INGLE. 3036/ ENGL. 3036: Literature and the Healing Arts: A Cross-cultural Perspective

45 hours/ 3 credit hours. Pre-Requisites: NONE

Professor: Dra. Loretta Collins Klobah

Course Description

An interdisciplinary course that examines essays, short stories, poetry, plays, novels, films, and medical writings that address, from several cultural perspectives, the relationship between literature, the human body in pain, social meanings of illness, and the healing arts.

G. Course Objectives: By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Comprehend fundamental aspects of a variety of literature that addresses, from varying perspectives, medical conditions and practices, the body in pain, healing arts, and socio-cultural meanings of illness.

2. Understand the cultural-historical relationship between the fields of Humanities and Medical Sciences, and demonstrate knowledge of the connection between the narrative structures and practices of medicine and the narration of medical cases in literature.

3. Develop a humanistic perspective towards healing practices, by interpreting various literary representations of:
   - medical practitioners, traditional healers, and the healing professions in literature;
   - illness, trauma, and the human body in literature
   - personal experiences of medical patients, people struggling with illnesses, or people trying to overcome physical or mental disabilities;
   - the doctor-patient relationship in literature and art;
• the medical practitioner’s experiences from the point of view of doctors, nurses, and other healers who also write creatively;

• cross-cultural literary expressions of historical or societal trauma that impacts both the individual psyche and sense of group identity;

• the traditional connection between spirituality, ceremony and the healing arts.

4. Recognize the diversity of human experiences, perspectives, values, and concerns about illness and healing practices; gain a more global or multicultural perspective through the critical analysis of poems, short stories, plays, novels, biographical writings, and medical narratives written by writers from several countries and cultures.

5. Examine various modes of constructing, interpreting, and applying knowledge about the interrelationship between literature and healing.

6. Demonstrate knowledge of available research sources in the field and be able to use the both bibliographic research sources and electronic databases and web-based research sources.

7. Understand and use basic literary terminology and healthcare concepts in classroom discussions and in written essay assignments, academic research paper assignments, and narrative writing assignments.

8. Acquire an inquisitive and thoughtful attitude regarding the relationship between literature, written and oral narratives, the human body in pain, illness, and healing practices.

H. Content and Time Distribution (45 hours)

I. Introduction to the intersecting fields of “Literature and Medicine” and “Humanities in Medicine”; discussion of the relationship between narration and interpretation in healthcare/ healing practices and literary narration and interpretation. (3 hours)

II. Historical Overview of Representations of Medical Practitioners, Traditional Healers, Healing professions, and “the Body” in literature, from the Outrageous to the Mundane (the pre-19th Century periods and focusing primarily on the 19th and 20th Centuries). (3 hours)

III. The Romantic imagination and the “exquisite combinations of human feeling” involved in being physician or patient (monstrous creation); Man and Science vs. God and Nature: Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. (6 hours)

IV. Societal Factors in Medical and Literary Representations of Illness; The Role of the Patriarchy and Colonialism in the Construction of Medical and Literary Representations.
Mental Illness and Gender During the 19th Century; The ‘Madwoman in the Attic’ Then (19th Century) and Now (20th Century). Readings: Charlotte Perkin’s Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” and “Why I Wrote ‘The Yellow Wallpaper’”; Excerpts from Charlotte Bronte’s novel Jane Eyre; Jean Rhys’s novel Wide Sargasso Sea. (3 hours)

V. Illness, Trauma, and the Human body in Contemporary Literature; Narrating the personal experiences of medical patients; Writers struggling with illnesses and overcoming physical or mental disabilities. Readings: Selections from Leatrice H. Lifshitz’s (ed.) Her Soul Beneath the Bone: Women’s Poetry on Breast Cancer; Excerpts from Deborah Cummins’ Recovery from Mortality: Essays from a Cancer Limbo Time; excerpts from A. Roberts, Hot Flashes in a Cold World: My struggle to remain a husband, a Doctor, and a man in the face of prostate cancer; and excerpts from Audre Lourde’s The Cancer Journals. (6 hours)

VI. Representations of people with Disabilities, the Reactions of the Society, and Social Agency. Readings: Cherrie Moraga’s theatrical play Heroes and Saints; Brief excerpts from Lennard Davis’ (ed.) The Disabilities Studies Reader. (3 hours)

VII. The Doctor-Patient Relationship in Contemporary Literature. Readings: Selections from Jim Ferris’ The Hospital Poems; Chitra Banerjee Divakaruna’s short story “The Ultra-Sound”; William T. Vollman’s “The Rainbow Stories”; William Carlos Williams’ story “Jean Biecke”; students write narratives about the students’ personal, familial or professional healthcare experiences. (4.5 hours)

VIII. The Medical Practitioner’s Experiences from the Point of View of Doctors, Nurses, and other Healers who also write creatively; Poetic imagery, form and language in literature by doctors and nurses. (4.5 hours)


