Religion 111.

Cultures of Health and Healing: Religion, Medicine, and Global Health

Harvard University, Fall 2015

Instructor: Dr. Mara G. Block
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Office Hours: Barker Center 405
Wednesdays 1-2:30, and by appointment

Course Time: 11:30a-1p, Tuesdays and Thursdays
Location: Barker Center 403

Course Description
What does it mean to “be healthy” and “to heal” in different contexts? What sorts of medical, ritual, or religious expertise authorizes different sorts of healers and forms of healing? What conceptions of human bodies and their capabilities are assumed? These questions probe entanglements of religion and medicine in everyday life. This course focuses on ways in which these issues might inform, challenge, and enrich thinking about global health. We will examine moral and religious histories of the global health movement alongside pressing contemporary questions such as, how do disease epidemics shape religious practice? How does religious belief shape the reception of biomedical technologies? We will consider examples from a range of contexts and traditions. Topics include colonialism, medical missionaries, social gospel and public health, human rights, bioethics, and liberation theology. Throughout the course, we will discuss the relevance of socio-economics, race, gender, and sexuality.

Course Goals
• To provide an introduction to concepts, issues, and literature in the burgeoning field of religion, medicine, and global health.

• To provide a series of tools, questions, and texts that will enable students to cultivate a robust understanding of “health” and “healing,” and to critically interrogate the effects, impact, and importance of social context and bodily difference.

• Through discussing style and technique in reading materials and through actively engaging students’ written work, the course aims to improve student writing.

Course Requirements
• Attendance, preparation, and participation
  Regular attendance and active participation are expected. Students should come prepared having completed the reading and taken note of important passages, themes, or questions for discussion.

• Group Presentation
  In groups of 2-3, students will give one 10-minute presentation on the week’s readings and related questions and issues of interest.
The purpose of the first paper is to demonstrate critical analysis of understandings of “health” and/or “healing” in one of readings in Unit I.

The second paper will review one of the two new books on religion and global health that we are reading in Unit II.

The final paper will develop a topic relevant for thinking about religion, medicine, and global health. Students will submit a final paper proposal with initial bibliography.

*Detailed descriptions of each assignment will be distributed in class.

**Policies and Expectations**

**Collaboration:** This course emphasizes dialogic and collaborative learning. Discussion and peer editing are encouraged. All written work must be your own.

**Extensions:** Requests for extensions will be considered up to 24 hours before the deadline for submission of written work. If no extension is requested or granted, 1/3 grade is taken off for each day late.

**Laptops:** Laptops are not permitted. The most engaging and productive discussions take place without them. Students using electronic versions of the readings may use an electronic device to cite a source in class, but the device must be immediately closed or turned off after use.

**Academic Integrity:** The course holds students to the standards of academic honesty outlined in the Harvard College Honore Code:

Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or
misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one’s own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

Course Materials
The following books should be acquired for the course. They are available at The Coop and on reserve at Lamont.

   ISBN: 9781608333165

   ISBN: 9780199827763

Course Schedule

**Week 1. Introduction**
**Thursday, September 3. Introduction to the Course**

**Week 2. Introduction, cont.**
**Tuesday, September 8. Religion and Global Health**
Paul Farmer, Arthur Kleinman and Bridget Hanna, essays on religious values and global health in *Ecologies of Human Flourishing*, eds. Donald K. Swearer and Susan Lloyd McGarry (2011), 73-99


**UNIT I: MEDICAL AND MORAL HISTORIES**

Some scholars argue that global health researchers have been wary of the topic of religion because of historical connections between missionary medicine and colonial oppression. In Unit I, we will examine several layers of this complex past. We’ll begin by reading classic anthropological texts that illustrate the complexity of medicine, healing, and healers in different socio-religious contexts. We will study the racialized history of biomedicine in the now classic works of Megan Vaughan and the Comaroffs on colonial medical and missionary discourse on Africa. In week 4, we’ll consider ways in which the work of healing bodies was intertwined with the work of healing souls in the letters of Dr. Clara A. Swain, the first American medical missionary of the Women’s Foreign Missionary Society to India. In week 5, we’ll study the relation between the American social gospel movement and public health reform, alongside the making of a domain of “women’s health” and black women’s health activism.
Thursday, September 10. Medical Pluralism, Healing, and the Body Social
Margaret Lock and Vinh-Kim Nguyen, c. 3 “Anthropologies of Medicine” in An Anthropology of Biomedicine (2010), 57-82


