

LMC 3219 Literature and Medicine

Dr. Narin Hassan

Skiles 338 telephone: 404-385-3060

narin.hassan@lmc.gatech.edu

Office hours: T/TH. 11:30-12:30pm and by appt.

Course Description:

This course will examine the relationship of medicine to literature, culture, politics, and history. We will trace how discourses and practices of medicine intersect with literary and cultural narratives and how medical knowledge is constructed and sustained through language and visual representation. We will analyze Western medicine and its current practices and methodologies in relation to other global contexts and to alternative therapies and systems. We will explore how a range of sources, including fictional texts, memoirs, films, and theoretical articles discuss the nature of illness and represent the body and medicine.

The course will explore these topics in relation to the pandemic/global health responses and analyze cross-cultural representations of health, medicine, and healing. It will also offer new components that ask us to consider the current moment and ways to enhance our well-being.

Course pre-requisites: ENG 1101/ENG 1102

Course Objectives and Goals:

To analyze the relationship of literature and medicine.

To study the historical context of medical practices and analyze the relationship of medicine and culture through the lens of human rights and social difference.

To trace how social and cultural practices inform different conceptions of medicine and the human body.

To discuss and analyze the social and cultural implications of texts and other artifacts relating to health and medicine.

To produce written and oral arguments regarding those texts and artifacts. To think critically and to communicate more effectively about the interactions among medicine, science, literature, and social change.

Learning Outcomes:

- Science and Technology Knowledge Construction: Students will understand that scientific and technological innovation occurs in a social context, and they will be able to recognize how the social influences scientific and technical discourses.
- Textual/Visual Analysis: Students will learn to read, analyze, and interpret not only cultural projects such as film, literature, art, and new media, but also scientific and technical documents.

- Interpretive Frameworks: Students will become familiar with a variety of social, political, and philosophical theories and be able to apply those theories to creative and scientific texts, as well as to their own cultural observations.
- Literary/Film/Narrative art Inquiry: Students will be aware of the traditions and conventions of literature, film and other forms of narrative art, and they will be able to analyze these traditions and conventions in specific cultural contexts.
- Historical analysis: Students will study literary and cultural texts within an historical framework to become familiar with various forces shape artistic and commercial production. They will learn to interpret history actively, rather than passively accepting archival information.

Reading list: Many of our readings are available online or as pdf files on Canvas. Here are a few of the longer texts you will need to purchase on your own:

Jean Dominique Bauby, *The Butterfly and the Diving Bell*

Atul Gawande, *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*

Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and Aids and Its Metaphors*

Course requirements: Weekly responses, one take home exam, one final research-based essay/project, short assignments and presentations, quizzes, active participation and discussion.

Reading will approximate 150 pages per week (more for novels/memoirs, less for critical material).

Attendance and Participation: 25%

(this component includes regular attendance,
participation, a discussion

leader session, Canvas short assignments)

Exam 1 25%

Exam 2 25%

Final paper/project and presentation (paper 20%/presentation 5%) 25%

Course Expectations:

Be Here!

The first expectation is that you come to class prepared, on time, and ready to work. The attendance and participation component of this course includes coming to class prepared with readings, contributing to discussion, and keeping up with class activities.

Engagement in online chats and discussion through Canvas also contributes to the attendance/participation. I will post questions for the week on Canvas, and our discussion leaders will also use Canvas to post their questions/comments for the week.

Absences will limit your contribution to the course and in turn impact the attendance and participation component of your grade.

Reading and preparation:

I will expect you to complete all reading assignments before class, bring the reading to class and arrive prepared to discuss readings thoughtfully and intelligently. Active participation and regular attendance is a crucial component of this class. I expect our class environment to be one of lively debate where we can challenge and respect the opinions and comments of others, and where we can all be prepared to discuss these texts.

Your role as discussion leader: You will be asked to sign up as a discussion leader for one class session. This is your opportunity to initiate and facilitate our discussion for the beginning of class that day. As a discussion leader you should be fully prepared to discuss the reading and to share your responses to it with the class. You may distribute and pose questions to the class to facilitate our analysis of the reading, select particular passages that you see as relevant or interesting, make connections to other texts we have read, and/or bring in additional material to share with the class that relates to the reading. You will lead this session with 1-2 other class members. You will also be asked to use Canvas to post some of your questions/responses for our class to consider before your session. Please post by 9pm the evening before your leader session.

