Racial Profiling and "Cultural Competency" in Public Health

As you know, liberal multiculturalism has now been institutionalized as “cultural competency”—the requirement (legally compulsive in California) that physicians become familiar with the perspectives on disease associated with racialized minorities. Doctors can thus carry in their white coat pockets a small book that will tell them that “Mexicans” conceive of diarrheal diseases, for example, as caused by the “evil eye.” The texts that support this movement provide an excellent initial focus for two reasons. First, they provide one of the most striking examples of the essentialization of discourses of culture in producing notions of racialized minorities as infected by what I referred to as “chronic cultural impossibility,” the transformation of racial stereotypes into “risk factors” that seem to explain how people of culture are to blame for their own purportedly pathological bodies. Agency and ethical superiority are thus reserved for health institutions, the state, and unmarked white subjects as racialized minorities appear to be ethno-culturally incompetent to deal with issues of their own health. This course draws on ethnographic, theoretical, and critical perspectives in enhancing students’ ability to critically analyze public health programs and discourses. films, media reports, and public health journal articles supplement the lectures.

Prerequisite: No prior background in anthropology, medical anthropology, medicine or public health is necessary. Students will be given opportunities to draw on their own experience throughout the course.
Required Texts


Fadiman, Anne. (1997). The Spirit Catches you and you Fall Down: A Hmong Child her American Doctors and the Collision of two Cultures


Recommended Texts


Assignments and Evaluation

Your grade will be based on preparation for and participation in class (15%), midterm made up of: A paper of 5 pages in length that critically looks at the class material; choose one theme and work through course material using these tools. Provide an original and insightful analysis with a theoretical approach (45%).

A 7-10 pages maximum final paper addressing social dimensions of a public health prevention program/or health problem, drawing analytically with theoretical approach on the material in the class (40%). Final papers are due after the last day of class

Class Participation: Students will be evaluated for their familiarity with required readings, their preparation and their general class participation. Students will be given opportunities to draw on their own experience/concern about Public health problem or program throughout the course in each class, in offices hours and emails.

Be prepared, be engaged, be respectful!

Repeated absences will adversely affect your grade.
Racial Profiling and "Cultural Competency" in Public Health

WEEK 1 Introduction

2009-03-31 The Health Professional’s Culture Vs the Other’s Culture


Supplementary Readings:

H. Jack Geiger 2001. Racial stereotyping and medicine: the need for cultural competence CMAJ • JUNE 12,; 164 (12)

Farmer, Paul (1996), On Suffering and Structural Violence; Daedalus, Vol 125, No 1, Pp. 261-283

[http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/resolve?id=doi:10.1086/382250]

2009-04-02 The Health Professional’s Culture Vs the Other’s Culture II


Supplementary Readings:

Ida Spruill and Bertha L. Davis Cultural Competence: Myth or Mandate Hampton University School of Nursing, Hampton Virginia

WEEK 2. Understanding Inequality in Everyday Public Health Practice

2009-04-07


Supplementary Readings:

Gwatkin, D. R. (2000), Health inequities and the health of the Poor: What Do We Know? What Can We Do?; Bulletin of the World Health Organization Vol. 78, No. 1, Pp. 3-17

2009-04-09


Supplementary Readings:


[http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/95/12/2155]


WEEK 3: Finding a Relationship between Theories of Culture and Public Health

2009-04-14


Potvin et al. (2005), Integrating Social Theory into Public Health Practice. Social Determinants of Health Inequities; American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 95, No. 4, Pp. 591-595
[http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/95/4/591]

**Supplementary Readings:**


2009-04-16


**Supplementary Readings:**


WEEK 4. Social Control through Medicalization

2009-04-21

Supplementary Readings:


2009-04-23


Supplementary Readings:


WEEK 5. Midterm

2009-04-28

Turning the midterm paper

2009-04-30

Film presentation and review of theory

WEEK 6. Communication that reinforces Health Inequalities

2009-05-05


**Supplementary Readings:**


Stepan, Nancy (1978), The Interplay between Socio-Economic Factors and Medical Sciece: Yellow Fever Research, Cuba and United States; Social Studies of Science, Vol.8, No. 4, Pp. 397-423


2009-05-07


**Supplementary Readings:**


WEEK 7. Film

2009-05-12

La Salud

2009-05-14

WEEK 8             Human Right, Ethics, and Justice Vs Power in Health Care

2009-05-19


Supplementary Readings:


2009-05-21

Cohen Lawrence (2005), Operability, Bioavailability, And Exception, in Global Assemblages, Edited by Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier. Blackwell. Pp. 79-90

Supplementary Readings:


WEEK 9      Social Medicine and its Critics

2009-05-26


[http://www.anthrosource.net/doi/abs/10.1525/can.2001.16.4.481]

Supplementary readings:


[http://www.jstor.org/view/00182168/di008683/00p0117y/0#&origin=sfx%3Asfx1]

2009-05-28


[http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/full/91/10/1592]


[http://www.jstor.org/view/00377791/ap030137/03a00120/0#&origin=sfx%3Asfx1]

Supplementary Readings:

WEEK 10  Review

2009-06-02


[http://www.jstor.org/view/08867356/ap020007/02a00120/0#&origin=sfx%3Asfx]

Supplementary Readings:


[http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/full/96/2/233]


2009-06-04 Review (Applying theory materials)

2009-06-09 Turning Final Paper.