Week 3 Classic Anthropologies of Healing and Medicine
Tuesday, September 15. Witchcraft, Performance, and the Problem of Belief

Byron Good, “Medical Anthropology and the Problem of Belief” (1994), in A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities, edited by Good, Fischer, Willen, and Good (2010), 64-76

Thursday, September 17. Healing, Ritual, and Disease


Week 4 Colonial Pasts
Tuesday, September 22. Colonial Histories and Medical Missionaries

John & Jean Comaroff, “Medicine, Colonialism, and the Black Body,” in Ethnography and the Historical Imagination, 215-233

Albert Schweitzer, “The Call to Mission” sermon (6 January 1905), in Albert Schweitzer: Essential Writings, 74-80

Recommended:

Thursday, September 24. Colonial Subjectivities
Franz Fanon, “Medicine and Colonialism,” in A Dying Colonialism (1967), 121-145
Week 5 Religious Reasons for Public Health Reform

Tuesday, September 29. The Social Gospel: A Movement for Public Health
Walter Rauschenbusch, “Introduction” and “The Physical Decline of the People,” in Christianity and the Social Crisis (1907), xv-xviii, 197-202


Thursday, October 1. American Churches and Black Women’s Health Activism


★Paper 1 due: Monday October 5★

UNIT II: MODERN MORAL MOVEMENTS

In Unit II, we will discuss contemporary writing on human rights, liberation theology, and the role of normative values in the global health movement in two new books on religion and global health. The essays in Paul Farmer and Gustavo Gutiérrez’s In the Company of the Poor (2013) examine the relation between liberation theology and the global health movement in conversation about medicine, social justice, and wealth inequality. Susan Holman’s Beholden (2015) draws out a range of issues between religion and global healthcare that include histories of human rights and “faith-based” aid.

Week 6 Liberation Theology and Medical Anthropology

Tuesday, October 6. Social Suffering and Structural Violence

Paul Farmer and Gustavo Gutiérrez, In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez (2013), Introduction and cc. 1-2, pp. 1-34
Recommended:
Suri, Weigel, Messac, Thorp Basilico, Basilico, Hanna, Keshavjee, and Kleinman
Paul Farmer, Jim Yong Kim, Arthur Kleinman, and Matthew Basilico, 245-286

Thursday, October 8. Wealth and Healing: Liberation Theology, Medicine, and Social Justice
Paul Farmer and Gustavo Gutiérrez, In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez (2013), cc. 3, 6-7, pp. 35-70, 147-188

Week 7 Moral Images
Tuesday, October 13. Conversion and Systemic Change
Paul Farmer and Gustavo Gutiérrez, In the Company of the Poor: Conversations with Dr. Paul Farmer and Fr. Gustavo Gutiérrez (2013), cc. 4-5, pp. 71-145

Thursday, October 15. Religious Practice and Global Healthcare

Week 8 Human Rights, Justice, and Charity
Tuesday, October 20. Religious Roots of Modern Human Rights Language


Thursday, October 22. Charity, Justice, and the Gift of Health
Susan R. Holman, Beholden: Religion, Global Health, and Human Rights (2015), cc. 5-6, pp. 125-194


http://www.carnegiecouncil.org/publications/archive/dialogue/2_01/articles/602.html

★Paper 2 due: Monday October 26★

UNIT III. GLOBAL ISSUES: RELIGION, ILLNESS, AND DISEASE
In Unit III, we’ll examine effects of illness and disease on social and religious life. We’ll discuss the significance of faith-based care and religious rhetoric used to characterize
disease epidemics, and consider intricate relationships between religious practice and disease.