Weekly response assignments and final project:

You will be asked to do weekly response assignments/Canvas discussions in response to the material. These will not be graded, but will be part of your overall engagement with the class.

You will be asked to write one research based final paper (8-10 pages) or final project (with a written and creative component) in this class. Your final paper/project will be on a research topic of your choice related to course material. You will be asked to organize a formal presentation related to this research. This will involve some group work and development of visual aids. I will ask you to submit a paper proposal and preliminary bibliography before your paper is due and you will receive feedback on both these assignments. We will also review research strategies in class and I will share information about relevant research resources as you develop your topics. Your project, should introduce and develop a clear thesis, support a sustained argument with evidence, address and respond to relevant critical arguments and debates, and revise and edit for clarity, cohesion and presentation.

Exam/Quizzes: You will have two exams in this class. They will cover material from our reading and discussion. In addition to the exams, you may have short quizzes over the course of the semester.

Additional issues:

ACADEMIC HONESTY: all work you turn in for this class must be your own work, with all outside references sources properly cited and acknowledged. All written assignments for this course will be turned in through the anti-plagiarism program "Turn It In" (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

The "Student Conduct Code of Rules and Regulations" (Georgia Institute of Technology General Catalog Section XIX) states "Academic misconduct is an act that does or could improperly distort student grades or other student records" and offers the following descriptive list:

- possessing, using or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation of any essay, laboratory report, examination, or other assignment included in an academic course;
- substitution for, or unauthorized collaboration with, a student in the commission of academic requirements;

- submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or persons, without adequate credit notations indicating authorship (plagiarism);
- false claims of performance or work that has been submitted by claimant;
- alteration or insertion of any academic grade or rating so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- forgery, alteration, or misuse of any institute document relating to the academic status of the student.

The Code continues, "While these acts constitute assured instances of academic misconduct, other acts of academic misconduct may be defined by the professor." Consult the Honor Code outline at <http://www.honor.gatech.edu/> or in the General Catalog to remember your primary commitment to academic honesty. Students who engage in academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or fail the course. In addition, the instance will be reported to the Dean of Students who may take further action.

Please make an appointment if you need to discuss special accommodations for a documented disability or special need. Students with disabilities should also contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) to discuss reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor call 404-894-2564 (voice) /404-894-1664 (voice/TDD) or visit Suite 210 in the Smithgall Student Services Building.

Course Outline: This is a guide to our course. Please bear in mind that dates may shift and the syllabus may be updated. I welcome your suggestions to the syllabus.

Section One: Concepts and Histories/Narrating Illness and Medicine

Week One:

Introductions, course overview.

Andrew Solomon, "Literature about medicine is all that will save us" <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/22/literature-about-medicine-may-be-all-that-can-save-us> (Links to an external site.)

Anna Hudson Jones, "Why Teach Literature and Medicine?" <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs10912-013-9241-9.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Sir William Osler. "Aphorisms," Somerset Maugham, "The Summing Up," William Carlos Williams. "The Practice" (pdf packet: "Doctor's Stories")

***Assignment:** Find one article in the news or popular media related to medicine and culture. This could be a story or blog by a doctor, an article in the news about a disease and its relationship to culture, an article about alternative therapies, or new studies in medicine, etc. The article or story should highlight medicine and its relationship to culture. Please have this ready by May 24. Post a link to Canvas so we can see the article/story you selected.

Week Two:

Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*; Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, "Knowledge in Medicine: Reading the Signs" (pdf); Rita Charon et al. "Literature and Medicine: Contributions to Clinical Practice"

Foucault, Preface to *Birth of the Clinic* and "Signs and Cases" (pdf)

Week Three:

Excerpt: Defoe, "Journal of a Plague Year" <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/38621/a-journal-of-the-plague-year-by-daniel-defoe/9780375757891/excerpt>

<https://lithub.com/what-we-can-learn-and-should-unlearn-from-albert-camus-the-plague/>

Isaac Chotiner, "How Pandemics Change History": <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/how-pandemics-change-history> (Links to an external site.)

Sonia Shah Pandemic Google Talks video (view on your own beforehand): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2k4SdwCY9g> (Links to an external site.)



