

ENG 281: Literature & Medicine
Fall 2016
MWF 11:00 – 11:50
Baldy 125
University at Buffalo, North Campus

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Office Hours: By Appointment

The relationships between literature and medicine are many, varied, and at least as old as the Greeks. Above the door of the ancient Library at Thebes an inscription read, “Medicine for the Soul” and at the heart of the philosopher Aristotle’s description of the effect of tragic drama on its audience, we find a medical term, catharsis. Even today, in the context of contemporary Western medicine, the experience of illness is shaped around multiple acts of storytelling, as the patient searches for the words to voice their pain and the doctor attempts to frame a diagnosis. And from TV medical dramas like *House M.D.* to works of contemporary poetry and fiction we find efforts to capture this drama and complexity, the stakes of which are quite literally life and death.

In this course, we will read texts by, for, and about medical practitioners and patients in order to investigate the relations between literature and medicine. We will also collaborate with the Arts in Health Initiative to explore how literature and the arts are being used to improve the experience of patients in Buffalo hospitals. As we range from the ancient philosophical treatises of Hippocrates, to the works of poet-physician William Carlos Williams, from the detective-like case studies of doctors to the autobiographical testimonies of the ill, we will ask: How do doctors, patients, and authors approach the complex ethical conundrums, emotional tangles, and difficulties of representation that so often surround illness?

This course is designed for students who wish to pursue a career in the health professions as well as for anyone with a personal interest in the way literature shapes our understanding and experience of health and illness. As a seminar, a gathering for informed conversation, this course’s success depends heavily on your commitment to careful preparation, considerate and effective discussion, and openness to new ideas. However, it requires no previous knowledge of the material, only interest in it; it is designed for both majors and non-majors. In addition to regular attendance, careful reading, and active participation in discussion, you will be required to maintain a weekly reading journal, turn in three 4-6 page papers, and participate in a group project.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Medical Ethics: A Very Short Introduction, Tony Hope (ISBN: 978-0192802828)

The Cancer Journals, Audre Lorde (ISBN: 978-1879960732)

Illness as a Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors, Susan Sontag (ISBN: 978-0312420130)

Intoxicated by My Illness, Anatole Broyard (ISBN: 978-0449908341)

On Being Ill, Virginia Woolf (ISBN: 978-1930464131)

(All other readings will be provided to you via UBlearns or as handouts)

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

- This is a discussion-based course. Students will be expected to read and take notes in a reading journal, arrive in class on time with your journal and reading materials, and participate actively in discussion and activity. Reading journals will be collected periodically during the semester.
- Students will write three papers of 4-6 pages. Essays may be revised for credit following consultation with the instructor.
- Grade breakdown is as follows:
 - Writing Project #1: 20%
 - Writing Project #2: 20%
 - Writing Project #3: 20%
 - Arts in Medicine Project: 15%
 - Reading Journal: 15%
 - Participation 10%

COURSE GOALS

	Learning Outcomes	Activities	Assessment
Course Goals	Develop humanistic understanding of the field of medicine, with a focus on ethics, aesthetics, and politics	lecture; papers; reading; exams	Grades A to C meet learning outcomes
	Connect issues in the medical humanities with personal interests and experiences	discussion; reading journal; creative paper	
	Examine the relationship between generic formal strategies and philosophical concerns about medicine	readings; discussion; papers; lectures	Grades D to F do not meet learning outcomes
	Learn about history of writing on medicine	lecture; readings	
	Develop strategies for productive academic discussion	Discussion; reading journal	
Department Goals	think, read, speak, and write critically and creatively	papers; discussion; reading journal	
	read in detail and in cultural contexts	Readings; journal; papers; exams	
	understand critical methods and theoretical concepts	lectures; papers	
	gain knowledge of periods and genres	lectures; readings	

	develop the ability to articulate ideas lucidly and persuasively in writing	informal writing; papers	
	develop skills for deploying research and evidence	papers; discussion leading	
	increase aesthetic appreciation	readings; discussion	

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance is critical to your success in this course. **Students will be allowed three absences per semester. Each additional absence will result in the lowering of your final grade by 1/3 of a letter grade.** If for whatever reason you need to miss more than two classes, schedule a time to meet with me. Depending on the circumstances I may be able to provide some makeup work. Instances either of lateness or leaving early may count as an absence, at my discretion.

