

## HUM 240 – Medical Humanities

Syllabus Spring 2021 CRN 37005

Instructor: Dr Katy Brundan

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Teaching assistant: Holly Jones

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Class meets Monday & Wednesday 10.15-11.45 on Zoom

Katy's office hours via Zoom: Thursdays 1-4pm & by appointment

<https://uoregon.zoom.us/j/94942744319?pwd=NVIDRU9mYThWeUN2TmpLUnJIMVBYUT09>

Please sign up on the Google docs so I know you are coming:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xV\\_La0zfbPANTYtwQvKkbqsKDzdf0Qx7Pfur04-0-Mw/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xV_La0zfbPANTYtwQvKkbqsKDzdf0Qx7Pfur04-0-Mw/edit)

or email me.

### Course Overview

This course provides a framework for thinking critically about illness, medical access, and the concept of health using humanities methodologies. Students will examine questions of structural inequities in medical outcomes and experiences based on gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, immigrant status, and language competency. The tools we will use to probe these questions are based on the principles of narrative medicine: developing techniques to analyze textual narratives, practicing narrative empathy, and listening to others' stories. This course takes a global, interdisciplinary focus to the concept of illness and health, including linguistic, sociological, and historical approaches to medical interventions. Narratives will reflect writers' diverse ethnicities, national origins, and epochs. Since stories can be told through means other than narrative language, we will also explore art and poetry. Assignments will include formal papers, some creative writing, and an interview or podcast.

Our Google docs document for class is at

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ndMO6l63D8HO10y2oSANXg4XT537MPgpSaGc1sQKQzs/edit>

### Hints for reading

Start the reading over the weekend to make sure you have all the reading done for both Monday's and Wednesday classes. Don't leave it until the last minute!

I know it seems obvious, but please underline, write in your text, and make notes. If you can, print out readings from Canvas so you have a copy to write in.

### Coronavirus awareness

Keep calm, keep in touch via Canvas, and keep aware of the latest developments. Course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change due to on-going developments. Information about changes in this course will be communicated as soon as possible by email, and on Canvas. Log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access alternative assignments.

### Required Texts (all available from UO Bookstore)

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* – Oxford University Press. There is a free etext on Project Gutenberg, at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/583/583-h/583-h.htm>. Since this is a long-ish novel, I do recommend a paper copy to read if at all possible.

Kwame Dawes, *Hope's Hospice* – Pepal Press. I have a PDF of this available, but you may like to buy this (and support the author).

### **Course Requirements:**

1. Class participation: 10%
2. Quizzes: 10%
3. Discussion board: 10%
3. Poem & essay: 20%
5. Health project: 30%
6. Creative writing project: 20%

### *Policies*

#### *Attendance*

Lectures will be conducted via Zoom twice a week. These will be automatically recorded on Canvas under “Zoom Meetings – Cloud Recordings” and only available to those students registered in the class. Attendance at lectures will count towards your grade; alternative options will be offered by default if attendance is not possible. If you have been absent, you may watch the class video by going to Zoom Meetings in Canvas and to Cloud Recordings. If you have been absent, please upload your detailed notes by going to Canvas Assignments: Make-up Work and choose the correct week; upload one set of notes for each class missed. Your participation grade will be recorded in the “attendance tool” on Canvas as well as our holistic assessment of your participation in class. Please contact me if you have an extended illness or exceptional circumstances. Your health should be your #1 priority; we want you to be safe and looking out for each other.

#### *Zoom lecture etiquette*

Students are expected to participate by sharing ideas and contributing to the collective learning environment. You will need to log into Zoom using the name you registered for class. Be on time – I may not be able to see you are in the waiting room if I am sharing my screen with the class. Please **enable your video** during Zoom lectures unless there is a good reason not to; any background should not be overtly distracting (partitioning off a corner of the room with a sheet is a good option, for example). Please remember that non-verbal cues (such as facial expressions) can be difficult to figure out on Zoom, so we need to be patient and understanding with each other. Zoom fatigue happens; we have the option to change things as the course goes on – so please keep in contact with Katy if you are experiencing Zoom fatigue. We will conduct a lot of class activities via a Google docs document, which is at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ndMO6l63D8HO10y2oSANXg4XT537MPgpSaGc1sQKQzs/edit>

