Harkness Tower, Yale University
Since its inception in the late 1950s, medical anthropology has been broadly defined as the study of health, illness, and healing through time and across cultural settings. Medical anthropologists study human suffering and wellbeing, as well as the medical systems in place to impact health and healing. Around the world, medical anthropologists analyze the relations among health, illness, disability, social institutions, culture, and political-economic power, combining biomedical perspectives with those that address social and cultural problems through health advocacy and activism. Their work points to the differences in the ways bodies count: who falls ill and why; who has access to health resources; and where healing is sought.

Medical anthropologists have contributed to the study of human health across the life cycle, probing issues of human reproduction and growth to disease and death. They have examined questions of stigma, marginality, and the disabled body. They have probed critical issues of biopolitics, immigration, race, citizenship, social inequality, and health disparities. They also look at the intersections of disease and environment, and the structural violence triggered by processes of globalization, neoliberalism, global capitalism, and war. In the midst of these macrostructural forces, medical anthropologists have examined the social construction of illness categories, the individual illness narratives used to articulate them, and the social and political hierarchies such categories may produce or maintain.

On a disciplinary level in North America, medical anthropology is now very firmly entrenched within the larger field of anthropology, through its 1,300-member Society for Medical Anthropology (SMA) and its accompanying professional journal, Medical Anthropology Quarterly. Several other professional journals are devoted to medical anthropology, including Social Science & Medicine, which examines the intersection of health research, health policy, and the social sciences, including medical anthropology. The practicing side of the profession is also prospering, as seen every two years when the SMA meets with the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA) and medical anthropological themes are especially prominent. Given its practice orientation, medical anthropology has often been described as an “applied” discipline, engaging fruitfully with the allied health sciences (medicine, nursing, public health, bioethics, psychiatry, human biology, nutrition, occupational therapy, and social work). Medical anthropology is now well ensconced as a health-related social science in universities around the world and in funding and policy settings. These include the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the World Health Organization.
(WHO), as well as numerous private, governmental, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In addition to its practice orientation, medical anthropology boasts a rich theoretical and empirical scholarly tradition. Many critically acclaimed medical anthropological ethnographies address topics ranging from embodiment and local biologies to the health problems engendered by structural and political violence. Authors of such work often engage across the social sciences and humanities disciplines, drawing upon history, philosophy, psychology, political science, religious studies, and women’s studies perspectives in their medical anthropological writing.

With its 50-year-old foundation solidly in place, medical anthropology is currently expanding outward and interacting in many productive ways across disciplinary boundaries. In her SMA presidential address, Yale faculty member Marcia Inhorn described ten key areas of medical anthropological interdisciplinarity. In 2009, Yale hosted SMA’s first international conference on the theme of “medical anthropology at the intersections,” highlighting medical anthropology’s interdisciplinarity. More than 1,000 scholars from 48 countries attended the conference, bespeaking the importance of medical anthropology as a growing global discipline. An edited conference volume, entitled Medical Anthropology at the Intersections, features seminal addresses by ten plenary speakers (Duke University Press, 2012).

Yale’s growing prominence in medical anthropology is reflected in the hosting of this historic conference, the presence of Social Science & Medicine’s medical anthropology editorial office at Yale, the initiation and development of courses and programs in evolutionary medicine, and a medical anthropology colloquium series co-hosted with Harvard University. Six Yale faculty members—Richard Bribiescas, Sean Brotherton, Marcia Inhorn, Karen Nakamura, Catherine Panter-Brick, and Brian Wood—specialize in a dozen key areas of medical anthropology and offer a broad range of courses in medical anthropology theory, research, methods, and applications. In addition, they lead interdisciplinary initiatives in collaboration with many affiliated faculty, centers, and departments across the Yale campus. Topics, courses, and affiliations are described below.
TOPICS IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

We reflect on the significance of theoretical and practical debates in medical anthropology as the most interdisciplinary sub-discipline of anthropology.