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

In order to create a positive environment for learning, students need to be present, prepared, and engaged, refraining from distractions, disruptions, and disrespectful behavior. At minimum this means not using technological devices such as cellphones and laptops, except as the instructor directly permits, and only then in ways immediately relevant to activity that the class is currently engaged in. Upon entering the classroom, students implicitly agree to abide by the University's policies on classroom decorum: <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/obstruction.shtml>. Be mindful of how your language affects others. A seminar is a space for engaged conversation. However for it to work, all seminar participants must be treated with respect and made to feel safe: racist, sexist, and otherwise offensive language will not be tolerated.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION POLICIES

Students are expected to bring their reading journal to each class. Your journal will be collected periodically over the semester. Essays are due at the *beginning of class* on the date due. Late essays are subject to having their final grade reduced (typically 1/3 grade for each day late). Absence from class on the date due does not excuse the lateness of your assignment. If you are absent from class the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to email me a copy of your paper before class. Allow plenty of time for printing your essay in the computer lab, and/or keep an extra printer ribbon/ink cartridge handy at home. All essays handed in to me are to be typed/word-processed. Use a reasonable font (12 pt. Times New Roman or Cambria is preferable), double-spaced, with 1 inch margins.

Assignments submitted more than one week late will receive an F. However, you must complete all major assignments in order to earn a passing grade for the course.

Major assignments will be graded using the A - F scale. You always have the right to revise your assignment for a higher grade, and you may revise it as many times as you like, but I strongly encourage you to meet with me to discuss the nature of the revisions you will make. All revisions of essays for a higher grade (accompanied by the original graded essay) are due to me no later than one week before the last day of class.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Please familiarize yourself with the University's Academic Integrity policy, which can be found at <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.shtml>. In a writing course, we are particularly concerned with plagiarism, which the catalog describes as "Copying or receiving material from any source and submitting that material as one's own, without acknowledging and citing the particular debts to the source (quotations, paraphrases, basic ideas), or in any other manner representing the work of another as one's own." The writing program's policy states that the first instance of plagiarism will result in an "F" on that assignment. Any additional instances of plagiarism will result in failure of the course.

TUTORING IN WRITING

UB's Center for Excellence in Writing supports writers across the university as they compose, construct, and share meaning. Since learning to write is a life-long endeavor, all members of the UB community are also students of their own writing processes. Committed to the idea that writing both creates and communicates knowledge, understanding, and individual reflection, the CEW provides attentive, respectful readers, offers workshops on writing and writing instruction, and conducts research to guide the future development of writing practices. The CEW, located in 209 Baldy Hall, is here to support any writing you might do while at UB – assignments, essays, research projects, as well as application materials, personal statements, and so on. Talking through challenges and choices and getting an audience's reaction is a healthy part of any writer's process. All writers are welcome to come in for free individual consultations. You can schedule from the CEW website, drop by the Center, or call 645-5139. The CEW's website is here: <http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/writing.html>

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you require accommodations due to a disability, please contact Accessibility Resources, located at 25 Capen Hall. AR can be reached by phone at (716) 645-2608 or by email at stu-accessibility@buffalo.edu. You should also visit <http://www.ub-disability.buffalo.edu>. Please inform me as soon as possible about your needs so that we can coordinate your accommodations.

