

CASID-WID Friday Forum – Health Disparities and Social Justice
Speakers Series - Fall Semester 2005

HEALTH DISPARITIES IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

**Shifting State Ideologies, Incipient Capitalism, and
Changing Therapeutic Itineraries in Cuba's "Special Period"**

Sean Brotherton

Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology & College of Human Medicine

Friday, November 18, 2005

12:00 noon

201 International Center

This presentation explores how Cuba's controlled entry into the capitalist global economy has severely compromised the socialist rhetoric of the state, particularly the official discourse on the provision of basic human needs. Brotherton examines how the recent special period, characterized by economic scarcity and material constraints on everyday life, has seen the state and its citizens resort to different strategies for survival. More specifically, Cubans are beginning to take advantage of the emerging two-tier healthcare systems in which possession of US dollars enables differential access to more comprehensive healthcare services. Drawing on 30 months of ethnographic fieldwork from 1999-2002 in the city of Havana, which included interviews with ordinary Cubans, family physicians, and research scientists, as well as using program reports of the Cuban Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP), Brotherton explores the processes by which external and internal forces interact with each other to produce, reproduce, and propagate ideals and practices of global capitalism within local communities.

Sean Brotherton is a cultural anthropologist who focuses on the critical study of health, medicine, and the body. His research and teaching explore the intersections between contemporary social theory and post-colonialism, grounding his theoretical interests through his ethnographic work in the Caribbean, particularly Cuba and Jamaica. Dr. Brotherton received his Ph.D. in the Department of Anthropology and Social Studies of Medicine at McGill University, Montréal; has been a Visiting Social Science and Humanities Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow during 2004-2005 for the Anthropology of Medicine Program, Universitat Rovira I Virgili, Spain; and is currently Assistant Professor in the Anthropology Department and College of Human Medicine at MSU.

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