



V-SAK 25/24: Endring av emnebeskrivelse, obligatoriske aktiviteter og eksamensform i SOSANT2550 Medical Anthropology

Saken legges frem for Programrådet:

- ☒ Til behandling
- ☐ Til orientering
- ☐ Til diskusjon
- ☐ Til uttalelse

Forslagsstiller: Emneansvarlig våren 2025, Wenzel Geissler.

BAKGRUNN FOR FORSLAG

The course description is completely revised from previous iterations, and the teaching outline and reading list will be new except for some particularly successful texts we used in the past (reading list to be submitted later).

We would like to replace the home exam with a traditional “school exam”. This is not just because of the obvious problems with AI-use in home exams, but because we think that home exams do not give the student sufficient scope to demonstrate some main knowledge aims of the course, notably the ‘knowledge of different anthropological approaches...’ (which should not be the knowledge where to find them, but familiarity with them) and the ability to link medical anthropological issues to broader anthropological themes, as well as, among the “skills” aims, the ability to look at diverse healthcare practices and critically analyse policy and technology with an anthropological gaze



(which, again, should be based on internalised knowledge). Importantly, among the “competence” goals, the students should gain the capacity to communicate anthropological ideas orally and in writing, and in scholarly and public debates, which requires fluency in them, rather than the ability to look things up. Overall, home exams (especially, but not only due to AI) have little discriminatory power, and if exams are marked (which should be open for discussion), then they should allow distinctions.

We did consider as possible alternative using a series of diverse coursework tasks that could be submitted as portfolio exam, but our previous experience with this – having used weekly written coursework during the 2120 Regional Ethnography Africa course last year, was mixed: the students produced beautiful work and quite surprising achievements, but some (few) students failed to respond, and also, reading up to 30 1-2 page essays every week and providing extensive written feedback (which students used for revisions towards their portfolio exam), was quite a large amount of work for the teachers. Moreover, the diversity of texts and approaches for this coursework were only suitable for a pass/fail marking, and we probably should not have too many exams like that - not because marking as such is a virtue, but because the students need marks on their transcript if they want to apply for masters elsewhere.

FORSLAG

SOSANT2550 – Medical anthropology

Course content

Medical anthropology studies the universal human experience of health and illness, and practices and technologies of medicine and treatment, across societies and cultures, in different historical and local situations, and under the impact of global political, economic and environmental changes. As anthropology students, you can apply your knowledge to concrete problems of health, and if you come from other subjects, this interdisciplinary field is a great introduction to social anthropology. Medical anthropology covers a broad range of themes related to body and health: classics like



UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

family and lifecourse, faith and the afterlife, healing and ritual, and topics like political economy and the state, biomedicine, science and technology, or imperialism and historical change.

Studying medical anthropology, you learn about existential experiences shared among humans of different places and times, about human diversity and creativity and entanglements with non-human life, and not least about inequalities of class and gender as well as racism that affect human opportunities to live well. We will cover topics like illness narratives and care, diagnosis and medicines, biomedicine, alternative practices and planetary medicine, and touch upon issues like childbirth, mental health, toxicity and environment, occupational health, disability, infrastructure and science, hospitals, health systems pharmaceuticals and epidemics.

Learning outcome

Knowledge:

- Knowledge of different anthropological approaches to key issues of health and healing around the world
- Understanding of biomedicine in relation to local conditions, global historical forces, and other forms of medical thinking and practice
- Grasp of medical anthropology as a subfield of general anthropology, its history and its ties into general anthropological themes
- Insight into the role of medical anthropology as a tool of social and political critique.

Skills:

- Ability to compare and link key current authors and texts in medical anthropology
- Capability to discuss recent theoretical approaches to issues of health and disease globally
- Ability to approach familiar healthcare practices and situations with an anthropological gaze
- Capacity to critically analyse aspects of health policies, practices and technologies



UNIVERSITETET I OSLO

General competence:

- Capacity to communicate medical anthropological ideas orally and in writing
- Competence to anthropologically reflect on and engage in scholarly discussions and public debates about health, illness and medicine
- Insights that have the potential to contribute to improving health care and wellbeing in diverse contexts

Teaching

Lectures

Obligatory activities

- One-page (max 500 word) essay using anthropological readings and ideas to reflect on a self-chosen health-related topic.
- Presentation, max five minutes, about one monograph from the reading list
- One-page (max 500 words) reading summary on one monograph from the reading list; written feedback will be provided.

Examination

- 4-hour written exam