

<http://somatosphere.net/2009/09/fpr-ucla-conference-on-cultural-and.html>

## FPR-UCLA Conference on the Cultural and Biological Contexts of Psychiatric Disorder

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By Eugene Raikhel



This coming January, the [Foundation for Psychocultural Research](#) is hosting what looks to be a superb conference at UCLA: “[Cultural and Biological Contexts of Psychiatric Disorder: Implications for Diagnosis and Treatment](#).” The event seeks to examine ways in which both anthropological and neurobiological knowledge call into question the validity and usefulness of the DSM diagnostic categories which dominate contemporary psychiatry. As the organizers write in the abstract for the conference:

“[B]oth neuroscientists and anthropologists have raised questions about the validity and utility of these categories. Neuroscientists are concerned that the categories obfuscate the key brain-behavior linkages underlying pathological processes. Anthropologists on the other hand argue that the categories are largely social constructions and that the current neurobiological zeitgeist minimally attends to social and cultural processes of mental illness....

....The aim of this conference is to improve the quality of psychiatric diagnosis and treatment by giving specific attention to biological and cultural contexts and their interactions. Given the abundant criticism directed to both the biological and cultural validity of current DSM diagnostic categories, the focus is particularly important and timely,” ([FPR 2009](#)).

In addition to general talks on biological and cultural contexts for mental

illness and their possible integration into DSM-V, the three day conference includes special sessions focusing on autism spectrum disorders, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. The organizers have assembled a particularly impressive set of speakers, including anthropologists of medicine and psychiatry (Byron Good, Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Douglas Hollan, Emily Martin, Tanya Luhrmann, Anne Becker, Carol Browner, Joao Biehl), cultural psychiatrists (Laurence Kirmayer, Devon Hinton, Roberto Lewis-Fernandez), psychiatrists (German Berrios, Kay Redfield Jamison, Peter Kramer) and researchers in neurobiology and psychology (Eric Kandel, Simon Baron-Cohen, Thomas Insel, Moshe Szyf)—and this isn't even an exhaustive list. You can read the preliminary program [here in html](#) or [here in pdf](#).

[Registration](#) is now open, and [abstracts for posters](#) can be submitted until October 2, 2009.

["Cultural and Biological Contexts of Psychiatric Disorder: Implications for Diagnosis and Treatment."](#)

When: January 22-24, 2010

Where: Neuroscience Research Building Auditorium, UCLA

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### AMA citation

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**Harvard citation**

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