Anthropology M234Q/Psychiatry M272
Psychological Anthropology: The Anthropology of Suffering

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Description:

Suffering is at the heart of many current theoretical and practical perspectives in psychocultural and medical anthropology. In this seminar, we will work through a number of representative approaches to the topic as a means to gain entry into what is most certainly one of the most compelling, difficult, and significant sites for engaging moral, practical, and experiential dimensions of contemporary culture theory. To prepare the way for what will be our close collective reading of six ethnographies that take on the problem of suffering head on from rather distinct analytical lenses, we will begin by thinking through how suffering has been linked to morality, meaning, and the formation of particular ethical subjectivities from both philosophical and anthropological perspectives. Having laid this foundation, we will then shift to exploring existential and experiential dimensions of suffering in clinical and political contexts, structural violence and suffering in the cases of starvation and the AIDS epidemic, aspects of psychopathology, suffering, and the personal meanings associated with it, before finally turning to discuss political violence in the form of genocide and war in Sri Lanka and Cambodia.

Requirements

(1) **Leading Discussion (15%)**: You will each be responsible for organizing and leading discussion for one of our ten meetings.

(2) **Weekly Discussion Questions (15%)**: You will each be responsible for submitting 3-5 discussion questions each week.

(3) **Participation (10%)**

(4) **Reaction Papers (60%)**: on Week 3, Week 6, and Week 10 you will be responsible for putting together 3-5 page critical reaction papers that will cover the readings and ideas that we have covered up until that point in the seminar. I leave it up to you as to which readings you wish to focus your attention upon for the papers, but, I expect that ideas covered in previous weeks will inform your critical dialogue with whichever text(s) you choose to engage in the papers.

Required Books


**Reading Schedule**

**Week 1**
**Subjectivity and Suffering (Introduction I)**


**Week 2**
**Marin Luther King, Jr Day – NO CLASS**

**Week 3**
**Morality, Meaning, and Suffering (Introduction II)**


Throop, C. Jason (forthcoming) “From Pain to Virtue: Dysphoric Sensations and Moral Sensibilities in Yap (Waqab), Federated States of Micronesia.” Special Issue: Toward a Medical Anthropology of Sensation, Devon Hinton, Laurence Kirmayer, and David Howes (eds). Transcultural Psychiatry

Week 4
Structural Violence and Social Suffering I

Week 5
Structural Violence and Social Suffering II

Week 6
Existence, Experience, and Suffering I

Week 7
President’s Day – NO CLASS

Week 8
Existence, Experience, and Suffering II

Week 9
Genocide, Violence, and Suffering I

Week 10
Genocide, Violence, and Suffering II