

# Illness and subjectivity

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## SUMMARY

While anthropology and other social sciences have long explored the social and cultural shaping of the self and personhood, many scholars have recently employed the rubric of “subjectivity” to articulate the links between collective phenomena and the subjective lives of individuals. This graduate seminar will examine “subjectivity” —and related concepts —focusing on topics where such ideas have been particularly fruitful: illness, pathology and suffering. Throughout the course we will critically examine the terms “self,” “personhood” and “subjectivity” —and their relationship to one another. Each week we will discuss a mix of conceptual and ethnographic readings which draw on some common analytical frameworks and categories, including narrative theory, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, biopower and science and technology studies.

## PREREQUISITES AND FORMAT

This course is intended for graduate students. Special provision may be made for selected advanced undergraduates to take part as well. The course will be run in a seminar format, with a minimum of lecturing on the part of the instructor. We will spend the majority of the time closely examining the texts for each week and discussing the problems they address. Please come to each class with two or three questions regarding the reading (whether or not you are giving a presentation that week).

## ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated on the basis of the following requirements and assignments:

- 1) **Participation** in weekly discussions.
- 2) A series of short (500 word) **reading responses**. Beginning week 2 of the course, students will write a response to the readings for each week and post it to the “Discussion Board” section of the course website. The reading response can either take the form of comments or questions that arise from the readings for that week, or a comment on a reading response posted by another student. If you choose to comment on another student’s response you should make clear reference to and engage with the text(s) being discussed as well. Students who would prefer not to share their responses with their classmates, can email them directly to me. It is important that responses be posted (or emailed) by 9 AM each Wednesday.
- 3) A final 3,000 to 4,000 word **paper**, for which you may either a) make a conceptual argument drawing on readings from more than one weeks, or b) use concepts from course readings to interpret findings from your own empirical research.

## Schedule of course sessions and readings:

### Week 1 – Person, self, subjectivity

Marcel Mauss, “A category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self” in *The Category of the person*, Michael Carrithers, et al. Eds. pp. 1-25.

Dan Zahavi. 2003. “Phenomenology of self.” In *The self in neuroscience and psychiatry*, T. Kircher and A. David eds. Cambridge University Press.

Amelie Rorty. "The Vanishing Subject: The Many Faces of Subjectivity" in eds. *Subjectivity*, ed Joao Biehl, Byron Good, Arthur Kleinman, University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Sherry Ortner. (2005) ‘Subjectivity and Cultural Critique’, *Anthropological Theory* 5: 31–52.

T. M. Luhrmann, ‘Subjectivity’, *Anthropological Theory*, 6 (2006), 345 -361

Byron Good, ‘Theorizing the “subject” of Medical and Psychiatric Anthropology’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 18 (2012), 515–535.

#### Used in previous years:

Charles Taylor, “The person,” in *The Category of the person*, Michael Carrithers, et al. Eds. pp. 257-281.

Ian Hacking, “Making up people.” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 28 No. 16 · 17 August 2006.

Todd Meyers. “The patient as a category of thought.”

Talcott Parsons. 1951. “The Sick Role” In *The Social System*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Irving Zola, 1973. Pathways to the Doctor—From Person to Patient. *Social Science and Medicine* 7: 677–689.

## Week 2 – Experience and narrative

Paul Ricoeur, "The Narrative Function." In Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics e3 the Human Sciences* (ch 11).

Byron Good, "The narrative representation of illness," in *Medicine, Rationality and Experience* (ch 6).

Mattingly, Cheryl (1994) 'The Concept of Therapeutic Emplotment', *Social Science and Medicine* 38: 811–22.

Robert Desjarlais. 1994. Struggling Along: The Possibilities for Experience among the Homeless Mentally Ill. *American Anthropologist* 96: 886-901.

Galen Strawson, "Against narrativity," *Ratio* 17, no. 4 (2004): 428-452.

Shaun Gallagher, "Self-narrative in schizophrenia." In *The Self in Neuroscience and Psychiatry*. Kircher and David eds. Cambridge UP, 2003. pp.336-357

### Used in previous years:

Cohler, Bertram J., 'The Human Studies and the Life History: The Social Service Review Lecture', *Social Service Review*, 62 (1988), 552-575.

Saris, A. Jamie. 1995. Telling Stories: Life Histories, Illness Narratives, and Institutional Landscapes. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 19(1): 39-72.

Paul Atkinson, "Narrative turn or blind alley?," *Qualitative Health Research* 7, no. 3 (1997): 325-344.