Anthropology of the Body

By examining the body as a subject of anthropological, historical, psychological, medical and literary inquiry, faculty in this area examine how different forms of knowledge and their attendant discursive regimes have shaped and informed debates about the body, including questioning assumptions about sex, sexuality, gender, class, ethnicity, race, and disability/ability. Faculty working in this area currently focus on the persistence of the mind/body dualism, experiences of embodiment/alienation, phenomenology of the body, Foucauldian notions of bio-politics, bio-power and the ethics of the self, the medicalized body, the racialized body, and the gendered body, among other salient themes.

Critical Studies of Health and Medicine

The interconnected issues that faculty in this area pursue examine historical, cultural, environmental, economic, and political considerations to provide a comprehensive global overview of the many factors that influence the health of individuals and populations. Buttressed by rich ethnographic case studies, our projects of inquiry and critique in this area explore medicine as a cultural system; different medical traditions; cross-cultural medicine; medicalization of the life-cycle; the social lives of medicines; biomedical technologies; social suffering; and the political dimensions of health policy.

Evolutionary Medicine

The concentration in evolutionary medicine provides research and theory training on health topics and issues within the framework of Darwinian evolution and life history theory. Areas of research and training include the evolution of pathogen virulence, diseases of lifestyle such as reproductive cancers, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, and obesity. The evolutionary biology of human reproduction, growth, and aging are also covered with an emphasis on the significance of human biological diversity, comparative evolutionary biology, and the evolution of biological responses to ecological challenges. The concentration also addresses present and future environmental issues that are likely to affect human health on a global level, such as the prevalence of pollution-borne endocrine disruptors, climate change, and the emergence of novel environments in association with globalization, western acculturation, migration, and urbanization.
Disability Studies

Disability Studies understands disability as a cultural construct. This does not mean that physical or mental impairments are not real, but that conceptions of the body and its possibilities and impossibilities, normativities and abnormalities are constantly mediated through social norms and mores, as well as the physical and social institutions in which we move. Disability Studies examines the contiguity of the disability category from social, legal, institutional, biomedical and personal perspectives, using both transhistorical and cross-cultural analysis. As with the allied disciplines of Women’s Studies and Queer Studies, Disability Studies has an intimate and often fraught relationship with activist communities, state actors, non-governmental organizations, and other mechanisms of social stasis and change.

Food, Nutrition, and Social Change

Food and nutrition are biocultural topics par excellence, demanding an interdisciplinary understanding of the intersections between society, biology, and health. Research and training emphasize the need to integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches to better integrate the multidimensional significance of food and health within physiological, psychosocial, sociocultural, economic, and political research and policy frameworks. Topics include cross-cultural perspectives on food insecurity, famine, seasonality, the adequacy of early childhood growth, and adult reproduction and work capacity. Three major thematic areas address the socio-cultural, biocultural, and political dimensions of food in the wake of social change; this includes symbolic and ritual dimensions, evolutionary and nutritional aspects, and ecological and economic dimensions of food production, distribution, and consumption.

Gender and Health

Through ethnographic engagement in women’s and men’s lives, faculty in this area contribute to the rich theoretical debates surrounding gender and health, including issues of embodiment, agency, identity, suffering, and resistance to (dis)ease-producing social relations and conditions. Topics highlighted in this area include the intersectionality of racism, poverty, patriarchy, and other forms of social difference in the production of women’s health problems; social construction and “disciplining” of the female body; women’s changing health needs across the life cycle; medicalization and the technological imperative in women’s health; and ultimately, how women narrativize and make meaning of their suffering. Women’s reproductive lives and their uses of reproductive technologies, both “high-tech” and “low-tech,” are a major theme. In addition, men’s health and masculinity studies are a major emphasis in the research, teaching, and publications of two Yale faculty members, who focus on men and reproduction.

