



Medical Anthropology and Doing Social Research: Amplifying Voices and Putting Theory into Practice

Sohayla El Fakahany
Spring 2024

“In every community there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart there is the power to do it.”

Marianne Williamson

This course introduces students to the field of medical anthropology, exploring its historical and contemporary approaches. Students will gain an understanding of the social and cultural determinants of health and illness, and how to conduct person-centered social research. The course will also cover the basics of writing academic articles and reports.

- The sessions are hybrid; some are face-to-face, and others are online.
(You can attend online only if needed)

Some of the specific topics that will be covered include:

- What is medical anthropology and what is its approach?
- What is medical anthropology and what is its contemporary approach?
- How can we understand the social and cultural determinants of health and illness?
- What is the difference between qualitative and quantitative research methods?
- What are the frameworks and the tools used to conduct person-centered social research?
- How to balance between voices from the field and theory?
- What is the role of humanitarian aid in today's world?

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Cover sufficient conceptual and background material on the selected topic.
- Reflect on the literature directly related to theories of medical anthropology.
- Compare and contrast between different research methods and tools.
- Understand how to write academic articles and reports.
- Conduct social research on a topic of the student's choice.

This course is a great option for students who are interested in learning more about health, culture, development, and society. It is also a valuable introduction to the field of medical anthropology and social research.

About your instructor

Sohayla is a social researcher, medical anthropologist, and sexual and reproductive health and rights specialist, based in Cairo, Egypt. She is a research consultant at the American University of Beirut, and she is also a founding member of the East Mediterranean Federation of Sexual Health (EMFeSH). With her advocacy roles, she is focused on intersectionality, structural violence, and gender justice. Throughout her career, she worked on producing journal articles, technical reports, proposals, case studies, evaluation reports, and training manuals. Her research style merges theoretical and fieldwork approaches. She holds an M.A in Social Anthropology and a B.A in Political Science from the American University in Cairo.

Contact Information

Email: sohaylaelfakahany@gmail.com

Phone Number: 01124101411

Meetings:
Mondays 5:30pm – 8:00pm

Course Outline

Part 1: Anthropological Approaches

Week 1 (22/04) – What is Anthropology

- What is Anthropology?

Readings:

1. Delaney and Kaspin. (2017). Introduction: Disorientation and Orientation in In Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology
2. Eriksen, Thomas H. (2010). “Anthropology: Comparison and Context” In Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology.

Week 2 (29/04) - What is Medical Anthropology? A Biocultural Approach (Online)

- Medical Anthropology as a field.
- What is a biocultural approach to research?

Readings:

1. Medical Anthropology: A biocultural Approach
2. Introduction in The Routledge Handbook of Medical Anthropology

Week 3 (06/05 -> 09/05) – The Body in Anthropology

***Rescheduled Sham El Nesim -> Thurs 9**

Readings:

1. Delaney and Kaspin. (2017). Our Bodies, Our Selves in In Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology

OR

Gendering Medicine

2. Ortner, S. (1974) Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?
3. Martin, E. (1991). The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles.

Part 2: Social Research

Week 4 (13/05) - Understanding the Social behind Development?

- What is social research?
- What is the difference between qualitative research and quantitative research?
- What are some social research framework and methodological tools?

Readings:

1. Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). Chapter 2: Thinking Like a Researcher in Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices
2. Ahmad, S. et al. (2019). Qualitative v/s. Quantitative Research- A Summarized Review

➔ **Assignment 1:** Create a brief literature review using a specific conceptual framework.

Week 5 (20/05) – Doing Social Research in the Arab World

- What are the frameworks and the tools used to conduct person-centered social research? (Interviews and Focus Group Discussions)
- How do you conduct social research in the Arab world?
- Project Introduction

Readings:

1. Gill, P., Baillie, J. Interviews and focus groups in qualitative research: an update for the digital age
2. Tessler. (2022) Introduction: Origins, Approach, and an Arab Sensibility in Social Science Research in the Arab World and Beyond

➔ **Assignment 2:** Prepare for pitching your projects.

Week 6 (27/05) – Amplifying Voices and Project Brainstorming

- How do we write reports and amplify voices but still merge them with theory.
- Project pitch and workshop.

Readings:

1. Report Example on merging theory with fieldwork:
Navigating Egyptian Youth's Coming of Age: Voices of Experiences and Voices of Experts on SRHR

➔ **Assignment 3:** Conduct a semi-structured interview on any topic of your choosing.

Part 3: Marginalization as a Developmental Social Category

Week 7 (03/06) – Youth and Women's Health in Conservative Settings

- Youth health in the Arab region
- Arab Women's health and what it means in the world of development.

Readings:

1. DeJong J, El-Khoury G. Reproductive health of Arab young people. BMJ.
2. AlQuaiz, A.J.M., Kazi, A. (2021). An Overview of Women's Health in the Arab World in Handbook of Healthcare in the Arab World. Springer

➔ **Assignment 4:** Write an autoethnographic piece on a memory where you had medical questions but were not able to find answers.

Week 8 (10/06) – Refugee Health

Readings:

1. Sawsan Abdulrahim & Marwan Khawaja (2011) The Cost of Being Palestinian in Lebanon
2. Sohayla El-Fakahany, Emile Whaibeh, Lina Abou Habib, Faysal El-Kak. 2023. Navigating Intersectional Realities: On Syrian Refugee Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Lebanon. <https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/faculties-and->

schools/commerce-law-and-management/research-entities/scis/documents/2_SRHR%20Lebanon_Intersectionality%20report.pdf

**Week 9 (17/06 -> 24/06) – Humanitarian Settings and Intervention (Online)
(Rescheduled for Eid Al-Adha)**

- Talk by Samir El Hawary, visiting lecturer of International and Public Affairs in Colombia University on humanitarian aid and development.
Focus Areas: Humanitarianism, Peacebuilding, Development, Complex Emergencies, Forced Displacement

➔ Assignment 6: Finalize projects for Exhibition.

Week 10 (Thursday 27/06 – 8PM) Exhibition and Presentations (Date to be discussed)

- ➔ Students present their projects to their classmates, fellows, and invitees.