



BODY, HEALTH AND SOCIETY

Faculty of Humanities
Charles University

INTRODUCTION - LECTURER

Alžběta Wolfová

Specialization:

- Social Anthropology; Medical Anthropology; Anthropology/ Sociology of CAM

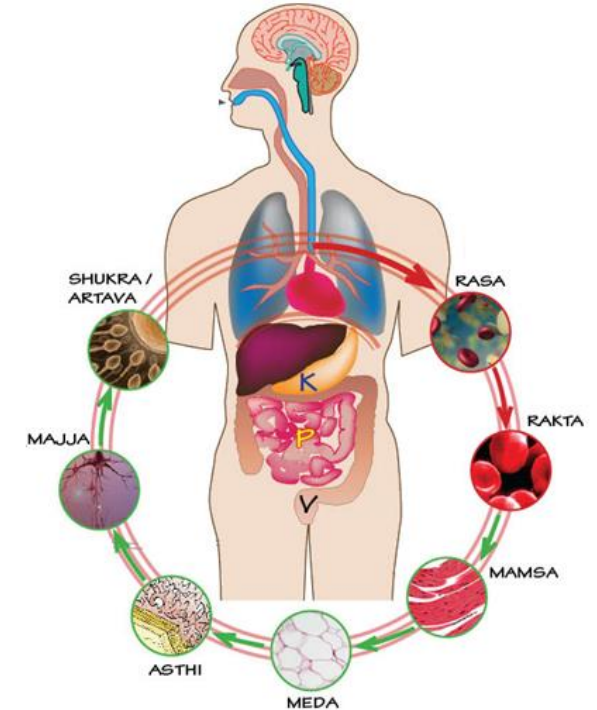
Research

- The practice of Ayurveda in the Czech Republic
 - How people think and practice their bodies differently in Ayurveda practice?

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Office Hours: Thursday 5-6PM, room 5008

Course's pg in moodle: <http://moodle.fhs.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=1076#section-1>



INTRODUCTION - STUDENTS

- Name
- Year
- Affiliation (FHS CZ/ ? ?)
- (Study program)

Why have you chosen this course?

- What are your expectations?
- What are you interested in?
- Do you have an idea for the BA/ MA thesis yet?
- What are your experiences with (medical) anthropology/ sociology?

WHERE ARE WE?: SITUATING THE COURSE

- Social Sciences?
 - Sociocultural anthropology?
 - Sociology?
 - Body?

WHERE ARE WE?: SITUATING THE COURSE

(THE VERY BASIC SIMPLIFIED DEFINITIONS)

- **Social Sciences?**
 - society and the relationship among individuals within a society
 - Anthropology; Economics; Psychology; Sociology etc.
 - positivist vs. interpretivist
 - empirical
- **Sociocultural anthropology?**
 - The study of human and human behaviour within a society/culture
 - emphasis on field (Novotná 2018)
- **Sociology?**
 - The study social organization: social institutions, patterns of social relationship, social interactions
 - emphasis on theory (Ibid.)
- ➔ • **Body?**

MAIN TERMS

- Culture

„man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.“ (Geertz 1973:5)

- Society

„the people who interact in such a way as to share a common culture“

➔ Culture and society are intricately related. A culture consists of the “objects” of a society, whereas a society consists of the people who share a common culture. (Zgourides, Zgourides 2000: 27-28)

THE MAIN QUESTION IS

Why are people behaving the way they are?



What are relations between society – (culture) – individual (body)?

culture \longleftrightarrow body

What function does the body has in relation to people`s behaviour?

Central role of the social relations of power structure/order and meaning.

AIM OF THE COURSE

- To introduce social sciences` concepts and theories providing answers for questions:
 - What function does the body has in relation to people`s behaviour?
 - What are relations between society – (culture) – individual (body)?
- To introduce some of the anthropological and sociological approaches to study social reality
- To support critical reading and writing/presentation skills
- To prepare for a part of CESS exam (internal students)

WHICH MEANS THAT

We will not „seek the representations of what the body is but the ways in which the body is a problem; a problem in a positive sense – not just an „obstacle“, but a vehicle for thought and action.“ (Osbourne 1996: 192 in Fraser, Greco 2005:3)

We will also „focus on the variety of problems the body poses, and demands it places in its encounter with (the task of) theory. We will reflect on what different formulations can do, what specific tasks they accomplish, rather than deciding on how „right“ and „accurate“ as accounts of what the body is“ (Fraser, Greco 2005: 3) or what kind of the function does it play in relation to human behaviour.