Global Health

Global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on achieving health equity on a local, national, and global level. Medical Anthropology offers a critical
understanding of the determinants of transnational health issues, as well as offering culturally
salient, sustainable solutions to address physical, emotional, and social suffering. Faculty
working in this area offer an interdisciplinary overview and a practical understanding of crucial
life-and-death issues, to understand why critical health problems persist even where effective
remedies are at hand, and thus to understand the close relationships between health inequalities
and social inequalities. Faculty working in global health provide a critical and reflective agenda
on health problems and weave together social sciences and biomedical health-related literature to
develop a relevant and grounded perspective on health problems and health interventions in the
world today.

Global Mental Health

Global mental health is a new movement of social importance. It rests on a call for action to
address glaring health disparities between mental health needs and access to quality care,
highlighting human rights principles. The multi-faceted ways in which mental health, poverty,
and violence intersect are reviewed, with a focus on the innovations recently developed in the
field of global mental health, including community-based interventions and the psychological,
social, and governmental dimensions of resilience, as opposed to risk and vulnerability to life
adversity. Current debates on trauma, social suffering, and structural violence for displaced
populations such as refugees and asylum-seekers are reviewed, as are responses to violent
conflict for under-studied groups, such as the new generation of adolescents. The scope and
implementation of health programs and the work of human rights and international aid workers
in the midst of intractable conflicts and fragile states are an important issue. A focus on global
mental health thus provides a critical and reflective agenda and specific knowledge of research
and intervention efforts regarding mental health-related issues in the world today.

Health Disparities and Health Equity

Current debates in medical anthropology and global health specifically focus on health
disparities and health equity. Faculty working in this area adopt a biocultural approach, based on
the understanding that biological and cultural issues intersect in matters of health research and
health intervention. Four thematic areas are addressed including: biomedical perspectives on
health; poverty, inequality, and health; health interventions; and structural violence and health.
Knowledge of conceptual and theoretical issues and debates in the field of health disparities is
emphasized, especially those located at the intersection of biology and society. Faculty in this
area encourage critical thinking regarding health disparity and equity issues across cultures and
their relevance for research and policy, using compelling case studies of health disparities and
equity issues in a variety of global sites.
Research Design and Methods

Medical anthropology students at Yale receive extensive training in ethnographic research design and methods. Core courses focuses on ethics and entrée to the research setting, developing and designing an ethnographic research project, a variety of approaches to interview-based and observational field methods, and methods of data recording, documentation, and analysis. Issues of research significance and the broader impacts of ethnographic work are also emphasized. Most doctoral students at Yale receive extensive mentoring in the development of dissertation field research proposals, including the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (DDIG). Throughout graduate training at Yale, issues of research accountability and professional development are emphasized. In addition, we provide specific training in lab-based hormonal, stress, and genetics research, and in the integration of quantitative and qualitative field-based data analysis and dissemination.

Science and Technology Studies

The field of science and technology studies (STS) turns a critical lens on the production and reproduction of science, technology, and biomedicine. STS scholars are interested in entering the “backstage” world of laboratories, clinics, operating theaters, pharmaceutical trials, and clinical research sites to offer critical accounts of science, technology, and medicine in the making. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary area of feminist technoscience studies focuses critical attention on reproductive technologies, such as contraception, abortion, and assisted reproductive technologies, challenging the potential for overuse and abuse of these technologies when applied to women’s bodies in a variety of global sites. At Yale, faculty in STS study the practices of science and medicine, including the application of both low and high technology to patients’ bodies. The relationship between ethics and social justice are explored, including issues of access and distribution of technological interventions across resource-poor settings. Another major area of concern involves the relationship between religion and local moral systems, particularly when global biotechnologies such as in vitro fertilization (IVF) enter local clinical settings around the world.
FACULTY BIO SKETCHES

Richard Bribiescas is Professor of Anthropology and Chair of the Anthropology Department, Director of the Yale Reproductive Ecology Laboratory and the Program in Reproductive Ecology, a research initiative sponsored by the Yale Institute for Biospheric Studies (YIBS). He received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from Harvard University and has been on the Yale University faculty since 1998. Bribiescas’ most notable research is on the evolutionary biology and endocrinology of human and comparative life histories, including reproduction, aging, and metabolism. He has conducted field research among the Ache of Paraguay and populations in Venezuela, Japan, and the United States, as well as among various species of non-human primates. He is very interested in applying life history concepts to evolutionary medicine and contemporary health challenges.

