

Syllabus
Anthropology and Risk in Health
ANTH 438/HSOC 488

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Class meets Tuesdays, 1:30-4:20, room 330, Museum

Course overview

How do people make choices that affect their health? How do people understand and respond to the ever changing nature of danger in their environment? How do people act/react when they are faced with imminent threats to their health? In this course, we will examine the construct of risk and the roles that risk perception and uncertainty play in health-related decision making. We will differentiate among anthropological, psychological, and epidemiologic approaches to understanding risk. Students will have an opportunity explore in more depth the ways that the notion of risk figures in decisions related to genetics, lifestyle choices and environmental health.

Course objectives

- To understand the role that risk plays in decisions about health
- To contrast interdisciplinary approaches to understanding risk
- To develop research skills that can be used to examine the role that risk plays in health related decisions and behaviors

Required books:

Auyero, J. and D. A. Swistun (2009). Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Scarry, E. (2011). Thinking in an Emergency. New York, W. W. Norton & Co, Inc.

Balshem, M. (1993). Cancer in the Community: Class and Medical Authority. Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.

Course readings: Other required readings will be posted on the course Blackboard site. These readings are denoted with an asterisk*

Teaching methods:

The course will be held in seminar style. For approximately half of each class, we will meet as a group to discuss the readings for the week. During the second half of each class, students will meet in smaller groups to apply weekly topics to their specific interests and to plan and implement field work experiences. Interest group topics are

likely to include: Risk and catastrophic environmental hazards, risk and chronic environmental hazards, genetic risks, and risks associated with lifestyle.

Evaluation:

- (1) Research paper By the third week of class, each smaller group will identify and turn in a brief description of a research topic relevant to the group's shared interests. For example, the group on lifestyle and risk perception might want to study "how knowledge about the risks related to smoking for adolescents is affected by media representations of tobacco." The group will develop a specific research question related to the topic, define a relevant sample, collect data from that sample and produce by the end of the semester a group research report that incorporates ideas from class discussion, class readings and from the primary data. We will discuss each step of this process in class. We have obtained IRB permission for you to do this. Specific details for this group research project and paper will be distributed in class. Hard copies of the papers are due on **May 1, 2012 by 5 pm. 40% of grade**
- (2) Homework Four short assignments are due throughout the semester. Unlike the research paper (which you submit as a group), each individual must turn in each homework assignment. You will be asked to 1) write a research question and research plan, 2) identify a sample, design an interview guide and interview strategy, 3) provide a status-report and 5min presentation on the research, and 4) share notes and initial interpretations of your completed interview. While these will not be graded for content, they must be completed on time to receive full credit. The date on which each of these homework assignments is due can be found below. **10% of grade**
- (3) Research workshop During the final three weeks of class, each small group will present their work in progress to the larger class. The purpose of this workshop is to obtain peer input into the interpretation of the data collected by the group. Workshop feedback can be incorporated into the final research paper. **20% of grade.**
- (4) Participation The value of this class will depend upon the active engagement of all students. This means that you will be required to complete all readings prior to class, attend all classes, and participate vigorously in class and small group discussion, data collection and data analysis. **30% of grade**

Week one

January 17, 2012

Introduction to Anthropology and Risk

Develop smaller interest groups

Week two

January 24, 2012

Defining risk in anthropology, psychology and epidemiology

Research design and selecting a research question.

Use of human subjects in research.

READINGS:

*Gifford, S. M. (1986). The meaning of lumps: A case study of the ambiguities of risk. Anthropology and Epidemiology: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Health and Disease. C. R. Janes, R. Stall and S. M. Gifford. Boston, D. Reidel Publishing Company: 213-246.

*Trostle, J. A. (2005). Chapter 7: Perceiving and representing risk. Epidemiology and Culture. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 150-167.

*Slovic, P. (2010). Introduction and overview. The Feeling of Risk: New Perspectives on Risk Perception. P. Slovic. London, Earthscan: xix-xxvii.

*MV Hayes, (Hayes 1992) On the epistemology of risk: Language, logic and social science.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Discuss and select research topic, research question, and preliminary research design plan. Individual written version due in class next week (January 31).

Week three

January 31, 2012

Proliferation of risk and the “risk society”

Developing an interview guide

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE: Submit a brief (approximately 250 word) description of your ideas for your group’s research topic and research question and brief research plan.

READINGS:

* Skolbekken, J.-A. (1995). "The risk epidemic in medical journals." Social Science & Medicine **40**(3): 291-305.

*Aronowitz, 2009 Converged experience of risk and disease

*Tulloch and Lupton, (Tulloch 2002) Risk is part of your life: Risk epistemologies among a Group of Australians

GROUP ACTIVITY: Brainstorm who to contact to learn more about your project topic, and to arrange to conduct your interviews (sample selection).

Week four

February 7, 2012

Risk perception and the social amplification of risk

Data collection methods

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE: Turn in draft interview guide you plan to use for your interview, and note who you've talked to about interviewing (or plan to contact) (each individual turns in their own interview guide).

READINGS:

*Pidgeon, N., K. Henwood, et al. (1999). Public health communication and the social amplification of risks: Present knowledge and future prospects. Risk Communication and Public Health. P. Bennett and S. K. Calman. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 65-77.