#### *Late work and Incompletes*

We understand that difficult circumstances require flexibility. Make-up or late work will be permitted in the case of illness or exceptional circumstances, but should be handed in no more than 2 weeks later than the original due date. If you are getting behind on work, I will recommend meeting with an adviser. Please be advised that UO instructors will not be able to grade large quantities of late work at the end of term. Incompletes can only be given if “some minor yet essential requirement has not been completed.” Please see the Registrar’s policy on Incompletes at <https://registrar.uoregon.edu/current-students/incomplete-policy>

### Quizzes

There will be weekly online quizzes to test your comprehension of the material available on Canvas. These will be due at on Friday. You will have 30 minutes to complete the quiz once you start it. If Canvas does something strange – email me and I can reset it.

### Papers

Written work is due on the day assigned, unless you have made prior arrangements with me. Submit all your assignments onto Canvas. Please **only** upload PDF and Word documents – absolutely no ZIP files, no Google docs, no URLs, no Pages (Canvas has difficulty with these formats).

Poem & essay: one poem; one reflective essay of 3 pages double-spaced

Write a poem about a medical experience – it does not have to be yours, or even real. In the short essay, discuss your experience of writing the poem in relation to one of the poems we have read in class. Were you inspired by a particular poem, and if so, why? How did you find portraying either you own voice or someone else’s perspective? Using quotes, indicate how both you and the writer were able to portray an experience or story effectively.

Discussion board:

Please respond to a question on the Discussion Board (with page numbers and quotes) on Thursday and then reply to one other class member on Friday, for a total of 200-250 words. Some of the prompts will ask you to respond creatively to the texts, others will be asking you to respond to questions, or provide your own question. I am looking for detailed responses. Your responses will be graded for quality.

Health project:

This will involve a creative option and a reflective essay. You can choose between the two options:

1. COVID-19 poster or podcast

For this option, you will produce a poster to encourage a group of people to receive COVID-19 vaccinations. For this option, please interview someone whose story you can highlight (eg. why they decided to get vaccinated). You WILL need to obtain their written permission to do this (I will have some sample permissions and guidelines). Please be extremely SENSITIVE about asking people to be interviewees and be clear about your own intentions and purpose before approaching someone. Your 4-page reflective essay will incorporate facts, quotes, and possibly interview material to highlight an aspect of the social barriers to receiving medical care, particularly during the pandemic. You will consider relevant issues of race, gender, sexuality, language ability, socio-economic status, and other cultural or belief systems.

2. Podcast: (4 minutes for one student; 8 minutes for a pair)

Script and perform a podcast analyzing the human experience behind a medical event or condition (eg. Aids, pregnancy, cancer, heart disease, anorexia, COVID-19, mental illness, death etc.), with an eye to issues of race, gender, sexuality, language ability, socio-economic status, and/or illness as a metaphor. Your podcast should reflect some data about the topic as well as reference to narratives or artistic representations. Be aware of privacy concerns if you are thinking of sharing others’ experiences, since others’ health information is private (a fictionalized version would be a better option). You can pair up with someone else in the class if you like. Your 2-page reflective essay will provide background to the podcast in connection with our readings.

Creative writing and reflection: 4-5 pages double-spaced

Take one character from *The Woman in White* and retell an important episode in the story from their point of view (2 pages).

Write a reflection on how your fictional reconstruction allowed you to imagine characters' emotions, barriers to equal treatment in society, and/or Victorian conceptions and metaphors of illness and identity, using quotes from the novel (2-3 pages).

Details will be under "Assignments" on Canvas.

I am looking for your awareness of any societal barriers that might exist for the individual and how these might (or might not) be resolved.

### *Academic Honesty*

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. The University Student Conduct Code (<https://studentlife.uoregon.edu/conduct>) defines academic misconduct. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct, including plagiarism and unauthorized help on assignments or examinations. Please contact me with any questions you have about academic conduct. Academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failing grade for this course.

### *Students with disabilities*

If you have a disability (physical or learning), or any other issue, which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me so that we can make arrangements for your full access to all classroom activities. For more information or assistance, you are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-1155; website: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>. Please remember to book alternative testing facilities for the midterm and close reading assignment 7 days in advance – go to the AEC website at <https://aec.uoregon.edu/testing-accommodations>.

