

Senior Seminar Topic Proposals

Fall 2012

Kali Block-Steele – To Create Balance is to Heal: A Study of Holistic Health Practices and Philosophies in the United States

For my capstone project I am embarking on a homeopathic healing journey utilizing an ethnographic method. I refer to this as a “journey” because in part it will include a record of my experiences with these healing methods and what they have done for my own personal growth. Homeopathic healing modalities have been gaining momentum in this nation, and I am conducting interviews with different homeopathic healers in order to see how these individuals became a part of this community and the learning that brought them to natural medicine. I refer to natural medicine as traditional because these methods stem directly from native cultures whose members have been practicing some of these modalities for centuries. My focus is on herbology, crystal healing and energetic healing through forms like Reiki and medical intuition, although I am also considering acupuncture and acupressure, aromatherapy, color and sound therapy, meditation and reflexology. I am considering how these different forms contribute to a holistic approach to health that contrasts with our current medical structure that is reactive rather than proactive. My thesis is that holistic medicine and self-healing provide useful ways to promote total healing that go far beyond the symptomatic treatments of current medicine, and I argue that it makes good financial, cultural and personal sense for the medical community to pursue them as practical health strategies. Some questions I am asking include: When did homeopathic medicine emerge in this country and why? What is the common view on homeopathic medicine? Is the popularity of natural medicine a reaction to our current medical system? Through modern medicine are people encouraged to take care of themselves in holistic ways and, if not, why not? What are people's reactions to a holistic view of health, taking care of body, mind and spirit? Do people discount these other healing methods and what they promote? What are their arguments for or against them? What role does mindset play in the effectiveness of these healing methods? This project is interactive in the sense that I am learning firsthand about these three main healing modalities in order to provide a learner's perspective. As I am currently studying more about different healing forms for my own personal growth, I feel this could be a great way to provide an alternative perspective, that of the novice, as I am also presenting the experiences of others who would be considered masters of their form. I feel this study is important because, although these healing methods are not new, there has been a resurgence of natural medicine among many varieties of people yet there is not much information out there about them, especially from an ethnographic standpoint.

race/ethnicity, the crime rate, gang warfare, cancer, incidences of asthma, the infant mortality rate, and various health statistics, etc. I then follow these statistics with a brief history of the land usage in Hunters Point and a vivid description of my own visit to the area. My thesis is that those who live in Hunters Point, especially those who have identified with the region for decades, have been silenced by those outside the community who presume to know what's best for them. This has led to the labeling of the community as "bad" and has contributed to neglect, environmental racism and institutionalized discrimination. I argue that the voices of community members within Hunters Point ought to be at the heart of the dialogue about what to do with this unstable region. I intend to explore the following questions: How are various communities misrepresented and underrepresented in Hunters Point? How are statistics used (and by whom) to represent and misrepresent the neighborhood (either intentionally or unintentionally)? How has the blatant environmental injustice been justified and perpetuated in Hunters Point since WWII and by whom? What does this imply about urban disintegration, urban renewal, urban regeneration, and the urban process in American history? How is space distributed and by whom? How do race relations, racial stereotypes, and common-sense notions of race affect socio-economic status? How does the segregation of a community affect the consciousness of the community and create a double consciousness? What does privilege mean and how does urban segregation maintain the invisibility of privilege? How are space and privilege related? How does the dialectic tension between individual agency and social

American hero is famous for his money and success whereas the old symbols of