He is the author of *Men: Evolutionary and Life History* (Harvard University Press, 2006), a comprehensive examination of the evolutionary biology of human males, which was awarded the 2007 Bronze Medal in the category of science by the Independent Book Publishers Association. In 2007, he was also awarded the Medal of 600 Years Anniversary of the Restoration of the Krakow Academy by Jagiellonian University for his research in human reproductive ecology. Bribiescas serves on the editorial board of the *American Journal of Human Biology* and *Evolution, Medicine, and Public Health*. His courses include Introduction to Biological Anthropology, Human Evolutionary Biology and Life History, as well as graduate seminars in behavioral endocrinology, reproductive ecology, and life history theory.

P. Sean Brotherton is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology. His research and teaching interests are concerned with the critical study of health, medicine, the state, subjectivity, and the body, drawing upon contemporary social theory and postcolonial studies. He conducts fieldwork in the Caribbean and Latin American, particularly Cuba and Jamaica, and is the author of *Revolutionary Medicine: Health and the Body in Post-Soviet Cuba* (Duke University Press, 2012). This book explores how bodily health and physical well being, in a context of economic insecurity, is interpreted through ethical and moral valences that embody the past and, importantly, reflect new reconfigurations of power and statecraft.

Brotherton is currently working on two projects that build on his interests regarding medicine, morality, and power. The first explores forms of what he terms “transactional humanitarianism,” that is, an assemblage of traveling actors, experts, practices, and specialized knowledge that are collectively marketed under the umbrella term “humanitarian,” yet are ostensibly imbricated in
market relations of economic and shifting moral values of exchange. This work draws on several case studies, including the Barrio Adentro (Inside the Barrio) program, where over 20,000 Cuban physicians are working in Venezuelan communities providing medical care in exchange for hard currency and subsidized petroleum, popularly known as “the oil-for-aid deal.” Another project he is developing in the Caribbean examines how popular conceptions of the “infected body,” produced through intersecting discourses of colonization, biomedicine, and traditional medicine, anchor notions of psychological, national, and racial health.

Prior to joining the faculty at Yale in 2008, Brotherton was an Assistant Professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Anthropology and the College of Human Medicine at Michigan State University. After receiving his Ph.D. in Anthropology and Social Studies of Medicine from McGill University, Brotherton was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Anthropology of Medicine Program at the Universitat Rovira I Virgili in Spain, a position funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). He currently serves on the Executive Board of the Society for Medical Anthropology.

Marcia C. Inhorn is the William K. Lanman Jr., Professor of Anthropology and International Affairs in the Department of Anthropology and The Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University, where she has served as Chair of the Council on Middle East Studies (2008-2011). Before coming to Yale in 2008, Inhorn was a professor of medical anthropology at the University of Michigan and president of the Society for Medical Anthropology of the American Anthropological Association. She received her Ph.D. in medical anthropology in the joint program at University of California-Berkeley/University of California-San Francisco, as well as an MPH in epidemiology at the UC-Berkeley School of Public Health.

