



ENGL 292: INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE AND MEDICINE

TR 9:35-10:50, Fall 2018

Prerequisite: NONE

Instructor Information

Dr. Jessica Howell

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Office: LAAH 316

Office Hours: TR 11:00 AM-12:00 PM and by appointment

Catalog Description:

Introduction to methodology, scope and practice of literature and medicine studies; analysis of autobiographies, novels and poetry dealing with health and illness; evaluation of sources from different disciplinary perspectives as a tool for critical thinking.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

1. apply critical thinking and interpret literary works dealing with health and illness
2. understand the methods and practice of literature and medicine studies
3. construct a written critical analysis based on original interpretations of course readings

Core Curriculum Objectives:

The course addresses the Foundational Component Areas (Language, Philosophy and Culture) in the following ways.

Critical Thinking Skills (CTS): The course will enhance critical thinking skills through consistent reading and class discussion of key ideas that serve as the foundation for literary works from different genres.

Communication Skills (CS): The course will enhance communication skills through small and large group discussion and writing about ideas, issues, questions, and themes central to course reading. Source materials will include both written and visual media.

Personal Responsibility (PR): The course will teach personal responsibility by enhancing students' understanding of how to use sources responsibly in order to craft a persuasive argument/answer to an essay question. Further, course readings include literary works which deal with fraught ethical and emotional issues related to health and illness, thus inspiring both analysis and self-reflection in the students.

Social Responsibility (SR): The course will enhance social responsibility by providing students with a deeper understanding of how broader social forces regarding health have shaped our current human experience.

Core Evaluation:

CTS: The evaluation of critical thinking skills will be based on weekly assignments, class participation and will include evaluation of written work. Weekly assignments will be designed to allow students to demonstrate their ability to evaluate and synthesize key ideas from the assigned reading. Classroom discussion will focus on helping students better understand the nuances and complexities of literary works drawn from various genres.

CS: The evaluation of communication skills will be based on class participation in discussions and on written assignments, and will include evaluation of written assignments. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the richness of literary genre and form, as well as historical context relevant to literary interpretation. Essay assignments will demand that they effectively convey key ideas from the course succinctly and clearly. Classroom discussion encourages students to express questions and thoughts about the subtleties of each text, including photographic images, film, and other literary modes under examination.

SR: The evaluation of social responsibility will be based upon the assignments and papers which will require students to demonstrate how key insights from the course have helped broaden their understanding of the way differing experiences, cultures and philosophical outlooks shape the development of a literary tradition, including their own.

PR: The evaluation of personal responsibility will be based upon an assignment in which students will be expected to ethically cite another person's work in crafting an answer or essay response to a specific question. The instructor will offer concrete examples of how to paraphrase ideas and integrate in-text citations in order to construct a persuasive argument. In addition, weekly discussions will focus on the complex notion of personal responsibility in relationship to health and illness.

Required Materials:

Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* and *AIDS and its Metaphors*

Florence Nightingale, *Notes on Nursing* (eCampus)

Louisa May Alcott, *Civil War Sketches*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (eCampus)

Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter" (eCampus)

Sylvia Plath, *Collected Poems* (eCampus)

Theodore Roethke, *Sequence, Sometimes Metaphysical* (eCampus)

Isabelle Allende, *Paula*

Amitav Ghosh, *Calcutta Chromosome*

Tananarive Due, "Patient Zero" (eCampus)

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Course Components:

Three, 2-page response essays: 30%

Final essay proposal: 10%

Final essay: 20%

Individual presentation: 10%

Final exam: 10%

Class participation: 10%

Schedule

Week 1:

Day 1: Introduction to literature and medicine studies

Day 2: *Illness as Metaphor*, by Susan Sontag (eCampus).

Week 2: Nursing

Day 1: Florence Nightingale, *Notes on Nursing* (eCampus)

Day 2: Louisa May Alcott, *Civil War Sketches*

Week 3: The risks and temptations of medicine

Day 1: Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (eCampus)

Day 2: Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter" (eCampus)

Week 4: Mental illness and poetry

Day 1: Selected poetry by Theodore Roethke (eCampus)

Day 2: Selected poetry by Sylvia Plath. **Response paper 1 due.** (eCampus)

Week 5: Cancer and autobiography

Day 1: "A Mastectomy: Letter to Esther Burney," by Fanny Burney (eCampus).

Day 2: Excerpt from *The Cancer Journals*, by Audre Lorde (eCampus).

Week 6: Loss and grief

Day 1: Isabelle Allende, *Paula*

Day 2: *Paula*

Week 7: Loss and grief

Day 1: *Paula*

Day 2: *Paula* **Response paper 2 due.**

Week 8: Gender and health

Day 1: Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions*

Day 2: *Nervous Conditions*

Week 9: Gender and health

Day 1: *Nervous Conditions*

Day 2: *Nervous Conditions*

Week 10: Essay proposal week

Day 1: Final essay proposal workshop. **Proposal draft due.**

Day 2: No class: essay proposal meetings, LAAH 326. **Proposal for final paper due.**

Week 11: Decolonizing health

Day 1: Amitav Ghosh, *Calcutta Chromosome*

Day 2: *Calcutta Chromosome*. **Response paper 3 due.**

Week 12: Decolonizing health

Day 1: *Calcutta Chromosome*

Day 2: *Calcutta Chromosome*.

Week 13: Imagining epidemics

Day 1: Michael Crichton, excerpt from *Andromeda Strain*.

Day 2: Tananarive Due, "Patient Zero."

Week 14:

Day 1: Contemporary debates in literature and medicine studies (eCampus)

Day 2: Conclusion. **Final essay due.**

Policies:

Grading:

Components are graded on an A-F scale where A=90-100, B=80-89, C=70-79, D=60-69, and F is less than 60.

Attendance:

Attendance in the course is mandatory. After two unexcused absences, a student's participation grade will drop by one letter grade for each additional absence. In addition, any work missed from an unexcused absence cannot be made up. Please consult <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule07> for a list of circumstances that constitute an excused absence.

Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy:

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do." You are expected to be aware of the Aggie Honor Code and the Honor Council Rules and Procedures, found here:

<http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu>. All work submitted for this course must conform to Author-Date citation format and fully cite its sources. If you use external references in preparing your final essay, you must credit those sources and include a Bibliography. If you are unsure how to cite your sources, please speak to your instructor before submitting work for a grade. Information on citation styles is also available from the Library and the University Writing Center. For help avoiding plagiarism, the Library's online tutorial is recommended (<http://library.tamu.edu/help/help-yourself/using-materials-services/online-tutorials/academic-integrity/>). In cases of suspected academic dishonesty, the instructor will refer the case to the Aggie Honor System Office.

Participation:

Excellent participation means 1) regular and punctual attendance; 2) coming to class with all required reading completed and bringing your textbook(s), syllabus and course materials with you (eCampus materials may be printed or downloaded and viewed on your laptop); 3) giving thoughtful responses to questions posed in class and participating in respectful dialog with your peers and instructor; 4) refraining from engaging in activities that might be distracting to your peers and instructors, which includes texting or browsing the web during class time.