Victor W. Turner. 1986. "Dewey, Dilthey, and Drama: An Essay in the Anthropology of Experience," in *The Anthropology of Experience*. Edited by V. W. Turner and E. M. Bruner, pp. 33-44. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

C. Jason Throop (2003) "Articulating Experience." *Anthropological Theory* 3(2):219-241.

Robert Desjarlais, *Shelter blues: Sanity and selfhood among the homeless* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997). Selections.

### Week 3 – Metaphor and embodiment

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. 2003. "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility." In *Self and Subjectivity*, Kim Atkins ed. Blackwell.

George Lakoff. 1993 "The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor." In Andrew Ortony (ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (second edition), Cambridge University Press.

Laurence Kirmayer, 1992, The Body's Insistence on Meaning: Metaphor as Presentation and Representation in Illness Experience, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 6(4), pp. 323-46.

Thomas Csordas, 1993 Somatic Modes of Attention. *Cultural Anthropology* 8 (2): 135-156.

Hinton, D., and S. Hinton, 'Panic Disorder, Somatization, and the New Cross-cultural Psychiatry: The Seven Bodies of a Medical Anthropology of Panic', *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 26 (2002), 155-178.

Mol, Annemarie, and John Law, 'Embodied Action, Enacted Bodies: The Example of Hypoglycaemia', *Body & Society*, 10 (2004), 43-62.

#### Used in previous years:

Lakoff G, Johnson M (1980) *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL. pp. 1-68.

Low, S. M, 'Embodied Metaphors: Nerves as Lived Experience', *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*, 1994, 139-162.

Elaine Scarry. Introduction. In *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1985, 3-23.

## Week 4 – Suffering

Kleinman, Arthur, “‘Everything That Really Matters’: Social Suffering, Subjectivity, and the Remaking of Human Experience in a Disordering World’, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 90 (1997), 315–335

Veena Das. 2000. “The act of witnessing: Violence, poisonous knowledge and subjectivity.” In *Violence and subjectivity*. Pp. 205-225. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Joao Biehl. 2004. “Life of the mind: The interface of psychopharmaceuticals, domestic economies, and social abandonment,” *American Ethnologist*, 31, pp. 475-96.

Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman. *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*. Princeton University Press: 2009. Introduction pp.1-12 (read carefully); Part One pp. 25-98 (skim/read around in); Part Four and Conclusion pp. 225-284 (read carefully).

Shweder, Richard A., ‘Suffering in Style’, *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 12 (1988), 479–497.

Joel Robbins. 2013. “Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good.” *JRAI* 19(3): 447–696

### Used in previous years:

C. Jason Throop, *Suffering and Sentiment: Exploring the Vicissitudes of Experience and Pain in Yap* (University of California Press, 2010).

Fassin, Didier, and Estelle d’Halluin, ‘Critical Evidence: The Politics of Trauma in French Asylum Policies’, *Ethos*, 35 (2007), 300-329.

Allan Young, 2002. ‘The Self-Traumatized Perpetrator as a “transient Mental Illness”’, *L’Évolution Psychiatrique*, 67(4): 630-650.

## Week 5 – The self, its disturbances and the work of culture

Irving Hallowell. 1955. The Self and Its Behavioral Environment. In Hallowell, *Culture and Experience*. NY: Schocken Books. pp. 75-110

Gananath Obeyesekere. 1985. "Depression, Buddhism, and the work of culture in Sri Lanka." In A. M. Kleinman & B. Good (Eds.), *Culture and Depression*, (pp. 134-152). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ellen Corin. 2007. "The "Other" of Culture in Psychosis," In Biehl, Good & Kleinman (eds), *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, University of California Press, pp. 273-314.

Louis Sass – "Negative symptoms', common sense, and cultural disembedding in the modern age" in *Schizophrenia, Culture, and Subjectivity: The Edge of Experience*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Hollan, Douglas, 'Self Systems, Cultural Idioms of Distress, and the Psycho-Bodily Consequences of Childhood Suffering', *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 41 (2004), 62–79.

Stefania Pandolfo, 2008. "The Knot of the Soul: Postcolonial Conundrums, Madness, and the Imagination." *Postcolonial Disorders* University of California Press: 329-358.

### Used in previous years:

Sigmund Freud. 1957 [1917] "Mourning and Melancholia." In *A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud* J.R. M.D. Pp. 124-140. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.

Sigmund Freud. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. New York: Avon Books, 1965, pp. 128-154, 274-310, 311-315.

Obeyesekere, Gananath. *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990 (Selections).

Katherine P. Ewing, "The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency," *Ethos* 18, no. 3 (September 1990): 251-278.

## Week 6 – Emotion

Rosaldo, Michelle (1984) "Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling." In Richard Shweder and Robert LeVine (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 137-157.

