

# WHAT IS MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY?

ANTHRO 208, Semester 1 2020

Week 1

Dr Heather Battles

# Today:

- Introductions
- What is 'medical anthropology'?
- Course outline overview, Q&A
- For Wednesday: Come to class having done the assigned reading, prepared for a class exercise (unmarked, practice/feedback only - don't stress!)
- COVID-19 Briefing slides



# Introductions

- Lecturers:

- Dr Heather Battles (biological/medical anthropologist in Anthropology) (Course Convenor)
  - A.P. Susanna Trnka (social/medical anthropologist in Anthropology)
  - Prof. Judith Littleton (biological/medical anthropologist in Anthropology)
  - Dr Jesse Grayman (social/medical anthropologist in Development Studies)
- Contact info on Canvas, staff webpages



# What is Medical Anthropology?

The application of anthropological theories, methods, and research-based knowledge to questions of health, illness, disease, suffering, and healing.



# What's makes medical anthropology distinct?

1. Widest temporal and geographic scope (paleontology, archaeology, contemporary ethnography)
2. Considers both cultural and biological parameters of disease (social anthro + bioanthro)
3. Commitment to long-term participant observation; qualitative alongside quantitative
  - What people say they do vs what they actually do
  - Quantitative methods contribute precision to ethnographic description and provide for the testing of hypotheses
  - Qualitative makes quantitative possible



*"I could not create a questionnaire for use in Japan without first undertaking some fine-grained qualitative research that involved entering into the world of middle aged Japanese women as well as Japanese gynecologists."*

*(Lock)*

# Central concept #1: CULTURE

## What is culture?

- Learned patterns of thought and behaviour characteristic of a social group
- “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.” (Geertz 1973)
- Also the structures that are created by and help to create these webs of meaning



# Central concept #2: Biocultural approach

- Biology is not just genes
- Biology and culture as inextricably entangled and co-produced
- Biocultural approaches recognise that for humans our biology (the way we grow, develop, get ill) is embedded within a context that involves structures (institutions, distribution of resources) and webs of meanings.
- (more on this in Week 3)



# Different approaches

- Ecological and evolutionary
- Interpretive
- Political economic or critical
- Applied

Usually, MORE THAN ONE approach is needed – and more than one discipline!

# The Azande (from Strangers Abroad 3- 23 mins)

<http://search.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/view/work/1869279>



# From the Azande

- What are crucial concepts in the Azande world?
- What is similar between the Azande system of healing and western biomedicine?
- What is different?
- What was E-P's aim in his research?
- What are the characteristics of anthropological fieldwork?

# Required readings

## Required Texts

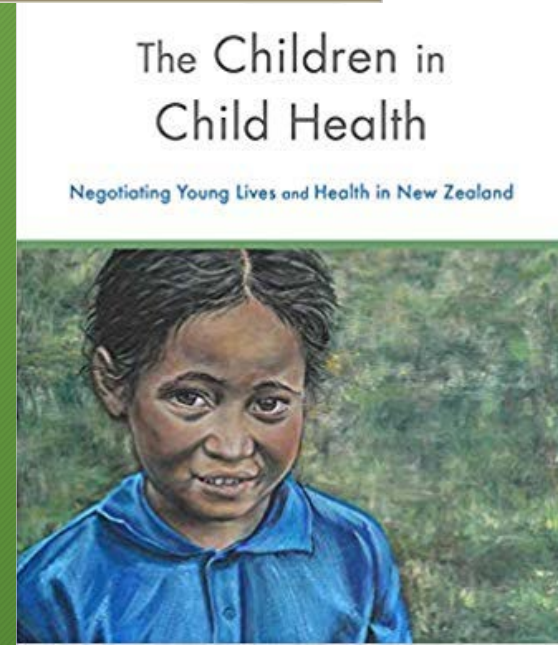
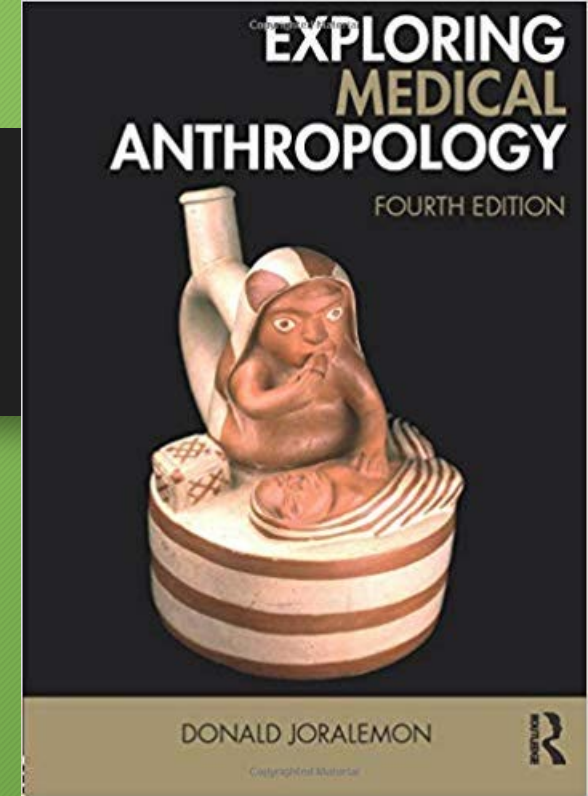
- ***Textbook:***