Rita Charon:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24kHX2HtU3o> (Links to an external site.)



Section Two Representing Illness: Patient Narratives/Medical Environments

Week Four:

View Film *Wit*. Read Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," Virginia Woolf, "On Being Ill" Fanny Burney, "Old Tyme Mastectomy"

Audre Lorde, *The Cancer*

Journals, <https://mastersofsexshortcourse.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/audre-lorde-cancer-journals-introduction.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Week Five:

Mary Cappello, excerpt from *Called Back "Getting the News"*

Barbara Ehrenreich, "Welcome to Cancerland" <https://archive.harpers.org/2001/11/pdf/HarpersMagazine-2001-11->

[0075358.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJUM7PFZHQ4PMJ4LA&Expires=1568333045&Signature=HWjBLPajQSIcGZFDl1dhshivZc%3D](#) (Links to an external site.)

* Garden/healthy environments or medical environments assignment TBA

Section Three: Gender and Medicine/Reproductive Technologies/Global Issues

Week Six:

Hottentot Venus material: Sander Gilman, "The Hottentot and the Prostitute" and Anne Fausto Sterling, "Gender, Race, and Nation," Terri Kapsalis, "Mastering the Female Pelvis," Londa Scheibinger, "Why Mammals are Called Mammals"

*View/gather some material related to this section of class: research material related the Saartje Baartmann, the Hottentot Venus; gather current material related to reproductive technologies, race and gender, history of medicine, medical ethics and reproduction.

Week Seven:

Emily Martin, "Metaphors of Women's Bodies: Birth," Rosalind Petchesky, "Foetal Images," Angela Davis, "Racism, Birth Control and Reproductive Rights," Lianne McTavish, "Practices of Looking and the Medical Humanities: imagining the unborn in France 1550-1800"

Nancy Scheper Hughes, on Global Traffic of Human Organs: "Ends of the Body" http://web.mit.edu/writing/2010/June/Scheper-Hughes_endsofthebody.pdf (Links to an external site.)

Talk with Scheper Hughes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkCWRQ1h1Dk> (Links to an external site.)

Midterm Exam

Section Four: Memoir and Medicine:

Week Eight:

Atul Gawande, *Complications: Part 1 Fallibility* first 3 chapters through page 74.

Related Blog/website: <http://atulgawande.com/> (Links to an external site.)

Bauby, *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (excerpts)

Week Nine:

Discuss *Girl, Interrupted* (film) and book (excerpts):

https://www.bookbrowse.com/excerpts/index.cfm/book_number/241/girl-interrupted (Links to an external site.)

<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/06/27/girl-interrupted-twenty-five-years-later/> (Links to an external site.)

Excerpts from Susan Gubar, *Memoir of a Debulked Woman*

*Read Blog posts from Susan Gubar and Don Dizon

Section Five: Culture, Contagion, and Nation

Week Ten:

Jill Lepore, "What our contagion fables are really about." <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/30/what-our-contagion-fables-are-really-about> (Links to an external site.)

Priscilla Wald, "The Healthy Carrier, 'Typhoid Mary' and Social Being,"

Vanessa Gamble on the Influenza epidemic:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/003335491012505314> (Links to an external site.)

Dr. Oliver Sacks:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PYAnB5Jx-k> (Links to an external site.)

Week Eleven:

Optional film: *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*

Additional material for this week:

Selection from Bessel van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/313183/the-body-keeps-the-score-by-bessel-van-der-kolk-md/9780143127741/excerpt> (Links to an external site.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmKfzbHzm_s (Links to an external site.)



Alternative therapies: <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/06/the-evolution-of-alternative-medicine/396458/> (Links to an external site.)

<https://yogainternational.com/article/view/its-alternative-medicine-but-is-it-holistic> (Links to an external site.)

Week Twelve: Presentations/Wrap Up/Final Projects

Final papers/projects due via email on July 28.

Additional resources: (we may discuss these in class—linking them here so you have access)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0a5WYClw3dw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emuj7Sp24dw>

Harvard art and medicine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFS6BjkLJok>

(History of medicine background)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCf62ksapII&t=16s>

(Mariam Golafshani on medicine and the arts/literature)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4mrHEKt2HC8>

Edmund Pellegrino on Medical Humanities