Levy, Robert I., 'Emotion, Knowing, and Culture', *Culture theory: Essays on mind, self, and emotion*, 1984, 217–234

Lutz, Catherine. "Depression and the Translation of Emotional Words." Arthur Kleinman and Byron Good (eds.). *Culture and Depression*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, pp.63-100.

Menon, Usha, and Richard A. Shweder, 'Kali's Tongue: Cultural Psychology and the Power of Shame in Orissa, India.', in Kitayama, Shinobu (Ed); Markus, Hazel Rose (Ed), (1994). *Emotion and culture: Empirical studies of mutual influence.* , (pp. 89-130). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association

Theresa D. O'Neil,. 1992. "Feeling Worthless": An Ethnographic Investigation of Depression and Problem Drinking at the Flathead Reservation. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*16:447-470.

Emily Martin, 2007. Chapters 8 and 9. in *Bipolar Expeditions: Mania and Depression in American Culture*. Princeton University Press.

### Used in previous years:

Richard A. Shweder, 1994. "You're not sick, you're just in love": Emotion as an interpretive system," In Paul Ekman and Richard J. Davidson (Eds), *The Nature of Emotion*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 32-44.

Janis H. Jenkins, "The state construction of affect: Political ethos and mental health among Salvadoran refugees," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 15, no. 2 (1991): 139-165.



## Week 7 – Affect

Brian Massumi. "The autonomy of affect." In *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Duke University Press Books, 2002)

Connolly, William E., 'Experience & Experiment', *Daedalus*, 135 (2006), 67–75

Berlant, Lauren, 'Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)', *Critical Inquiry*, 33 (2007), 754–780

William Mazzarella. 2009. 'Affect: What is it Good For?' In S. Dube, ed., *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization*. Routledge.

Blackman, Lisa, 'Embodying Affect: Voice-hearing, Telepathy, Suggestion and Modelling the Non-conscious', *Body e3 Society*, 16 (2010), 163–192

Papoulias, Constantina, and Felicity Callard, 'Biology's Gift: Interrogating the Turn to Affect', *Body e3 Society*, 16 (2010), 29–56

Ruth Leys, 'The Turn to Affect: A Critique', *Critical Inquiry*, 37 (2011), 434–472

[Optional: read around in the critical discussion responding to Leys' article]:

- William E. Connolly, 'The Complexity of Intention', *Critical Inquiry*, 37 (2011), 791–798
- Ruth Leys, 'Affect and Intention: A Reply to William E. Connolly', *Critical Inquiry*, 37 (2011), 799–805
- Frank, Adam, and Elizabeth A. Wilson, 'Like-Minded', *Critical Inquiry*, 38 (2012), 870–877
- Altieri, Charles, 'Affect, Intentionality, and Cognition: A Response to Ruth Leys', *Critical Inquiry*, 38 (2012), 878–881
- Leys, Ruth, 'Facts and Moods: Reply to My Critics', *Critical Inquiry*, 38 (2012), 882–891

Used in previous years:

Ahmed, Sara., 'Affective Economies', *Social Text*, 22 (2004), 117-139.

## Week 8 – The self as subject

Michel Foucault. 1982. "The Subject and Power", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 777-795.

Michel Foucault. (1997) "Technologies of the Self." Pp. 221-251 in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*. New York: The New York Press.

Judith Farquhar and Qicheng Zhang, "Biopolitical Beijing: Pleasure, Sovereignty, and Self-Cultivation in China's Capital," *Cultural Anthropology* 20, no. 3 (August 1, 2005): 303-327.

Vinh-kim Nguyen. 2005 Antiretroviral Globalism, Biopolitics, and Therapeutic Citizenship. In *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. A. Ong and S. J. Collier, eds. Pp. 124–144. Malden, MA: Blackwell

Petryna, Adriana. 2004. "Biological citizenship: The Science and Politics of Chernobyl-Exposed Populations" *Osiris*, Vol. 19, pp. 250-26.

Stevenson, Lisa, 'The Psychic Life of Biopolitics: Survival, Cooperation, and Inuit Community', *American Ethnologist*, 39 (2012), 592–613

### Used in previous years:

Paul Rabinow. 1992. "Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality," in Jonathan Crary, ed., *Zone 6: Incorporations*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Didier Fassin, "Another Politics of Life is Possible," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 5 (2009): 44 -60.

## Week 9 – Making up people: technology and subjectivity

Ian Hacking. 2007. 'Kinds of People: Moving Targets', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 151: 285-318.

Kaushik Sunder Rajan, "Subjects of speculation: emergent life sciences and market logics in the United States and India," *American Anthropologist* 107, no. 1 (2005): 19-30.

