming	Uploaded by August 3	40 pts (40%) of grade

Course Readings (still being developed and arranged)

Alexandrin, Lucia, "Self, Soul Loss, and Motorbikes in Modern Bali" (2017). Award Winning Anthropology Papers. 3. http://digitalcommons.mcalester.edu/anth_awards/3

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Kaiser, Bonnie and Weaver, Lesley (2019). [Culture-bound syndromes, idioms of distress, and cultural concepts of distress: New directions for an old concept in psychological anthropology](#). *Transcultural Psychiatry* Vol 56(4) 589-598.

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Lemelson, *Traditional Healing and its Discontents: Efficacy and Traditional Therapies of*

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Vol. 18, No. 1 (Mar., 2004), pp. 48-76 (29 pages)

Lovric, Barbara (1987) "Rhetoric and Reality: The Hidden Nightmare." Ph.D. thesis,
Department of Indonesian and Malaysian Studies, University of Sydney.

McGuire, Daniel. (2011) [Ten Things I learned from Balinese Healers](#). Elephant Journal.

Mukherjee, Pulok. (2001) [EVALUATION OF INDIAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE](#),
Therapeutic Innovation & Regulatory Science. Vol 35: 2

Nala, Ngurah (1991) *Usada Bali*. Denpasar: Penerbit PT. Upada Sastra.

Ong, Aihwa. (1988). The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in
Malaysia. *American Ethnologist*. 15. 28 - 42. 10.1525/ae.1988.15.1.02a00030.

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Singer, Merrill. (2004). [The social origins and expressions of illness](#). *British Medical Bulletin*.
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Morality and Health Care](#). *American Ethnologist*. Vol. 16, No. 2 (May, 1989), pp. 294-312

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