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I – MEDICAL CASES

Week 1: INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL ETHICS

8/29 Introduction to Course

8/31 Discuss The Hippocratic Oath

9/2 Discuss Hope, *Medical Ethics* (1-6, 113-128)

Week 2

9/5 – Labor Day – NO CLASS

9/7 Discuss Hope, *Medical Ethics* (7-41, 58-74)

9/9 Continue to discuss Hope, *Medical Ethics* (7-41, 58-74)

Week 3: ETHICS OF THE MEDICAL CASE

9/12 Discuss Chambers, “What to Expect from an Ethics Case” [UBLearns]

9/14 Discuss Sacks, “The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat” [UBLearns]

9/16 Discuss Couser “The Cases of Oliver Sacks” [UBLearns]

Week 4: TV MEDICAL DRAMA

9/19 Discuss Medic “White is the Color.” Introduce assignment #1.

9/21 Discuss House M.D. “Three Stories.”

9/23 Discuss Scrubs “My Life in Four Cameras.”

INTERLUDE – LITERATURE IN MEDICINE

Week 5:

9/26 Discuss *Healing Words* [UBLearns]

9/28 Presentation by Arts in Health Initiative Teachers

9/30 Peer Critique Assignment #1

PART II – THE PATIENT’S PERSPECTIVE

Week 6: Language and Illness

10/3 Discuss Woolf, *On Being Ill* (3-28)

10/5 Discuss Sontag *Illness as a Metaphor* (3-42)

10/7 Discuss Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor* (43-87). **Assignment #1 Due.**

Week 7:

10/10 Discuss Broyard *Intoxicated by My Illness* (3-30)

10/12 Discuss Broyard, *Intoxicated by My Illness* (33-58)

10/14 Discuss Lorde, *The Cancer Journals* (23-55)

Week 8: Nothing About Us Without Us

10/17 Discuss Lorde (56-79)

10/19 Discuss Johnson, “Unspeakable Conversations” [UBLearns]

10/21 Discuss Yergeau “Significant Disturbance” [UBLearns]

Week 9: Blogging #Illness

10/24 Computer Lab (Clemens 128). Discuss “Why More Patients Should Blog” “Blogging Illness” “The Social Media Cure.” [UBLearns] Introduce Assignment 2.

10/26 Computer Lab (Clemens 128).

10/28 Computer Lab (Clemens 128). Introduce Literature in Medicine Intervention.

INTERLUDE: LITERATURE IN MEDICINE II

Week 10:

10/31 Literature in Medicine Intervention group brainstorm

11/2 Revision of Intervention ideas with AHI Teachers

11/4 Peer Critique Assignment #2

Part III – MEDICINE IN LITERATURE

Week 11

11/7 Discuss Silas Weir Mitchell, “The Autobiography of a Quack” [UBLearns]

11/9 Discuss Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” [UBLearns]

11/11 Discuss William Carlos Williams, “The Use of Force.” [UBLearns]

Assignment #2 Due.

Week 12

11/14 Discuss Katherine Anne Porter, “Pale Horse, Pale Rider.” [UBLearns]

11/16 Discuss “Pale Horse, Pale Rider” continued

11/18 Discuss Susan Sontag “The Way We Live Now.” [UBLearns]

Week 13

11/21 Discuss poetry of C. Dale Young, Emilia Philips and Max Ritvo [UBLearns]

11/23 Fall Recess – NO CLASS

11/25 Fall Recess – NO CLASS

Week 14

11/28 I Discuss Chris Adrian, “The Sum of Our Parts” [UBLearns] Introduce assignment #3.

11/30 Discuss Rebecca Curtis “Fish Rot” “There’s a Lot About Illness” [UBLearns]

12/2 Discuss Dodie Bellamy “When the Sick Rule the World” [UBLearns]

INTERLUDE: LITERATURE IN MEDICINE III

Week 15 –

12/5 Presentation/Reflection on Hospital Experience

12/7 Peer Critique Assignment #3.

12/9 Course Wrap-up.

Assignment #3 due 12/14 11:59 PM.