Joao Biehl. 2010. "Human Pharmakon: Symptoms, Technologies, Subjectivities," In: *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities*. pp. 213-231

Allan Ehrenberg. 2010. "The "Social" Brain: An Epistemological Chimera And A Sociological Fact," Francisco Ortega & Fernando Vidal, Eds., *Neurocultures. Glimpses Into An Expanding Universe*. New York/Frankfurt/Berlin: Peter Lang.

Allan Young. 2007. PTSD of the virtual kind – trauma and resilience in post 9/11 America. In *Trauma and Memory: Reading, Healing, and Making Law*. Austin Sarat, Nadav Davidovitch, and Michal Alberstein eds., pp. 21-48. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.

Lock, Margaret, 'Unbound Subjectivities and New Biomedical Technologies', in *A Companion to Psychological Anthropology*, ed. by Conerly Casey and Robert B. Edgerton (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), pp. 298–314

### Used in previous years:

Ian Hacking, "Our Neo-Cartesian Bodies in Parts," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 1 (2007).

Junko Kitanaka. *Depression in Japan: Psychiatric Cures for a Society in Distress*. (Princeton University Press, 2011).

## Week 10 – Neuro: engagements, experiments and entanglements

Latour, Bruno, 'Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern', *Critical inquiry*, 30 (2004), 225–248

Rose, Nikolas, and Joelle M. Abi-Rached, *Neuro: The New Brain Sciences and the Management of the Mind* (Princeton University Press, 2013) – Selections.

Roepstorff, Andreas, and Chris Frith, 'Neuroanthropology or Simply Anthropology? Going Experimental as Method, as Object of Study, and as Research Aesthetic', *Anthropological Theory*, 12 (2012), 101–111

Daniel Lende and Greg Downey, 2012. "Neuroanthropology and the encultured brain." In *The Encultured Brain: An Introduction to Neuroanthropology*. MIT Press.

Slaby, Jan, and Suparna Choudhury, 'Proposal for a Critical Neuroscience', in *Critical Neuroscience*, ed. by Suparna Choudhury and Jan Slaby (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 27–51

Elizabeth A Wilson, 'Neurological Entanglements: The Case of Paediatric Depressions, SSRIs and Suicidal Ideation', *Subjectivity*, 4 (2011), 277–297.

## Other modules/topics used in earlier versions of the course

### **Intimacy and care**

Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality*. (Duke University Press, 2006).

### **Violence and the psychic life of power**

Judith Butler. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford University Press. Pp.1-30, 83-105.

Veena Das. 2000. "The act of witnessing: Violence, poisonous knowledge and subjectivity." In *Violence and subjectivity*. Pp. 205-225. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stefania Pandolfo, 2008. "The Knot of the Soul: Postcolonial Conundrums, Madness, and the Imagination." *Postcolonial Disorders* University of California Press: 329-358.

Lisa Stevenson. 2009. "The Suicidal Wound and Fieldwork among Canadian Inuit." In *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*. Edited by John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi. U California Press.

### **November 18 – Therapy and the politics of recognition**

Wendy Brown. 1995. "Wounded Attachments," in *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton University Press, pp. 52-76.

Carol Cain, "Personal stories: Identity acquisition and self-understanding in Alcoholics Anonymous," *Ethos* 19, no. 2 (1991): 210-253.

Eva Illouz, "Triumphant Suffering," in *Saving the modern soul: Therapy, emotions, and the culture of self-help* (Univ of California Pr, 2008), pp. 152-196.

E. Summerson Carr, *Scripting Addiction: The Politics of Therapeutic Talk and American Sobriety* (Princeton University Press, 2010). Selections.

## Disordered states

- Listen to: Byron Good, "Theorizing the 'Subject' of Medical and Psychiatric Anthropology," The 2010 Marett Memorial Lecture.  
<http://somatosphere.net/2010/09/subjectivity-politics-and-medical.html>
- Good, B., Subandi & Delvecchio Good, M.J. 2007, The Subject of Mental Illness: Psychosis, Mad Violence, and Subjectivity in Indonesia, in Biehl, Good & Kleinman (eds), *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations*, University of California Press, pp. 243-272.
- Begoña Aretxaga, 2008. "Madness and the Politically Real: Reflections on Violence in Post-dictatorial Spain." *Postcolonial Disorders* University of California Press: 43-61.
- Anne M. Lovell (2013), "Elusive Travelers: Russian Narcology, Transnational Toxicomanias and the great French Ecological Experiment", in Eugene Raikhel and William Garriott eds., *Addiction Trajectories*, Duke University Press.