

## ARTS & SCIENCE 4CT3 Medical Humanities 2015-16 (Term 2)

Monday 9:30-10:20, Thursday 9:30-11:20

**Classroom:** KTH/B107

**Office hour:** Monday 10:30-11:30

**Instructor:** Dr. Amelia DeFalco

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**Office:** CNH 311

### **Course Description**

This course brings a number of disciplines into dialogue, including history of medicine, philosophy, aging studies, literary studies and cinema studies, in order to examine the various ways health, illness, and medicine are constructed, circulated, and interpreted in literature and film. The course interprets “medical” in its broadest sense, incorporating artistic explorations dealing with experiences of doctors and patients, as well as a wide range of healthcare workers, caregivers, and others dealing with the meanings and implications of illness and care. Through weekly discussion starter and response paper assignments we will investigate and theorize the multiple cultural meanings and functions assigned to health and illness by visual and literary representation.

“The body itself,” proclaims disability studies critic David Mitchell, “has no language, since language is foreign to its materiality. The body must be spoken for if its meanings are to prove narratable” (28). We will consider the meanings and repercussions generated by representations that speak for bodies affected by illness, impairment and pain. As disability scholars have made clear, what is variously termed the “extraordinary” or “problem” body has a long history of representation: injury and impairment have fulfilled a symbolic representational function as far back as Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex*. The first unit of 4CT3 will allow us to consider the connections between illness, disability, medicine and narrative, providing the theoretical foundations that will inform the following units on specific maladies and the posthuman. In Unit II, we will examine narrative representations of particular conditions and their treatment, including cancer, HIV/AIDS, mental illness, and dementia, that have powerful, conflicted, and often stigmatizing cultural meanings. From there, we will conclude with a consideration of how emerging technologies might transform the meaning and function of illness, medicine, and embodiment.

How do we read, see, know, understand, and evaluate illness, impairment, and care in a variety of texts, both literary and visual? How do such texts influence our notions of responsibility and identity? How do illness, impairment, and caregiving affect selfhood? These complicated questions will help guide our study of representations of health, illness, and medicine across the life course.

### **Required Texts:**

#### **FILMS**

*Arrugas* (Spain 2011; Ignacio Ferreras)

*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (France, U.S.A. 2007; Julian Schnabel)

#### **LITERATURE** (available at the Campus Store, unless otherwise indicated)

Joyce Brabner and Harvey Pekar, *Our Cancer Year*

Rebecca Brown, *The Gifts of the Body*

Joyce Farmer, *Special Exits*

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

Shane Neilson, *On Shaving Off His Face*

Ian Williams, *The Bad Doctor*

**CRITICISM** (available at the Campus Store)  
Custom Courseware (CW)

### Assignments

- **Participation** **20%**
- **Response Papers** **20% (2 x 10%)**
- **Discussion Starters** **15%**
- **Essay** **45%**

### Participation

Participation grades are based on attendance, contribution to class discussion, and presentation of response papers. It is vital that all students come prepared to discuss the weekly readings. Active, engaged, thoughtful reactions to the response papers are essential for lively discussion. Students who are not presenting will be expected to actively engage with the issues raised by their colleagues.

### Response Papers (500 words each)

Each student will write **2** response papers during the term. These papers should provide a *critical* response to one or more of the weekly discussion questions by engaging with the week's creative reading(s) and/or film. On the Thursday that your paper is due, you may be asked to discuss or read from it during seminar. The class will be divided into five groups which correspond to Thursday due dates beginning January 14. **Response papers will not be accepted after the class in which they are due**, since the purpose of the assignment is to encourage discussion and debate *within the seminar*.

### Discussion Starter (10-15 minutes) (done in groups of 2-3)

It will be helpful to be attentive to representations of illness, disability, and care outside the classroom, collecting interesting texts that can enrich our study of literature and film. These might include advertisements, articles or essays, photographs or videos. Each Monday's class will begin with a group of two to three students sharing a "cultural artefact" with the class, using a short analysis (around 10-15 minutes) that connects the artefact to one or more of the week's critical essays. This critical reflection should aim to initiate class discussion. In other words, the group's role is to provide a critical introduction to a new text in a way that provokes discussion. It is often helpful if presenters include one or two questions to initiate response. Not only will these "artefacts" provide provocative starting points for each meeting's conversation, they will also help us assemble a foundation of popular notions regarding illness, disability, and medicine that will assist our critical interpretation of literature and film dealing with these topics.

You might consider the following queries when developing your discussion starter presentation: How does the artefact relate to health, aging, illness, disability and/or health care? What visual or literary strategies does the artefact employ for its effects? What discourses of health and illness does the artefact invoke? How does the text relate to the week's theoretical materials and any other texts we've considered in class?

