

Psyche, Trauma, Culture

ANTH 2093 / ASAM 2093

Course Prospectus

Instructor: Emily Ng
Tuesdays 1:45 – 4:45pm

What shapes our psychic lives today? How are histories of pain and creative possibility transmitted, ruptured, and transformed? The language of mental health and trauma have become more present in recent years. These vocabularies have made room for conversations about forms of violence that may have been difficult to put into words before. In the United States, this includes the insidious effects of racialization, indigenous dispossession, and other forms of exclusion, extraction, and misrecognition. Yet, the rise of mental health discourses also poses new conundrums, as self-care is increasingly promoted in times of collective crisis, and trauma becomes a basis on which to seek rights, recognition, and resources. This course draws on the works of anthropologists, psychoanalysts, and decolonial thinkers to explore tensions between trauma, culture, and the psyche. We begin with common encounters that inform and disrupt our lives, examine historical and contemporary concepts of trauma, and close with questions of what lives on.

The seminar will involve reading response posts, group discussions, group presentations, and a final paper or project. We will read authors including bell hooks, Frantz Fanon, Ocean Vuong, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Byung-Chul Han, Gananath Obeyesekere, Stefania Pandolfo, Angela Garcia, Sarah Ahmed, and more.