### *Victim support*

I am a "student-designated reporter" of sex- or gender-based violence, which means I will only report if you wish me to. I can connect you with confidential employees and counselors - I recommend the 24-7 hotline 541-346-SAFE. Students experiencing any form of prohibited discrimination or harassment, including sex- or gender-based violence, may seek information at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu) (concerning sex and gender-based violence), [respect.uoregon.edu](http://respect.uoregon.edu) (concerning bias, hate, or discrimination), [titleix.uoregon.edu](http://titleix.uoregon.edu) (Title IX co-ordinator), or [aaeo.uoregon.edu](http://aaeo.uoregon.edu) (office of affirmative action). You may contact the non-confidential Title IX office (541-346-8136), AAEO office (541-346-3123), or Dean of Students offices (541-346-3216). I am also a mandatory reporter of child abuse.

### *Inclusivity*

Some of the course materials may include content that contains and/or alludes to traumatic events. You are welcome to discuss any topics that might be difficult for you with me in advance. Above all, I will strive to create a comfortable and a respectful environment for productive discussions.

### *Equity and Inclusion*

The University of Oregon values diversity and inclusion in a welcoming, safe, and respectful community. For more information or assistance, you are encouraged to contact the following campus services: *Division of Equity and Inclusion*, 1 Johnson Hall, 346-3175; website: <http://inclusion.uoregon.edu>; *Center for Multicultural Academic Excellence (CMAE)*, 164 Oregon Hall, 346-3479; website: <https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/content/center-multicultural-academic-excellence-cmae>; *Center on Diversity and Community*, 54 Susan Campbell Hall, 346-3212; website: <http://codac.uoregon.edu/>. For

information on the UO's support for DACA students, please visit the UO DREAMers Workgroup website at <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/dreamers/>. Local resources include Centro Latino at <http://centrolatinoamericano.org/>.

### *Preferred First Name and pronouns*

The university recognizes that many people use first names other than their legal names to identify themselves. I will use your preferred first name and pronouns in the course of university activities, in accordance with UO policy.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Analyze medical themes and issues by drawing from a variety of humanities approaches (history, linguistics, literary studies, art history, and sociology).
- Develop narrative competencies through close reading of literature on medical themes by analyzing elements such as point of view, plots, dialogue, images, word choices, and metaphor, focusing on the human stories behind illness and medical treatments.
- Identify and use some of the main techniques of narrative medicine, eg. how and why we tell stories, the role emotion plays in mediating experience, the effect of genre in conveying meaning (case history, witnessing, poetry, story).
- Practice empathy in response to written texts.
- Begin to identify and analyze structural inequities in society, particularly in relation to race, gender, national origin, socio-economic status, and language competence.
- Analyze medical issues in a global context in response to texts highlighting medical concerns in different countries.
- Develop and use “close reading” techniques in relation to literary texts and visual ones, specifically photographs, paintings, and illustrations.
- Apply creative and critical thinking skills to develop oral and written interpretations of and responses to texts.

### **Schedule**

**The schedule is subject to change; any updates will appear on Canvas**

*Readings are on Canvas, unless otherwise noted*

#### Week 1 Introduction to Narrative Medicine

Mon 29 Mar – Introduction. Read Viola Allo, “Bird from Africa” and brief extract from Audre Lourde’s “A Burst of Light”

Wed 31 Mar – Rita Charon, “Narrative Medicine”  
Veneta Mason, poems from *Clinician’s Guide to the Soul*  
Morgan Parker, “Heaven be a Xanax”

Explore this website: <https://dearworld.org/nurses/>

## Week 2 Narrative Humility

Mon 5 Apr – Sayantani DasGupta, “The Art of Medicine: Narrative Humility.”  
From Freud’s *Dora*

Wed 7 Apr – Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*  
Charles Baudelaire, “Miss Scalpel” (“Mlle Bistouri”)  
“Against Virus as Metaphor,” <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/against-the-coronavirus-as-metaphor>

## Week 3 Back to Empathy

Mon 12 Apr – Kwame Dawes, *Hope’s Hospice* 9-26  
Dawes, “Back to Empathy”  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2010/04/back-to-empathy>  
From David France, *How to Survive a Plague*, 44-45, 121-134

Wed 14 Apr – *Hope’s Hospice* 26-end  
From David France, *How to Survive a Plague*, 276-280, 440-445

## Week 4 Rethinking the “Single Story”

Mon 19 Apr – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s TED talk, “The Dangers of a Single Story,”  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story/transcript?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en)

