

LMC 3219 Literature and Medicine

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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: Most of our readings are available online or as pdf files on Canvas. I have linked them into the syllabus and will also be adding files into our Canvas page.

Course requirements: One exam, one final research-based essay/project, short assignments and presentations, active participation, and discussion.

Reading will approximate 100 pages per week (more for novels/memoirs, less for critical material).

Attendance and Participation: 30%

Exam: 35%

Final paper/project and presentation: 35%

Course Outline:

Section One: Concepts and Histories/Narrating Illness and Medicine

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.)[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.

Film: *Wit*. Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*; Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, "Knowledge in Medicine: Reading the Signs"

Foucault, Preface to Birth of the Clinic and "Signs and Cases" (pdf); Rita Charon et al. "Literature and Medicine: Contributions to Clinical Practice" Virginia Woolf, "On Being Ill"

Sonia Shah Pandemic Google Talks video (view on your own):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2k4SdwCY9g>

Rita Charon: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24kHX2HtU3o>

Section Two: Representing Illness: Patient Narratives/Medical Environments

Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," 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.)[Links to an external site.](https://mastersofsexshortcourse.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/audre-lorde-cancer-journals-introduction.pdf)

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=HWjBLPajQSIfCgZFD1dhshivZc%3D> (Links to an external site.)[Links to an external site.](https://archive.harpers.org/2001/11/pdf/HarpersMagazine-2001-11-0075358.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAJUM7PFZHQ4PMJ4LA&Expires=1568333045&Signature=HWjBLPajQSIfCgZFD1dhshivZc%3D)

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

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"

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.)[Links to an external site.](http://web.mit.edu/writing/2010/June/Scheper-Hughes_endsofthebody.pdf)

Section Four: Memoir and Medicine:

Atul Gawande, *Complications*

<https://xn--webeducation-dbb.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Atul-Gawande-Complications--a-surgeons-notes-on-an-imperfect-science-Profile-Books-Ltd-2002.pdf>

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

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

https://www.bookbrowse.com/excerpts/index.cfm/book_number/241/girl-interrupted

<https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/06/27/girl-interrupted-twenty-five-years-later/>

Excerpts from Susan Gubar, *Memoir of a Debulked*

Woman: <https://www.npr.org/2012/05/01/151780641/debulked-woman-ovarian-cancers-grim-reality>

Section Five: Culture, Contagion, and Nation

Jill Lepore, "What our contagion fables are really about."

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/30/what-our-contagion-fables-are-really-about>

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

Vanessa Gamble on the Influenza epidemic:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/00333549101250S314>

Dr. Oliver Sacks: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PYAnB5Jx-k>

Optional film: *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*

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>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmKfzbHzm_s

Alternative therapies: <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/06/the-evolution-of-alternative-medicine/396458/>

<https://yogainternational.com/article/view/its-alternative-medicine-but-is-it-holistic>