You will be asked to sign up for a discussion starter and two response paper dates (see below) during the first week of class.

### **Term Essay (8-10 pages)**

This research essay will explore issues raised in the course in relation to one or more representational texts (literature, film, comics, etc.). The essay must deal with at least two texts included on the syllabus. Essay topics will be circulated in advance. If you wish to devise your own topic, please come discuss your plans with me during office hours. ***Please follow MLA guidelines for formatting and citation in your essay.***

### **Late Assignment Policy**

Essays must be submitted at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day, for 7 days. Assignments more than one week overdue will not be accepted. Essays submitted on time will receive a letter grade and written comments; late assignments will receive minimal feedback. **LATE RESPONSE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

*McMaster Policy on Academic Integrity:*

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences—e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>  
The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty: 1) Plagiarism—e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained. 2) Improper collaboration in group work. 3) Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

### **MSAF Statement**

*McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF):*

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work.” Please also see the MSAF statement on our website (<http://artsci.mcmaster.ca/>) and direct any questions or concerns to Shelley Anderson or Rebecca Bishop in the Arts & Science Program Office as appropriate.

### **Email Contact and Student Responsibility Statement**

*Please Note:*

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of students to check **their McMaster email** and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes. Announcements will be made in class and by using the course email distribution list.

### **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities Statement**

*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities:*

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or email [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

### **Sustainable Written Work Submission Guidelines**

The written work submission guidelines have been chosen to support the more sustainable use of paper, energy, and toner, and meet the Gold standard of the Office of Sustainability [www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability](http://www.mcmaster.ca/sustainability). All written work should be submitted in the following format: double-sided printing; no title page; sans-serif font.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Unit I – Illness, Medicine, Narrative**

#### **Week 1 - Introductions**

January 7

- Course, text, and assignment overview
- Locating course materials (articles, films)
- Assignment of position paper dates

#### **Week 2 - Illness and Narrative**

January 11, 14

📖 Arthur Frank, "Being a Good Story: Humanities as Therapeutic Practice" (CW)

📖 Roxana Robinson, "The Treatment"

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/09/the-treatment/302581/>

📖 Lorrie Moore, "People Like That Are the Only People Here: Canonical Babblings in Peed Onk"

<https://bioethicsarchive.georgetown.edu/pcbe/bookshelf/reader/chapter8.html>

#### **Assignments:**

- Monday, January 11 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, January 14 -- Group 1 Response Papers Due

#### **Week 3 - Narrative Medicine**

January 18, 21

📖 Catherine Belling, "Begin with a Text: Teaching the Poetics of Medicine." *Journal of Medical Humanities* 34.4 (2013): 481-491. (available through McMaster library)

📖 Rita Charon, "Narrative Medicine: Attention, Representation, Affiliation" *Narrative* 13.3 (2005): 261-270. (available through McMaster library)

📖 Shane Neilson, *On Shaving Off His Face* (Poems)

#### **Assignments**

- Monday, January 18 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, January 21 – Guest Speaker: Shane Neilson, MD and PhD candidate in English and Cultural Studies, McMaster

#### **Week 4 - Graphic Medicine**

January 25, 28

📖 Ian Williams, *The Bad Doctor*

📖 Ian Williams, "Comics and the Iconography of Illness" (CW)

📖 Podcast: Arthur Frank, "When Bodies Need Stories in Pictures"  
<http://www.graphicmedicine.org/arthur-frank-when-bodies-need-stories-in-pictures/>

📖 Website: [graphicmedicine.org](http://www.graphicmedicine.org)

### Assignments

- Monday, January 25 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, January 28 -- Group 2 Response Papers Due

### Week 5 - Disability and Narrative

February 1, 4

#### Required

📖 David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder, "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor"  
[http://www.english.upenn.edu/sites/www.english.upenn.edu/files/Mitchell-Snyder\\_Narrative-Prosthesis\\_Chpt2.pdf](http://www.english.upenn.edu/sites/www.english.upenn.edu/files/Mitchell-Snyder_Narrative-Prosthesis_Chpt2.pdf)

📖 Martha Stoddard Holmes, "Disability in Two Doctor Stories" (CW)

📖 *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* (France, U.S.A. 2007; Julian Schnabel)

#### Assignments

- Monday, February 1 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, February 4 -- Group 3 Response Papers Due

### Week 6 - Aging and the Ethics of Care

February 8, 11

📖 Eva Kittay et al. "Dependency, Difference and the Global Ethic of Longterm Care." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 13.4 (2005): 443-469. (available through McMaster library)

