Gender and 'Addiction' – Cross-cultural Perspectives on a Psychiatric 'Diagnosis'
Modul 3, Summer Term 2014

Mi. 14.00-16.00, 2.10 Institut für Ethnologie

Description of Class
In this class we investigate the medical/psychiatric category of 'addiction' from an anthropological point of view and explore its interface with 'gender' and 'culture'.

In the first part of the class we are going to discuss the 'sociology of diagnosis'. Theories from the social sciences help us to understand how so called 'diagnostic systems' like the DSM (Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) actually work and how the psychiatric process of 'diagnosing addiction' is practiced in society.

The second part focuses on the interface of addiction and anthropology. We will come to know how to grasp and describe addiction from a social anthropological (cross-cultural) perspective. At this point we will discuss if addiction can be understood as a cross-cultural phenomenon or concept. We will examine the consumption of alcohol and tobacco as an example. Finally we are going to discuss what could be important questions and perspectives for an 'Anthropology of Addiction'.

In the third part of the class we are going to read and discuss five ethnographies in the fields of substance use, addiction, recovery and therapy. Each of the participants is supposed to read and present one of these ethnographies. In this way we will get to know cross-cultural examples of substance use like drinking in Rarotonga, Cook Islands and heroin-addiction in New Mexico and in Bombay/India. Finally we will also encounter the anthropology of recovery and therapy in two examples from North America: one exploring the 'culture and belief' of Alcoholics Anonymous, another one describing clinical drug rehabilitation treatment.

The last part of the class considers the question of gender and substance (ab)use. We will discuss what we learned about gender and substance (ab)use from the ethnographies. Subsequently we have a look at cross-cultural perspectives on alcohol consumption of women and the entanglement of substance use and concepts of 'masculinities'.

Credit Points: 6 ECTS (Workload: on campus: 30hrs/private study: 150hrs). The course constitutes an optional course of module 3 and belongs to the field of 'Social Anthropology and Psychiatry II'.

Requirements: Regular attendance (not more than two missed sessions), presentation (+ handout), regular preparation of readings (average 12.5 hrs per week) is expected (in particular: think/note something down about the topic/question for the respective sessions given in the schedule below). Every student has to hand in at least 3 assignments (1-2 pages). Upload your assignments to the BSCW-Server before the respective sessions. I won’t accept any assignments handed in late!

E-Learning: All the readings and additional materials for our class can be found on the BSCW-Server (e-mail address given on the 'list of participants' will be used).
Structure of the Class:

Part I: Understanding Diagnosis from a Sociological Perspective - Diagnostic Systems and Diagnosing 'Addiction'

Understanding the DSM as a Diagnostic System


The Sociology of Diagnosis and Diagnosing Addiction


Part II: Addiction and Anthropology: Understanding Addiction from a Social Anthropological Perspective

Anthropology of Alcohol and Tobacco Use


An Introduction to the Anthropology of Addictions and Recovery, pp. 1-16.
2 The Many Faces of Alcohol Use, pp. 17-34.
3 Tobacco and Its Global Reach, pp. 35-50.

The Anthropology of Addiction


Part III: Ethnographies in the Fields of Substance Use, Addiction and Therapy

An Ethnography of Drinking in Rarotonga Cook Islands

Heroin Addiction I - Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande


Heroin Addiction II - Drug Culture in India


Anthropology of Recovery and Therapy I – Alcoholics Anonymous


Anthropology of Recovery and Therapy II – Drug Rehabilitation Treatment


Part IV: Substance (Ab)Use and Gender

Substance (Ab)Use and Women


Substance (Ab)Use and Masculinity

