

SOCIOCULTURAL BIOLOGIES

SPRING 2005 ANTH 231A

Monday 9-11:50

SSPB 2296

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Course Description

This seminar explores the interrelationship of what can be provisionally called “the sociocultural” with what is conceived of as “the biological.” Conceding the artifice of such dualisms, we will examine ontological, normative and political economic processes as they impact notions of the body, eugenics, death, gender/sex, health and disease. This course will be oriented around some central questions:

- 1) In what ways are the relationships between biologies, social processes and cultural forms represented?
- 2) How can anthropology best contribute to understanding people as simultaneously social and biological beings?
- 3) What is gained by revealing that disease, death, or health are embodied expressions of conditions under which people live?
- 4) What role do biomedicine and anthropology play in the production of cultural biologies? So what?

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and participation are mandatory.

2. Two in-class presentations (2).

Presentations will occur all quarter except weeks 1 and 6. Presenters should provide a summary, suggest questions and guide the discussion.

3. WEEK 6 PROJECT PART A: Contribution of one (1) current reading related to course themes and your own research interests for week 6. Due week 4.

4. WEEK 6 PROJECT PART B: One mid-quarter short essay (5-6 pages) due beginning of class week 6. Essays should be a review and critical analysis of the readings you suggested for week 6 in conversation with at least one other required text. During class week 6, each student will give a mini-presentation of their essay material.

5. Final paper (approx. 12-15 pages) due 5PM Monday June 13th. Papers should be significantly different than your week 6 essays and should draw substantively from two (2) required texts, (at least one (1) from weeks 1-5 *and* one (1) from weeks 6-10). Papers can be tailored to your dissertation or proposals. It is advised that you come see me individually to discuss your final paper.

Grading

Attendance, Discussion Participation & (2) Presentations – 30%
Week 6 Project (Readings, Short Essay, and Presentation) – 30%
Final Paper – 40%

**Course Schedule &
Required Readings**

(Available at the Bookstore and on Reserve at Langson)

Introduction

Week 1. - April 4

Course overview, Introductions, Sign-ups.

Political Economy

Week 2. - April 11

Paul Farmer (2005) Pathologies of Power. U. California Press

Week 3. - April 18

Alan Goodman and Thomas Leatherman (eds) (1998) Building a New Biocultural Synthesis. Michigan (Selections).

Politics

Week 4. - April 25

Troy Duster (2003) Backdoor to Eugenics Routledge

Week 5. - May 2

Adriana Petryna (2002) Life Exposed. Princeton

Biosocialities

Week 6. - May 9

Rabinow, Biosociality *In* Essays on the Anthropology of Reason

Student generated list of readings. Course readings will be made available (approx week 4) once we tailor this list to our respective projects/interests.

Instructor's default suggestions on Biosociality:

Rabinow, Life as we know it. *In* French DNA

Taussig et al, Flexible Eugenics. *In* Nature/Culture

Kreiger, Embodying Inequality Introduction

Rose and Novas, Biological Citizenship *In* Assemblages

Normativity

Week 7. - May 16

Roger Lancaster (2003) The Trouble with Nature. U California Press

Week 8. – May 23

Georges Canguilhem (1991) [1966] The Normal and the Pathological. Zone Books

Ontologies

Week 9. May 30

Annemarie Pol (2003) The Body Multiple. Duke Press

Week 10. June 6

Margaret Lock (2001) Twice Dead. UC Press