Health, Disease, and Development in 20th-Century Africa

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Wednesday, 10:30-12:00
Office Hours: Tuesday, 10-12
532 Rothberg
Fall 2012

Over the past two decades or so, scholars have developed a complex literature on practices of health and healing in Africa. This course examines why the topic of health and healing occupies such a central role in our understanding of Africa’s past and present. In the first part of the course, we will explore continuities and changes in ideas about health during the period of colonial rule, focusing in particular on the creative and shifting ways in which Africans sought to compose healthy communities through the expansion of therapeutic repertoires. In the second part of the course, we will shift attention to the emergence of international/global health projects in the second half of
the twentieth century, focusing in particular on the manner in which African communities have shaped and been shaped by these initiatives and the ethical dilemmas they raise. Our readings will vary from straightforward to very challenging and include works drawn from the disciplines of history, anthropology, and journalism.

**Required Readings:**

All readings are available online via Moodle.

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**ASSIGNMENTS**

1) Between weeks 2 and 11, each student will post a short (1 page) response essay on Moodle. These essays should offer critical assessment of the week’s readings – significance of the key arguments, most and least persuasive aspects, new research inspired by the work – and may also analyze how the readings relate to other courses and outside texts. Your commentaries should avoid summarizing the readings and should instead focus on a particular theme or issue addressed by the author(s). Since these essays will be available for all members of the course to read, you may also choose in your essays to respond to the observations of your classmates. These essays will serve, along with the introductory remarks prepared by the discussion leaders, as the basis for in-class discussions. Please post your response essays by 6:00 pm on the Tuesday before our class meeting on Wednesday. You do not need to post an essay for the week you are leading discussion.

2) Weekly discussions of the assigned readings are a crucial component of the seminar. You should come to class each week prepared to share your thoughts on the readings and to actively participate in discussion. Between weeks 2 and 11, each of you will be responsible for leading one discussion, possibly with another class member. The discussion leader(s) will make a short (10 minutes maximum) presentation at the beginning of the class.

3) The major assignment for the course will be a 15-page research paper on a topic of your choice selected in consultation with the professor. The development of a research topic early in the semester will prove critical for the success of your projects, and I encourage you to meet with me to discuss potential topics. In order to facilitate this process, each of you will submit a two-paragraph description of the research topic you have chosen, along with a list of sources that are directly relevant to your topic, prior to our class session in week 8. Please bring a hard copy of your proposal to class on December 21. Final papers
will be due on February 15. Please submit your paper via e-mail: kodesh@wisc.edu

EVALUATION

Grades
Final grades will be calculated in the following manner:

Weekly Commentaries and Active Class Participation: 50%
Research Paper: 50%

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS

2/11  Week 1.  Introduction to Course

9/11  Week 2.  What is health, What is healing? Defining a Field of Inquiry


Arthur Kleinman, "What Is Specific to Biomedicine?" in Writing at the Margin: Discourse between Anthropology and Medicine, pp.21-40.

Recommended:


16/11  Week 3.  Missionaries, Medicine, and Colonialism


Recommended:


**23/11 Week 4. Colonial Medicine and African Bodies**

Reading: Julie Livingston, *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*, 107-141


Recommended:

30/11 Week 5. **Science, Efficacy, and Medical Pluralism**


Recommended:


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7/12 Week 6. **Global Health, AID, and NGOs**


Recommended:


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14/12 Week 7. **HIV/AIDS**


Recommended:

Johnny Steinberg, *Sizwe's Test: A Young Man's Journey Through Africa's AIDS Epidemic*

Helen Epstein, *The Invisible Cure: Why We are Losing the Fight Against AIDS in Africa*

21/12 Week 8. **Bioethics and AZT Trials**


Recommended:

P. Wenzel Geissler and Catherine Molyneux (eds.), *Evidence, Ethos, and Experiment: The Anthropology and History of Medical Research in Africa*.

* Research paper proposals due in class

28/12 Week 9. **Global Health Projects and Biopolitics**


Recommended:


4/1 Week 10. **Ontological Politics, or Moving Beyond the Traditional Medicine/Biomedicine Divide**


Recommended:


11/1 Week 11. **African Biomedicine**


Recommended:

John Iliffe, *East African Doctors: A History of the Modern Profession*

18/1 Week 12. No class: continue research/writing

25/1 Week 13. No class: continue research/writing

1/2 Week 14. No class: continue research/writing