*Finucane, M. L., P. Slovic, et al. (2010). Gender, race and perceived risk: The 'white-male' effect. The Feeling of Risk: New Perspectives on Risk Perception. P. Slovic. London, Earthscan: 125-139.

*Lock, M., J. Freeman, et al. (2007). "Susceptibility Genes and the Question of Embodied Identity." Medical Anthropology Quarterly **21**(3): 256-276.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Exchange draft interview guides with your group members, discuss and finalize. Hone your overall research question. Work to shape the interview guides (and your choices of whom to interview) to fit your research question.

Week five
February 14, 2012
Uncertainty

READING:

Auyero, J. and D. A. Swistun (2009). Flammable: Environmental Suffering in an Argentine Shantytown. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Finalize and submit group interview guide. Apply concept of uncertainty to discussions about research project. Report on interview progress.

Week six
February 21, 2012
Environmental justice

Britt Dahlberg
Coding and analyzing your data

READINGS:

*Checker, M. (2007). "'But I know it's true': Environmental risk assessment, justice, and anthropology." Human Organization **66**(2): 112-124.

*Button, G. (2010). Chapter 6: "What we don't know can't hurt you". Disaster Culture: Knowledge and Uncertainty in the Wake of Human and Environmental Catastrophe. Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press: 127-147

*Pezzullo, P. C. (2007). Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press. - INTRODUCTION

* Pezzullo, P. C. (2007). Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice. Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press. - CHAPTER ONE

GROUP ACTIVITY: Talk about your data analysis plan.

Week seven
February 28, 2012
Risk, Power and Science

READINGS:

*Christensen, J. (2008). Smoking out objectivity: Journalistic gears in the agnogenesis machine. Agnotology: The Making & Unmaking of Ignorance. R. N. Proctor and L. Schiebinger. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California: 266-282.

*Button, G. (2010). Chapter 3: "What you don't know can't hurt you" Disaster Culture: Knowledge and Uncertainty in the Wake of Human and Environmental Catastrophe. Walnut Creek, CA, Left Coast Press, Inc. pp 71-88

*Benson, P. (2010). "Tobacco Talk: Reflections on Corporate Power and the Legal Framing of Consumption." Medical Anthropology Quarterly **24**(4): 500-521.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Prepare for status update next class. Talk about how interviews have gone, or when they are scheduled.

March 6, 2012 NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

Week eight
March 13, 2012
Risk and decision making

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE: Mini-status report on research progress. Turn in individual status reports, and give concise (5 min) presentation during the Group Activity Time to the class about: what interviews you've completed, what interested or surprised you most about what you've learned from interviews, what you're doing next, and any issues.

READINGS:

*Sharon Kaufman, Janet Shim, and Ann Russ. "Old age, life extension, and the character of medical choice". *Journal of Gerontology, Social Sciences*. 2006; 61B(4): S175-S184. Barg and Grier

*Mol, A. (2009). "Living with diabetes: care beyond choice and control." Lancet **373**.

*Borovoy, A. and J. Hine (2008). "Managing the Unmanageable: Elderly Russian Jewish Émigrés and the Biomedical Culture of Diabetes Care." Medical Anthropology Quarterly 22(1): 1-26.

*Briggs, C. L. (2003). "Why Nation-States and Journalists Can't Teach People to Be Healthy: Power and Pragmatic Miscalculation in Public Discourses on Health." Medical Anthropology Quarterly 17(3): 287-321.

*Bazylevych, M. (2011). "Vaccination Campaigns in Postsocialist Ukraine: Health Care Providers Navigating Uncertainty." Medical Anthropology Quarterly 25(4): 436-456.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Research status reports (to the whole class)

Week nine

March 20, 2012

Risk communication

Guest Speaker: Marilyn Schapira, MD, MPH, Professor of General Internal Medicine

READINGS:

*Reyna et al – numeracy and risk comprehension

TBA

GROUP ACTIVITY: Apply concepts of risk communication to your research topic. Discuss ideas and themes that are emerging from your interviews.

Week ten

March 27, 2012

Trust, blame, and responsibility

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT 4 DUE: Bring in notes from your completed interview(s) and any participant-observation. Discuss with your group, and turn in notes.

READINGS:

Balshem, M. (1993). Cancer in the Community: Class and Medical Authority.

Washington, Smithsonian Institution Press.

*Slovic, P. (1998). Chapter 8: Trust: Perceived risk, trust and democracy. The Earthscan Reader in Risk & Modern Society. R. Lofstedt and L. Frewer. London, Earthscan Publications Ltd: 181-192.

GROUP ACTIVITY: Share findings from completed interviews and participant-observation. Analyze the data together, comparing findings from different interviews and exploring potential reasons for similarities and differences.

Week eleven

April 3, 2012

Thinking and habit in emergency response

READINGS:

Scarry, E. (2011). Thinking in an Emergency. New York, W. W. Norton & Co, Inc.

Kahnemann TBA

GROUP ACTIVITY: Apply concepts from psychology to your data. Plan group “work-in-progress” presentation.

Week twelve

April 10, 2012

Research works-in-progress presentations

Week thirteen

April 17, 2012

Research works-in-progress presentations

Week fourteen

April 24, 2012

Research works-in-progress presentations

Final papers due by 5 pm on May 1, 2012