

# ANTH 394 A02

## The Anthropology of Cancer

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*INSTRUCTOR: Thomas Siek*

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the world, following cardiovascular disease. Along with losing friends and relatives to this disease, we are often reminded of cancer through numerous charities and fundraisers, tantalizing miracle cures and new hosts of cancer-causing agents or risks. Cancer is also often portrayed as a homogenous plague of modernity, brought on by industrial advancement and an ever-increasing human lifespan. However, cancer has been with humans for millennia and it is only in the last century that we began to understand its processes. This course centers cancer within a biocultural framework and will examine how this disease process has impacted the human experience, both past and present. It will draw on varying fields of inquiry including biological anthropology, paleopathology, paleoepidemiology, medical history and medical anthropology.

### **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Conceptualize cancer as a multi-faceted disease in a biocultural framework
- Have a baseline understanding of cancer in a biological context
- Discuss and critically evaluate theoretical models and methods related to studying cancer in an anthropological context
- Develop research and writing skills through written assignments
- Develop public speaking skills through oral presentations