1. **Course description:**

This course introduces students to the field of medical anthropology as it pertains to South Asia. We will examine histories of colonial medicine in South Asia and try to understand how these effect lived experiences of public health infrastructure, medicine, and healing in the contemporary.

This course will be divided into two parts. First, we will analyze how religious, cultural, political and economic structures impact health and wellbeing. Second, we will look at ethnomedicine, that is, how local systems of healing provide alternative ideas of illness and health, such as medical pluralism and Ayurveda.

2. **Course objectives:**

   a. Developing a working knowledge of key concepts in the medical anthropology of South Asia and how they impact health and wellbeing including poverty, caste, and everyday violence, etc. and to understand how ongoing public health and global health interventions respond (or do not) to these factors.

   b. Gaining hands-on knowledge and experience with complementary and alternative medicine and their relation to biomedicine in South Asia.

   c. Understanding how healing is conceptualized in cultural terms, as well as understanding how it is a relational practice.

3. **Course requirements:**

   a. **Leading discussion** (30%)

   Every student will lead one class discussion on a reading of your choice once this quarter (in groups of two or three), lasting about 40 minutes. By noon the day before your presentation, your group should email me a lesson plan on which I will give you suggestions and comments. After you have completed your in-class discussion, you must email me a Collaborative Assessment form, which will remain confidential. This will help me assess how different members of the group contributed to the preparation.

   b. **One research paper, combining a field experience with course material** (50%)

   c. **Course participation** (20%)

   Your course participation grade includes your willingness and preparedness to class every day, the quality of the questions you ask, your ability to synthesize readings, and offer analyses, and your approach to the classroom as a space of active participation, not passive learning. In addition, participation also includes the ways in which you use our fieldwork trips to facilitate your own learning about medicine in South Asia. How engaged are you during the field visits? Do you take notes and think through what you are seeing outside the classroom with our discussions inside the classroom? How enthusiastically do you participate in all class activities, and does your written and verbal work demonstrate your own intellectual growth?

4. **Required texts**


5. **Course schedule**

**PART I: FOUNDATIONS**

**Week 1: Introduction: A “Concise” History of Modern India**


**Week 2: Colonialism and “Making Up People”**


**Week 3: Medicine in Colonial South Asia**


**Week 4: Partition, Gendered Violence, and Silencing**

Das, Veena.
2007  “The Figure of the Abducted Woman” in *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary.* University of California Press: Berkeley.

Sunder Rajan, Rajeswari

Watch:  *Khamosh Pani* (Silent Waters)

PART II: PRACTICING BIomedicine THE “INDIAN” WAY

Week 5: Structural Violence and Affliction


Week 5: Structural Violence and Affliction, cont.

Das, Veena. 2015. *Affliction: Health, Disease, Poverty*, Chapter 4-

Week 2: Social Determinants of Health (cont.)

Claire Snell-Rood, *No One Will let her Live: Women’s struggle for well-being in a Delhi slum* (selections)

Richa Nagar and the Sangtin Collective, *Playing with Fire* (selections)

Week 3: Medical Pluralism and Healing (in Kerala)

Stefan Ecks, *Eating Drugs: Psychopharmaceutical Pluralism in India*

Week 4: Medical Pluralism and Healing (cont…)

Murphy Halliburton, *Mudpacks and Prozac: Experiencing Ayurvedic, Biomedical and Religious Healing* (selections)

Helen Lambert, Medical Pluralism and Medical Marginality: Bone Doctors and the Selective Legitimation of Therapeutic Expertise in India. *Social Science & Medicine* 74:1029-1036.

Week 5: Refugee Health and Tibetan Medicine

“*In Dharamsala: Becoming Ready for the Next Life*” – *The New York Times* -  

Sienna Craig, *Healing Elements: Efficacy and the Social Ecologies of Tibetan Medicine* (selections)


Video on Public Anthropology/Monk Immolations:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pf2HX0lbGhw&list=PLH1giskVWCFi5h7oy9kTaFPvxlRbaDpK&index=4
1. Course Description

Popular representations of South Asia abound in clichés: extreme poverty and unimaginable luxury, cosmopolitan cities and rural hamlets, ascetics and call center workers – we are all familiar with these juxtapositions in images, films, and popular books about the region. In this course, we will ask: what do these clichés do to our understanding of South Asia? Do they reveal some deeper truth about the region, or are they reflections of how South Asia has been historically imagined by others? How do we get beneath or beyond these representations?

We will respond to these questions in this course by drawing, primarily, on the work of anthropologists. One of the strengths of anthropology’s methodology—ethnography—is that it captures the complexities of everyday life. In this course, we will explore how people in South Asia live on a day-to-day basis, while also attending to how major historical events, such as colonialism and the Partition of India and Pakistan, continue to shape contemporary life and politics. Although most of our course readings will be about India, we will also draw on scholarly work from Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh, to develop a transnational perspective on the region.

While this course offers an in-depth engagement with a specific region of the world, South Asia has also been a key site from which scholars have thought through major themes, including social organization, everyday life, religion, nationalism, violence/conflict, and globalization. As such, this course also offers an engagement with anthropological theory, which will allow you to question and deconstruct dominant clichés about South Asia.

No prerequisites

2. Course Objectives

By the completion of the course, students will have developed:

- A working knowledge with historical and contemporary examples of how caste, gender, political violence, and religious practices shape everyday life in South Asia
- A basic understanding of key concepts, theoretical approaches, and issues of concern in the anthropology and historiography of South Asia
- Critical writing and thinking skills, including engaging and synthesizing multiple perspectives (both scholarly and popular), offering cogent and clear argumentation in written work, and putting class discussions and readings into a broader intellectual context

3. Course requirements

   a. Attendance and participation – 20%
   b. Short response paper – 30%
   c. Final research paper – 50%

For your final research paper, you will write a book review of a contemporary, popular, nonfiction text about South Asia for an educated but popular audience, such as the London Review of Books or The New Yorker. Your book review should be a critical assessment of a popular representation of South Asia, showing what anthropological, ethnographic, or historical perspectives they use, miss, or could benefit from. Your book
review should synthesize and compare different works with each other, including readings from our course as well as secondary/outside sources (unlike those publications, you will be expected to cite other scholarly works in your book reviews). Some examples of books you could write about are:

*Eat, Pray, Love* — Elizabeth Gilbert  
*Behind the Beautiful Forevers* — Katherine Boo  
*In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India* — Edward Luce  
*Holy Cow: An Indian Adventure* — Sarah MacDonald

## 4. Course Schedule

There are two required books for this course:


### Week 1: Introduction


### Week 2: Partition and its Aftermath


In class film viewing: *1947 Earth*, Deepa Mehta, 1998

- Possible field visit:  
  - Partition Museum Project (Amritsar) or visiting a museum in New Delhi that has a Partition exhibition

### Week 3: Castes of Mind


Raheja, Gloria Goodwin

Film viewing: *Ankur* (the Seedling), Shyam Benegal, 1974

**Short response paper due**

**Week 4: Representations of Caste**


Possible field visit:
- Visit to Amrita University projects on caste

**Week 5: Aspiration and Globalization**

Liechty, Mark

Chua, Jocelyn L.

Possible field visits:
- Visit to Tibetan Youth Congress office, Dharamsala