A specialist on Middle Eastern gender and health issues, Inhorn has conducted research on the social impact of infertility and assisted reproductive technologies in Egypt, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and Arab America over the past 25 years. She is the author of four books on the subject, including The New Arab Man: Emergent Masculinities, Technologies, and Islam in the Middle East (Princeton University Press, 2012), Local Babies, Global Science: Gender, Religion, and In Vitro Fertilization in Egypt (Routledge, 2003), Infertility and Patriarchy: The Cultural Politics of Gender and Family Life in Egypt (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) and Quest for Conception: Gender, Infertility, and Egyptian Medical Traditions (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), which have won the AAA's Eileen Basker Prize and the Diana Forsythe Prize for outstanding feminist anthropological research in the areas of gender, health, science, technology, and biomedicine. She is also the editor or co-editor of eight books, including Medical Anthropology at the Intersections (Duke University Press, 2012), Anthropology and Public Health: Bridging Differences in Culture and Society (Oxford University Press, 2009),
Reconceiving the Second Sex: Men, Masculinity, and Reproduction (Berghahn Books, 2009), and Infertility around the Globe: New Thinking on Childlessness, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies (University of California Press, 2002).

Inhorn has been a visiting faculty member at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and the American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, where she has conducted studies on “Middle Eastern Masculinities in the Age of New Reproductive Technologies” and “Globalization and Reproductive Tourism in the Arab World.” In Fall 2010, she was the first Diane Middlebrook and Carl Djerassi Visiting Professor at the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Cambridge. Inhorn is also the current and founding editor of JMEWS (Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies) of the Association of Middle East Women’s Studies, and co-editor of the Berghahn Book series on “Fertility, Reproduction, and Sexuality.” She currently serves on the Executive Board of the Middle East Studies Association.

Karen Nakamura is an Associate Professor of Anthropology. A cultural and visual anthropologist, her research focuses on disability and minority social movements in contemporary Japan. Her first ethnography, Deaf in Japan: Signing and the Politics of Identity (Cornell University Press, 2006) won the John Whitney Hall Book Prize given by the Association for Asian Studies. Since then, she has been conducting research on mental illness and psychiatric disabilities in Japan. In 2004, she was granted the prestigious Abe Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council and Japan Foundation’s Center for Global Partnership to pursue research on comparative disability politics in Japan and the United States. In addition to her books and articles, she has produced two ethnographic films on contemporary Japan: Bethel: Schizophrenia and Community in Northern Japan and A Japanese Funeral. The latter was awarded the Society for Visual Anthropology Short Film Award, as well as the Society for East Asian Anthropology David Plath Media Award.

Starting in 2012, with support from a Yale Senior Faculty Fellowship and a Yale-Waseda University Asakawa Kanichi Fellowship, Nakamura will be engaged in a new project exploring debates in Japan on transsexuality and gender identity disorders as forms of disability, as recognized by the Japanese government and medical care system.
**Catherine Panter-Brick** is Professor of Anthropology, Health, and Global Affairs. Her work addresses risks to health across key stages of human development, giving special attention to the impact of poverty, disease, malnutrition, armed conflict, and social marginalization. She has extensive cross-cultural and interdisciplinary experience in the design and analysis of global health research and community-based interventions, having directed over 40 large interdisciplinary projects in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, and the United Kingdom.

Panter-Brick has published more than 120 peer-reviewed publications in journals with readership in the social sciences, human biology, nutrition, ecology, demography, psychiatry, medicine, and humanitarian fields. She has co-edited five books, including *Health, Risk, and Adversity* (Berghahn Books, 2010), *Hunter-Gatherers* (Cambridge University Press, 2001) and *Abandoned Children* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). She is currently Senior Editor (Medical Anthropology section) for the international and interdisciplinary journal *Social Science & Medicine*. Her specific expertise combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to bring an integrated social sciences and human biology perspective to the design and delivery health interventions. In particular, she leads a comparative and longitudinal research program on youth in global adversity. This includes interdisciplinary work with street-children, slum-dwellers, refugees, famine-stricken communities, and war-affected populations. It also includes setting a consensual agenda on global mental health in humanitarian settings, and establishing a systematic evidence base on health and resilience for refugee and displaced children.

After receiving her Ph.D. in Biological Anthropology from Oxford University, Panter-Brick led the Medical Anthropology program at Durham University (UK), and in 2010, joined the Yale University faculty. In 2011, she was awarded the Lucy Mair Medal by the Council of the Royal Anthropology Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, to honor excellence in the application of anthropology to the relief of poverty and distress, and to the active recognition of human dignity.