X. Illness, Healing, Ceremonies, Spiritual and Medical Practices Cross-Culturally, as Represented in literature and film; Medical Ethics in the Cross-Cultural Situation; Unequal Societal Power and Health Issues; Discussion of brief excerpt from Judyann Bigby’s study Cross-Cultural Medicine. Screening of Richard Fung’s short poetic documentary film Sea in the Blood (about family illnesses and HIV in Trinidad and Canada); Screening of Stephen Frear’s film Dirty Pretty Things (about organ harvesting among immigrants in Britain). Readings: Excerpt from Anne Fadiman’s prose collection The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down (about the illnesses and healing practices of Hmong (Laos) immigrants in California); brief excerpts from Jamaica Kincaid’s novel
Annie John (about the woman as spiritual healer or obeah woman in the Caribbean). (4.5 hours)

XI. Alternative Narrative Forms: the Graphic Novel. Readings: Brian Fies’ graphic novel Mom's Cancer. (3 hours)

Students submit and present final research paper.

I. Teaching Strategies: Lecture (30%), critical; guided group discussion (30%); task group projects (20%) on literary texts, critical readings, and films; critical essay and research paper writing (20%). When appropriate, up to 11.25 hours of the course may be taught by alternative methods, including but not limited to, online instruction through an educational platform and class projects.

J. Resources and Equipment Required: English Department screening room, Sala Jorge Enjuto, or computer lab may be needed.

K. Methods of Evaluation:

Attendance and Participation 10%
Daily Quizzes 15%
Informal responses to reading assignments and films (Written homework assignments) 10%
Formal Essay #1 10%
Formal Essay #2 10%
Student Narrative about a personal, familial or professional healthcare experience 10%
Midterm Exam 15%
Group Presentation on novel 5%
Final Research/Writing Project and Presentation 15%

TOTAL 100%
A differential grading system will be applied for students with special needs.

L. **Grading System:** A, B, C, D, F

Ley 51

Los estudiantes que reciban servicios de Rehabilitación Vocacional deben comunicarse con el (la) professor(a) al inicio del semestre para planificar el acomodo razonable y equipo asistivo necesario conforme a las recomendaciones de la Oficina de Asuntos para las Personas con impedimento (OAPI) del Decanato de Estudiantes. También aquellos estudiantes con necesidades especiales que requieren de algún tipos de asistencia o acomodo deben comunicarse con el (la) professor(a).

M. **Selected Bibliography**


*** -----. “The Strange Death of the Animated Cadaver: Changing Conventions in Nineteenth-


*** Clark, Miriam Marty. “Art and Suffering in Two Late Poems by William Carlos Williams.”


*** Collins, Loretta. “‘We Shall All Heal:’ Ma Kilman, the Obeah Woman, as Mother-Healer in Derek Walcott’s Omeros.” Literature and Medicine 14.1 (1995): 146-162.


**Films:** (most of which will be screened voluntarily and outside of class time)

*Sea in the Blood* (Canada and Trinidad, Dir. Richard Fung, 2000)

*Children of Men* (U.S., Dir. Alfonso Cuaron, 2006)


*Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* (Britain, Dir. Kenneth Branagh, 1994)


**Web Resources:**

1.) Society for the Arts in Healthcare

http://www.thesah.org/template/index.cfm

2.) Medical Humanities at NYU

http://medhum.med.nyu.edu/medhum.html

2.) *The Yale Journal for Humanities in Medicine*

http://info.med.yale.edu/intmed/hummed/yjhm/
3.) Ars Medica: A Journal of Medicine, the Arts, and Humanities
http://www.ars-medica.ca/home.htm

4.) Bellevue Literary Review: A Journal of Humanity and Human Experience
http://www.blreview.org/

5.) The Healing Muse: A Journal of Literary and Visual Arts
http://www.upstate.edu/bioethics/thehealingmuse/

6.) Literature and Medicine
http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/literature_and_medicine/

7.) Medical Humanities
http://mh.bmj.com/

8.) Medical Humanities Review
http://www.utmb.edu/imh/publications.asp

9.) Women Physician’s Autobiographies
http://research.med.umkc.edu/teams/cml/womendrs.html

10.) Society for Literature, Science and the Arts
http://slsa.press.jhu.edu/

11.) The British Society for Literature and Science
http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/BSLS/

12.) Georgetown University’s “Interacting with the Medical Humanities”
http://www8.georgetown.edu/departments/familymedicine/imh/units.htm

13.) Columbia University’s program in Narrative Medicine
http://www.narrativemedicine.org/

14.) Alaska Webpage on Narrative and Healing
http://litsite.alaska.edu/uaa/healing/healing.html

15.) Ohio State University’s Project Narrative
http://projectnarrative.osu.edu/resources/default.cfm

16.) Recent Dissertations in the Medical Humanities

http://www.hsls.pitt.edu/guides/histmed/researchresources/dissertations/index_html