**Week 9 Infectious Disease**

**Tuesday, October 27. Sexual and Structural Violence: HIV/AIDS**


**Recommended:**


**Thursday, October 29. Religion and Ebola**


http://www.lrb.co.uk/v36/n20/paul-farmer/diary

“Ebola Is Not God’s Wrath”
http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2014/08/ebola_is_not_god_s_wrath_religious_leaders_say_disease_is_caused_by_sin.html

“In Sierra Leone, Religion Major Player in Ebola Fight” 18 May 2015
http://www.voanews.com/content/sierra-leone-ebola-religion/2776241.html

“‘God is angry with Liberia,’ local religious leaders say, blaming Ebola on ‘homosexuality’” 6 Aug 2014
Week 10 Mental Illness  

**Tuesday, November 3. Spiritual Care and Global Mental Health**


**Recommended:**

Film, World Health Organization (WHO) “Introduction to Mental Health” (2009) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8iRjEOH41c


**Thursday, November 5. Religion, Mental Illness, and Psychiatric Practice**


Elialilia Okello and Seggane Musisi, “The Role of Traditional Healers in Mental Health Care in Africa,” in *The Culture of Mental Illness and Psychiatric Practice in Africa Paperback* (2015), 249-261

Rabbi Mark A. Popovsky, “Special Issues in the Care of Ultra-Orthodox Jewish Psychiatric In-Patients,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 47, no. 4 (September 2010), Special Issue on “Religion and Mental Health,” 647-672

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**UNIT IV. HEALING BODIES: BELIEF AND BIOETHICS IN PRACTICE**

Arguably the most pressing bioethical issues provoke questions about uses of biomedical technologies to change, alter, or modify the body. In the final unit of the course, we will examine uses of religious and medical discourses to navigate the integrity of the human body. We will consider ways in which religious belief shapes the reception of biomedical technologies, and ways understandings and experiences of illness, health, and healing are navigated in personal lives and social worlds. We will pair studies of topics including
organ transplant, blood donation, assisted reproduction, and transsexuality with readings that draw out religious symbolism and significance of the body.

**Week 11 Religious Ethics and Organ Transplant**

**Tuesday, November 10. Islam and Embodied (Bio)ethics**


**Thursday, November 12. Body Property**

Sherine Hamdy, c. 5 “Transplanting God’s Property: The Ethics of Scale” in *Our Bodies Belong to God: Organ Transplants, Islam, and the Struggle for Human Dignity in Egypt* (2012), 141-172

Lock and Nguyen, “Who Owns the Body?” in *An Anthropology of Biomedicine*, 205-228

**Week 12 Women’s Health, Women’s Bodies: Religious and Medical Imaginaries**

**Tuesday, November 17. (Re)producing Catholic Bodies**


Recommended:


Marcia C. Inhorn, “Defining Women’s Health: A Dozen Messages from More than 150 Ethnographies,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (September 2006): 345-378

**Thursday, November 19. Controversies and Conception**

Margaret Farley, “Feminist Theology and Bioethics” (1990)


★Final Paper Topic Proposal with Bibliography: Monday November 23★

Week 13 Histories and Practices of Sexual Science

Tuesday, November 24. Sexual Lives and Sexual Labels

Thursday, November 26. Thanksgiving Recess

Week 14 Bodily Gifts

Tuesday, December 1. The Gift of Blood
Jacob Copeman, Veins of Devotion: Blood Donation and Religious Experience in North India (2009), selections

Wendy Doniger, “Medical and mythical constructions of the body in Hindu texts,” in Religion and the Body (1997), ed. Sarah Coakley, 167-184

Thursday, December 3. Final Words

★Final Paper – First Paragraph and Bibliography: Bring to Class (12/3)★

★Final Paper due: Thursday December 10★