Joralemon, Donald. 2017. *Exploring Medical Anthropology*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- ***Ethnography:***

Spray, Julie. 2020. *The Children in Child Health: Negotiating Young Lives and Health in New Zealand*. Rutgers University Press. (available soon – see Canvas announcement)

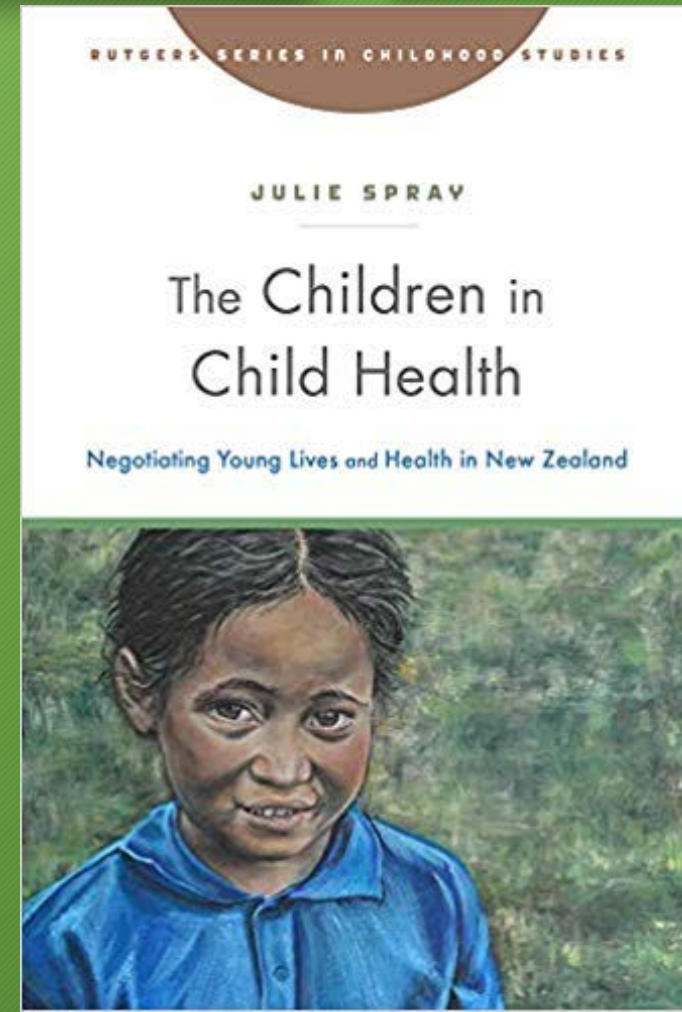
Other assigned readings available digitally via Talis