SYLLABUS

Bodies and social (dis)order

2. *Bodies and social (dis)order*
2. 10.10. Techniques of the body (Marcel Mauss)
3. 17.10. The two bodies (Mary Douglas)
4. 24.10. Embodied information in face-to-face interaction (Erving Goffmann)
5. 31.10. Habitus, body as both, the outcome and structuring principle (Pierre Bourdieu)
6. 7.11. Docile bodies (Michel Foucault)
7. 14.11. Embodiment (Robert Murphy)
8. 21.11. Body and subject (guest: Lenka Polčová)

Exercising power, shaping bodies

9. 28.11. Body as a discourse negotiation (Judith Butler+ Emily Martin)
10. 5.12. Body as a locus of cultural resistance (Aihwa Ong)
11. 12.12. Body – a central nod in a symbolic and social structure (Nancy Scheper Hughes)
12. 19.1. Bodies incommensurable and the menopause (Margaret Lock)
13. 9.1. Summarizing the topics; connecting the concepts

CLASSES DESIGN

- Revision of the reading
- Working in groups
- Ppt presentation

- Guided discussion
- Starting with the discussion question assigned to the reading

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

Attendance: at least 70% of sessions.

- **Active class participation 10%**
- Complete **4 synopsis** from a compulsory literature (you can choose from 10 papers or chapters assigned to each class) **30%**
- **Final essay 60%**

HOW TO WORK WITH THE TEXT? THE VERY IDEAL

REVIEWING, CRITICAL READING AND WRITING

- Summarizing the content (what is it about)
- Defining the main argument (what is its main thesis)
- Situating text – keep in mind that the text is a product of a particular situation (a product of its time – e.g. goes along the mainstream of the discipline or contrary – criticises the leading way of thinking of the time)
 - Theoretical – methodological assumption (paradigm)
 - Position of the author (personal – political)
- Are there some gaps in argumentation? Does everything makes sense in the logic of the text?
- i.e. comparing to other texts (what is similar, what is different)
- The overlap to practice (how would you use this approach/ method/ concept in your research?)

SYNOPSIS

- Introduce (and explain) the main argument
- Contextualize
- Ask question

- 1-2 paragraphs long

- due to the day before the class with that reading assigned

Upload to MOODLE

- You will always have a „manual“ for the reading!

FINAL ESSAY

- length: 1250-1750 words
- based on at least 3 titles from the field of social sciences (at least one from the course mandatory literature)
- the consultation of the topic with the lecturer needed before you start

Essay in form of the Compilation

- discussion/introduction of a selected topic, comparing different theoretical approaches to it
- the arguments have to be rooted in literature!!!! (plagiarism: <http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/students/plagiarism.html>)
- due to the end of January

BODY IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

(LOCK 1993)

Body as a medium of social interaction might seem a core of anthropological research

- 17th cent + * modern science
- Cartesian assumption – the world is made by the thinking nonmaterial element and by material substance, rationally accessible
- objective vs. subjective
- → body falls into the domain of natural sciences
- body = universal biological base for a cultural filling
- from 20th cent 70' - the interest from the area of social sciences
- decentralization of the physical body from the domain of natural science question of the assumption of western epistemology – a basic for a production of natural facts
- relativization of the dichotomies nature vs. culture, self vs. others, mind vs. body

WHAT IS BODY?

- What is the body?
 - What is the relationship with the self?
 - What is its relationship with the society?
 - What is its relationship with the culture?
 - How can we study it?

WHAT IS BODY AGAIN

(ONTOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW)

- **an object**
 - the one we have – a possession
- **the subject**
 - the one we are – the self extension
- **the process, performativity**
 - the one we become

STUDY OF THE BODY AND PRAXIS

SOACIAL CHANGES THAT HELP TO TURN TO BODY IN SOCIAL THEORY (FRASER, GRECO 2005:2)

- rise of „somatic society“ (Turner 1996: 6)
 - transition to post-industrial society
 - rise of opportunities for leisure
 - importance of consumption
 - erosion of „puritanical orthodoxy“ (Fraser, Greco 2005: 2)
 - legitimization of pleasure – bodily hedonism
- transformation of intimacy (Giddens 1991 a)
 - body as a vehicle of new emotional intensities in interpersonal interaction
- shift in demographic structure of western societies
- epidemiological shift
 - „no man`s land between health and disease“
 - still not possible curing conditions with life-threatening potential
 - illnesses integrated into patterns of work and leisure
 - living with illness makes body a problematic aspect of life
 - emphasis on prevention
 - the body no longer province of specialist
- development of biomedical technologies
 - limits of human body, personhood and identity

NEXT CLASS

Techniques of the body

Compulsory reading:

- Reading: Mauss, Marcel (2007) [1935]. Techniques of the body. In Farquhar, J. and Lock, M. *Beyond the Body Proper*, pp. 50-68.

Reading question

- What are techniques of the body?
- How they are acquired?
- Are all the ways of handling body techniques? Which are not and how are they acquired?
- Are they conscious / unconscious?
- What is habitus?

Discussion questions

- Why are people handling their bodies the way they are?
- What is the relationship between individual bodies and the society?
- Can you think about some competing theory explaining this phenomenon?
- Can you find some other culturally specific techniques of the body among people present in class?

LITERATURE

- FRASER, M., GRECO, M. (2007) *The body: A reader*. Routledge, Oxon, New York.
- GEERTZ, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic books. New York.
- NOVOTNÁ, H. (2018). Oral presentation. Prague.
- ZGOURIDES, G. D., & ZGOURIDES, C. S. (2000). *Sociology*. Foster City, CA, IDG Books Worldwide.