*New Yorker* story you may like to read: “The Doubled Fears of the Undocumented during the Coronavirus Shutdown”

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-doubled-fears-of-the-undocumented-during-the-coronavirus-shutdown>

Adichie, “The Shivering”  
Samanta Schweblin, “The Merman”

Wed 21 Apr – Tananarive Due, “Patient Zero,” “Removal Order,” “Herd Immunity”

## Week 5 Race and Health

Mon 26 Apr –

Statement released by American Medical Association on racism:  
<https://www.ama-assn.org/press-center/press-releases/new-ama-policy-recognizes-racism-public-health-threat>

Listen to the NPR podcast: “This Racism is Killing Me Inside” (the medical story begins about 2.30 minutes in) <https://one.npr.org/?sharedMediaId=576818478:576901155>

*Guardian* article: “Racism Ages Black Americans Faster”  
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/dec/07/racism-ages-black-americans-faster>

Association of American Medical Colleges, “How we Fail Black Patients’ Pain,”  
<https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/how-we-fail-black-patients-pain>

CNN article on risk to Black children after surgery (research in *Pediatrics*):  
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/20/health/black-children-surgery-death-risk-wellness/index.html>

Wed 28 Apr – COVID-19 articles

Please explore this website set up by Black medical workers:  
[https://www.greaterthancovid.org/theconversation/?utm\\_source=betweenusaboutus.com&utm\\_medium=vanity%20url](https://www.greaterthancovid.org/theconversation/?utm_source=betweenusaboutus.com&utm_medium=vanity%20url)

New York Times article on vaccine attitudes and access:  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/opinion/us-covid-black-people.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

Latest CDC data on COVID deaths & hospitalization  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/racial-ethnic-disparities/disparities-deaths.html>

Guardian story on COVID death disparities  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/04/native-americans-coronavirus-covid-death-rate>

CNN story on vaccine disparities  
<https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/30/us/new-york-vaccine-disparities/index.html>

Guardian story on death disparities  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/30/los-angeles-coronavirus-latino-deaths-increase-1000>

Fri 30 Apr – Poem & essay due

Week 6 Language & Telling the Story of Pain

Mon 3 May – Gregg, Jessica and Somnath Saha. “Communicative Competence”

Jhumpa Lahiri, “Interpreter of Maladies” *Interpreter of Maladies*.

“What We Can Learn from Untranslatable Illnesses”  
<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200604-what-we-can-learn-from-untranslatable-illnesses>

Wed 5 May –Alejandra Pizarnik, poems, Sylvia Plath, *Lady Lazarus*, Sylvia Plath, “The Surgeon at 2 a.m.” - <https://genius.com/Sylvia-plath-the-surgeon-at-2-am-annotated>

Sunita Puri, “Happiness in Quotation Marks”

Look at Frida Kahlo paintings, “Birth”, “Self Portrait Between the Borderline of Mexico and the United States,” “Henry Ford Hospital,” “Frida and the Miscarriage” “What I Saw in the Water” (You may like this article on “Frida Kahlo and her Doctors” at the BMJ):

<https://pmj.bmj.com/content/94/1112/369>

### Week 7 The Victorian Madwoman

Mon 10 May – *Woman in White* 5-107

Wed 12 May – *Woman in White* 107-197 (to end of “first epoch”)

### Week 8 The Victorian Madwoman

Mon 17 May – *Woman in White* 198-308

Wed 19 May – *Woman in White* 308-419 (to end of “second epoch”)

### Week 9 The Victorian Madwoman

Mon 24 May – *Woman in White* 419-532

Wed 26 May – *Woman in White* 532-end

### Week 10 The Autopsy

Mon 31 May – Autopsy art

Alice Jones, ‘The Cadaver’ (in Packet)

Autopsy art: *Anatomy Lesson by Dr. Willen van der Meer*, by Michael Jansz Van Mierevelt, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Frederik Ruysch*, by Adriaen Baker, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Deijman* by Rembrandt, *The Anatomist* by Gabriel Cornelius Ritter von Max, *The Agnew Clinic*, by Thomas Eakins, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*, Rembrandt, “¡Y tenía corazón!” (1890) - Enrique Simonet Lombardo

Wed 2 June – conclusion, presentation in groups of health project

Fri 4 June – Health project due

### Finals week

Creative writing project due on Wednesday June 9.