# Why do we expect you to read an ethnography?

- Method, theory, and evidence
- Integration, not disaggregation
- Novel insights built and developed
- Critical reading skill-building
- Seeing how good writing works
- To help you understand the basic premises of medical anthro



# Course learning outcomes and capabilities

Learning Outcomes	Capabilities for BA Graduate Profile
Bring an appropriate range of theoretical and analytical perspectives to bear on topics in medical anthropology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disciplinary Knowledge and Practice</li></ul>
Understand how different approaches may be satisfactorily combined to address particular topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disciplinary Knowledge and Practice</li></ul>
Identify appropriate resources, research and write analytically within this area of anthropological work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Critical Thinking</li></ul>
Identify contemporary issues associated with health and think about these from a medical anthropology perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication and Engagement</li><li>• Social and Environmental Responsibilities</li></ul>



# What do we want you to learn?

- To think like anthropologists
- E.g., to question unexamined assumptions and apparently 'natural' categories

# Assessment

Assessment	Length (approx.)	Percentage value
In-class exercises (best 2 of 3)		5% x 2 = 10%
Assignment 1 (compulsory): illness episode	300-500 words	10%
Assignment 2: found object + bibliography	200 words	10%
Assignment 3: critical analysis essay of found object	2,000 words	35%
Final exam (scheduled during exam period)	2 hours	35%



# In-class exercises

- Exercises may include paragraphs, quizzes, diagrams, etc.
- These will be quick pieces of work but are designed to keep you on track and help us make sure you are on track.
- See Canvas for which weeks there will be an assessed exercise.
- First in-class exercise will be Monday of Week 3 (marked exercises returned in class on Wednesday)
- Best 2 of 3 taken for final grade calculation



# Assignment 1: Health episode (compulsory)

- A description of some episode/event that has to do with health, illness, and healing, *which you either experienced, participated in, or witnessed first hand*
- Select an episode that you feel merits sustained reflection, and one you will be comfortable having your lecturer read
- 300-500 words (1-2 pages)
- *\*Must\** be completed to pass the course; it will be the basis for one of your final exam essays



# Assignment 2: Found object + 5 references

- Find an article (academic, newspaper, magazine), website, piece of fiction, movie, or documentary that connects with the questions and concepts of medical anthropology you are studying in class
- Should fit one of these themes:
  1. Equality and inequality and its effects on health (political economy/ecology of health)
  2. Cultural constructions of health and illness
  3. Medical knowledge and practices relating to health, illness and healing
- Write a short annotation (max. 200 words) that explains how you see it connecting with the issues discussed in the course; think of the concepts you have learnt, apply those ideas and questions, and include a list of 5 relevant scholarly references
- Will form the basis for your critical essay assignment
- Submit by due date AT LATEST (aim for earlier, for earlier feedback)



# Critical Essay

- Builds on Assignment 2's found object
- 2,000 words
- Essay will have a line of argument, with relevant material to support that argument
- Aim to interweave theoretical and empirical material from lectures, assigned readings, ethnographies, videos, and your own selected readings in a systematic and innovative way



# Submitting work late

- Deadlines are meant as the latest *possible* submission date – aim to submit earlier (which leaves time if last-minute problems arise)
- For emergencies, illnesses, and other exceptional circumstances, **please contact me** for an extension (a doctor's/counsellor's note may be required in some cases, but most based on trust)
- Late penalty *without* an extension is 5%/day or part thereof, including weekends
- Full details on Canvas, including information of where to go for help

# Final exam

- Scheduled during final exam period
- 2 hours
- 2 essay-style questions:
  - Essay question 1 = reflect analytically on your health episode description (Assign. 1), bringing to bear ideas, perspectives, questions, and comparative examples from course readings
  - Essay question 2 will be based on the assigned ethnography by Julie Spray (you will not know the precise question ahead of time)