**Brian Wood** is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology. His teaching and research interests focus on human ecology, the production and sharing of food, family formation, and demography. He conducts fieldwork in northern Tanzania among the Hadza, a people who have traditionally relied upon hunting and gathering for their livelihood, who now face serious health challenges accompanying increased immigration into their region, land loss, and increased prevalence of infectious diseases. Working with local health professionals and other concerned colleagues, Wood has developed [hadzafund.org](http://hadzafund.org) as a way to
raise awareness of these challenges and address them in culturally appropriate ways.

Wood is currently working on a National Science Foundation-funded project to investigate the individual and family-level decisions that lead to emergent patterns of kin coresidence among the Hadza. Comparative work in cultural anthropology has shown that marriage, kinship systems, and marital residence patterns vary in ways that reflect human ecology. He has proposed theoretically grounded hypotheses about the formation of residential groups that can be tested by examining variation between and within Hadza residential groups. This research examines how demographic, economic, and ecological factors contribute to variation in Hadza social structure, through both time and space. Wood is also engaged in research focusing on the energetics of foraging and theories for the emergence of obesity cross-culturally.

In his Ph.D. research among the Hadza, Wood focused on foraging, food sharing, and family formation. He is especially interested in the evolution of paternal provisioning, and the role that Hadza fathers play in the provisioning of their nuclear families and extended kin. This research has been published in *Current Anthropology* and *Human Nature*. Prior to joining the faculty at Yale in 2012, Wood was a Postdoctoral Fellow in Ecological and Environmental Anthropology at Stanford University, a position funded by the National Science Foundation. Wood received his Ph.D. in Anthropology at Harvard University in 2010.
COURSES IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY CURRENTLY OFFERED

1) Anthropology of the Body (Brotherton)
2) Biocultural Perspectives on Global Health (Panter-Brick)
3) Conflict, Resilience, and Health (Panter-Brick)
4) Disability and Culture (Nakamura)
5) Global Health: Ethnographic Perspectives (Inhorn)
6) Human Evolutionary Biology and Life History (Bribiescas)
7) Intersectionality and Women’s Health: Ethnographic Approaches to Race, Class, Gender, and “Difference” (Inhorn)
8) Health Disparities and Health Equity: Biocultural Analyses (Panter-Brick)
9) Introduction to Medical Anthropology (Brotherton)
10) Laboratory and Field Methods in Human Evolutionary Biology (Bribiescas)
11) Masculinity and Men’s Health (Inhorn)
12) Reproductive Ecology (Bribiescas)
13) Reproductive Technologies: Global Perspectives (Inhorn)
14) Research in Socio-cultural Anthropology: Design, Methods, and Proposal Writing (Inhorn)
15) Theories of Health, Medicine, and Science (Brotherton)
16) Topics in Medical Anthropology (Brotherton)

FUTURE COURSES IN MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1) Biodemography (Bribiescas/Wood)
2) Climate Change and Human Health (Bribiescas/Wood/Faculty)
3) Evolutionary Biology and Women’s Health (Bribiescas/Faculty)
4) Evolutionary Biology and Children’s Health (Bribiescas/Panter-Brick/Faculty)
5) Human Ecology (Wood)
6) Topics in Evolutionary Medicine (Bribiescas)

OTHER RELATED YALE RESOURCES

1) Yale Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics
2) Yale Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS
3) Yale Center Climate and Energy Institute
4) Yale Child Study Center
5) Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB)
6) School of Forestry and Environmental Studies
7) Yale Global Health Initiative (GHI)
8) Yale School of Public Health
9) Health and Global Justice Program, Yale Law School
10) Program in the History of Medicine
12) Rudd Center for Food and Obesity
13) Department of Sociology
14) Program in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
15) Yale Institute for Biospheric Studies