📖 Joyce Farmer, *Special Exits*

#### Recommended

📖 Sarah Leavitt, *Tangles: A Story About Alzheimer's, My Mother and Me*

📖 Roz Chast, *Can't We Talk about Something More Pleasant?: A Memoir*

#### Assignments

- Monday, February 8 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, February 11 -- Group 4 Response Papers Due

## MID-TERM RECESS

### Unit II -- Maladies

### Week 7 - Mental Illness: Gender, Sexuality, and Hysteria

February 22, 25

#### Required

📖 Elaine Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender"

<http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft0p3003d3&chunk.id=d0e14039> 📖

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/literatureofprescription/exhibitionAssets/digitalDocs/The-Yellow-Wall-Paper.pdf>

#### Recommended

📖 Marjorie Levine-Clark, "I Always Prefer the Scissors": Isaac Baker Brown and Feminist Histories of Medicine" in *Health Humanities Reader*

📖 Sander Gilman, "Madness and Representation: Toward a History of Visualizing Madness" in *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*

#### Assignments:

- Monday, February 22 -- Discussion Starter

- Thursday, February 25 -- Group 5 Response Papers Due

### **Week 8 - HIV/AIDS: Witnessing and Testimony**

February 29, March 3

#### **Required**

📖 Rebecca Brown, *The Gifts of the Body*

📖 G. Thomas Couser "HIV/AIDS and Its Stories" (selections) (CW)

#### **Recommended**

📖 Susan Sontag, *AIDS and Its Metaphors*

📖 Sarah Brophy, *Witnessing AIDS: Writing, Testimony, and the Work of Mourning*

#### **Assignments:**

- Monday, February 29 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, March 3 -- Group 1 Response Papers Due

### **Week 9 - Cancer: Visualizing Illness**

March 7, 10

#### **Required**

📖 Martha Stoddard Holmes, "Cancer Comics: Narrating Cancer through Sequential Art" *Tusla Studies in Women's Literature* 32.2 (2013): 147-162. (available through McMaster library)

📖 Joyce Brabner and Harvey Pekar, *Our Cancer Year*

#### **Recommended**

📖 *Cancer Vixen*

📖 *Mom's Cancer*

#### **Assignments:**

- Monday, March 7 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, March 10 -- Group 2 Response Papers Due

### **Week 10 - Representing Pain**

March 14, 17

#### **Required**

📖 Eula Biss, "The Pain Scale"

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6gyxfOtiHEgYTA3MjlxZTYtMGJmNi00YTMwLTliYjktMmJmYWVmZmRiMjEx/view?layout=list&pid=0B6gyxfOtiHEgMjg4NmIxBmEtNjRIZi00MjkzLTg0MTctZTVlZjllMzFIZTFI&sort=moddate&desc=true&pli=1>

📖 Elaine Scarry, Introduction, *The Body in Pain* (CW)

📖 Shane Neilson, "Pain as Metaphor: Metaphor and Medicine"

<http://mh.bmj.com/content/early/2015/08/07/medhum-2015-010672.abstract>

#### **Assignments:**

- Monday, March 14 – **ESSAYS DUE**
- Thursday, February 17 – Guest Speaker: Shane Neilson

### **Week 11 - Dementia: Memory and Identity**

March 21, 24

#### **Required**

📖 E. Ann Kaplan, "'Do you Remember Me?' Constructions of Alzheimer's Disease in Literature and Film" (CW)

📖 Janelle Taylor, "On Recognition, Caring, and Dementia." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 22.4 (2008): 313-335. (available through McMaster library)

📖 *Arrugas* (Spain 2011; Ignacio Ferreras)

**Recommended:**

- 📖 Alice Munro, "The Bear Came Over the Mountain"
- 🎬 *Still Alice* (USA 2014; Richard Glatzer, Wash Westmoreland)
- 🎬 *The Savages* (USA 2007; Tamara Jenkins)
- 🎬 *Away from Her* (Canada 2006 ; Sarah Polley)

**Assignments:**

- Monday, March 21 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, March 24 -- Group 3 Response Papers Due

**Unit III: Biomedical Futures****Week 12 - Bioethics & Bioengineering**

March 28, 31

- 📖 Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*
- 📖 Verena Stolcke, "Homo Clonicus" (CW)

**Assignments**

- Monday, March 28 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, March 31 -- Group 4 Response Papers Due

**Week 13 - Posthuman Bodies: Medicine as Bodywork**

April 4, 7

- 📖 Rosemarie Tong, "The Virtues of the Imperfect Body" (CW)
- 🎬 Viktoria Modesta music video, "Prototype"
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jA8inmHhx8c>
- 🌐 Website: <http://www.orlan.eu/works/performance-2/>

**Assignments**

- Monday, April 4 -- Discussion Starter
- Thursday, April 7 -- Group 5 Response Papers Due