# Complaints/concerns

- Let me know! For issues about this course, come see me, email me, or communicate with the class rep who can pass along concerns to me
- For broader issues (across courses, about the Anthropology/Anthro Sci programme, about uni facilities and resources, etc.), you also talk to me and/or your class rep who can bring them to the attention of the University via the SSCC (Staff Student Consultative Committee)

# Course overview

Week	Topic(s)	Lecturer
1	What is medical anthropology?	Heather
2	Cross-cultural perspectives on the body, health and healing in the context of globalized health and medicine	Susanna
3	What does 'biocultural' mean? The intertwining of biology and culture in health	Heather
4	The changing biomedical clinic: History, technologies and power	Susanna
5	Illness narratives and meaning-making	Susanna
6 & 7	Embodiment, biological process and bodily practice	Heather
8	Political economy and health	Heather
9	Structural violence, state policies, and embodied consequences	Heather
10	TB - from prehistory into the future	Judith
11	Health and development	Jesse
12	Being a medical anthropologist and in our own backyard	Heather



# Questions?

## For class on Wednesday:

- Come to class having done the assigned reading, prepared for a class exercise about the oral rehydration salts article
- Unmarked, practice/feedback only – don't stress!
- To bring: lined paper, pen, copy of article (digital on device, or printed), notes on article



# Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Briefing slides

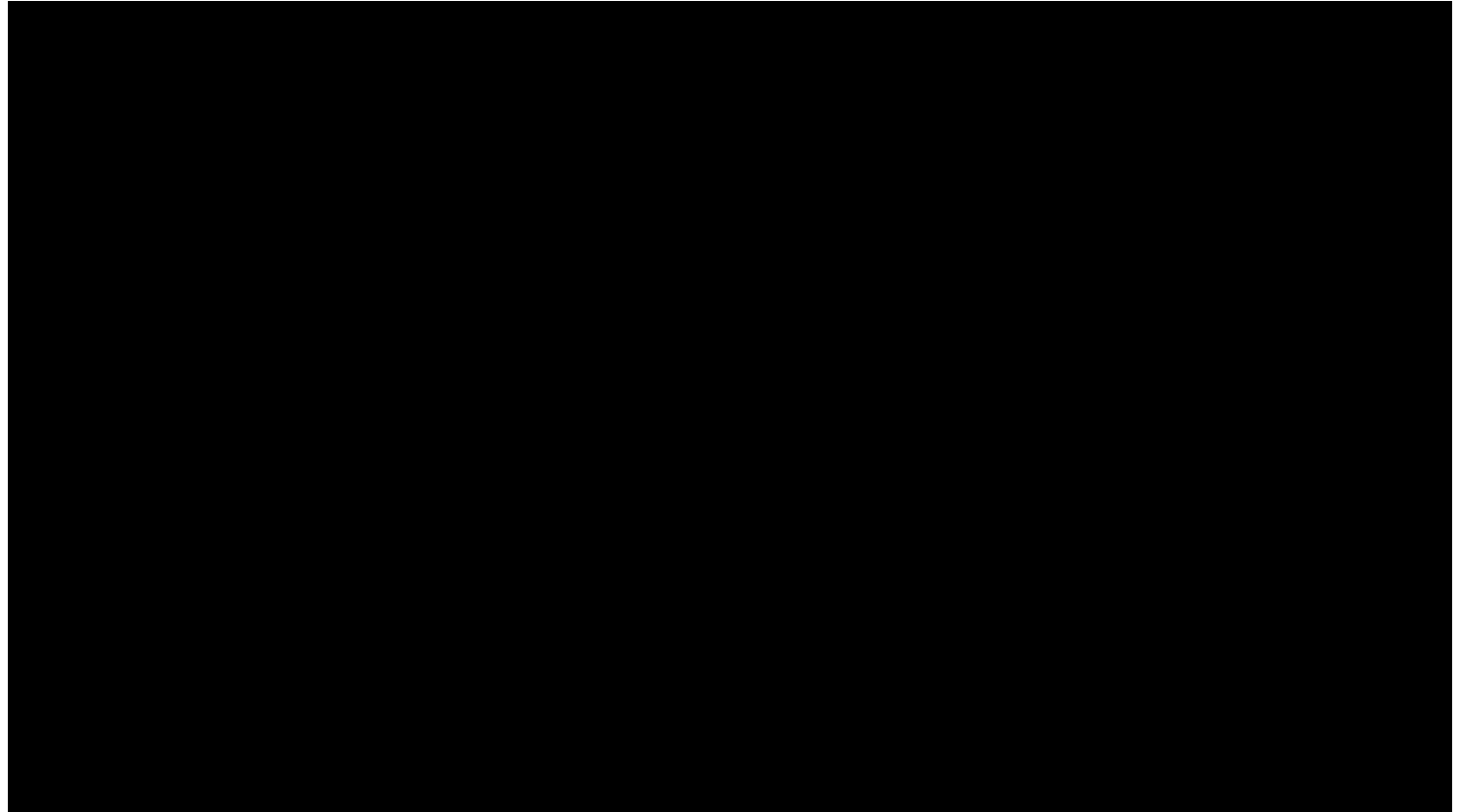
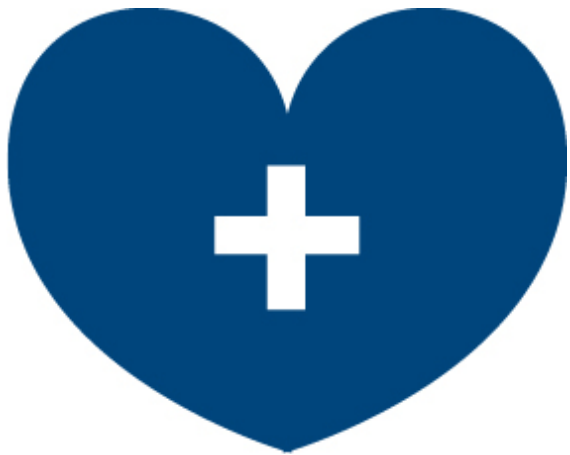
February 2020



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**AUCKLAND**  
Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau  
NEW ZEALAND

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# What is Coronavirus (COVID-19)?



The Vice-Chancellor discusses coronavirus with  
infectious disease expert Dr Stephen Ritchie



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## What are the impacts on our campuses?

All University of Auckland activities are **operating as normal**.

Current medical advice is that there is **no increased risk** of contracting coronavirus by being on campus.

We are **following the advice of NZ health authorities** to reduce exposure and support those in self-isolation.



To stay informed visit: **[auckland.ac.nz/coronavirus](https://auckland.ac.nz/coronavirus)**

## What can I do to stay safe?

If you're feeling unwell  
**call your doctor** or  
a health professional.

Try to **isolate yourself** from  
others in the meantime.

Call HEALTHLINE on  
**0800 358 5453**  
for advice.

Just like in flu season, remember to  
**maintain healthy hygiene practices:**

1. Frequent hand washing with soap
2. Covering sneezes and coughs with a tissue
3. Stay away from others if you're sick
4. Avoid contact with people who have cold and flu-like symptoms



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## How can we look after each other?

### **Act with manaakitanga**

Show respect, care and support for others. Act with kindness and hospitality.

### **Foster whanaungatanga**

Commit to making our University community a place in which all feel they belong.



### **Be respectful**

Remember that if someone wants to wear a face mask, it does not mean they are unwell. They have every right to wear one and do what makes them feel comfortable.

### **Be kind**

As we all work together to minimise the spread of the virus, remember to be kind and supportive to each other.

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## What if I witness bad behaviour?

**Any forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination or xenophobic behaviour are completely against the University's principles of equity, care, compassion and hospitality to all, and have no place on our campuses.**

### **If you do witness such behaviour:**

- Stay calm and act. Don't stay silent.
- Call out the behaviour and tell the person to stop. Remind them that such behaviour is not appropriate.
- Correct any misinformation or inaccuracies in what people are saying.
- Show support, and if appropriate, refer the person subjected to the bad behaviour to the Student Health & Counselling Service.

