

LANCE WAHLERT

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MEETING TIMES

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:30-6:00 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What was it like to live with a serious illness in the late-19th- and early-20th centuries? How have laypersons' cultural understandings of sickness and health changed over time? And how do historical images, literary accounts, and cinematic representations of doctors, nurses, and sick people reveal and affect conventional assumptions about disease and medical authority? This course offers a comprehensive study of significant changes and continuities in the history of 19th- and 20th-century medicine, alongside works of literature and film that exemplify the shifting notions of the doctor and sickness in the Western medical tradition. In particular, we will focus on fictional sources (poetry, short stories, novels, and films) as well as on non-fictional accounts (journals, diaries, and documentaries) that explore the emotional and somatic aspects of "conditions" such as hysteria, cancer, syphilis, homosexuality, and madness. As a trans-historical study of Western medicine from the innovations of Paris Medicine through the present, we will be concerned with the power of literary and cinematic narratives to bring coherence and meaning to lives at moments of great physical and emotional crisis. Inspired by recent historiographical trends to study the history of medicine from the bottom up, this course moves away from a methodology that emphasizes the "great men of science" to one that centers on the concerns of sick persons.

This semester, we will read works of literature by authors such as Anton Chekhov, Emily Dickinson, Henrik Ibsen, Knut Hamsun, Sylvia Plath, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Additionally, we will watch numerous films including Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru*, Alfred Hitchcock's *Marnie*, Derek Jarman's *Blue*, Todd Haynes's *Safe* and *Superstar*, Jonathan Glazer's *Birth*, and documentarian Frederick Wiseman's *Titicut Follies* and *Hospital*. In conjunction with these literary and cinematic texts, we will study contemporaneous medical topics, such as the history of psychoanalysis, advancements in anesthesia, the elevation of the professional surgeon, the pathology of sexual deviances, the impact of the AIDS/HIV pandemic, and the clinical gaze. Assignments will include two short papers, a midterm, and a final exam.

COURSE TEXTS

All texts have been placed on reserve in the Rosengarten Reserve on the bottom floor of Van Pelt Library. Each required book is available for purchase at the Penn Book Center on 34th Street.

HANDOUTS

Throughout the term, you will receive packets of readings for each section of study

REQUIRED HISTORICAL TEXTS

Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*
Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*
Michel Foucault (ed.), *Herculine Barin*

REQUIRED LITERARY TEXTS

E. M. Forster, *Howards End*
Sigmund Freud, *Dora*
Sinclair Lewis, *Arrowsmith*
Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*
Tarjei Vesaas, *Birds*
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*
Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*
Tony Kushner, *Angels in America*

COURSE TEXTS NOT REQUIRED

Martin Duberman, *Cures*
Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*
Todd Haynes, *Three Screenplays: Superstar, Safe, and Far From Heaven*

EVALUATING AND GRADING

FORMAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS: 40%

There will be **two short papers** assigned for this course. The first will be 4-6 pages and based on writing prompts provided in the middle of the semester. The second paper will be 6-8 pages. It can be based on writing prompts provided for the class in late November or a proposal that you submit. This second paper must incorporate secondary readings from the syllabus and/or independent research outside the syllabus.

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS: 40%

These exams will be given in-class, covering material from each half of the syllabus. They will feature short answers on relevant medical and literary terms, quotations from primary literary texts, close readings of images, and an essay.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: 20%

See description below.

EXTENSIONS AND MAKE-UP WORK

Late papers will receive a reduction in grade. You are allowed one extension during the term and are responsible for arranging the extension *in advance*. All other extensions and make-up work are offered *only* in the case of emergency or serious illness. Always feel free to talk with me if you foresee a problem with a deadline.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

The quality of a class experience can be judged, in part, on the quality of your participation. While I will occasionally lecture on specific historiographical topics, the majority of our class sessions will be spent talking about the readings. You are therefore expected to participate actively in the life of the class: come prepared to class; complete reading, viewing, and writing assignments on time; engage in class discussion; and get to know fellow students. Your final grades will be heavily affected by your class participation. So speak up!

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence that will be reported, as described in the University of Pennsylvania's *Guide to Academic Integrity*. These guidelines are also available on Penn's website at "<http://www.upenn.edu/OSI/acadint.html>" or by entering "Code of Academic Integrity" in the Search box on the UPenn homepage. It is expected that you will read, understand, and abide by the guidelines governing the use of material other than your own. It goes without saying that all work you submit must be your own. Failure to document the source of material submitted will result in a report to the appropriate administrative authorities.

SEQUENCE OF PRIMARY READINGS

Most units cover a single class. Those with an asterisk () cover two or more class sessions.*

- UNIT 1 **INTRODUCTION: DISEASE IN HISTORY & LITERATURE**
- G. S. Rousseau, "Literature and Medicine: The State of the Field"
- C. Lawrence, *Medicine in the Making of Modern Britain* (chapters 2-3)
- *UNIT 2 **HYSTERIA I**
- Sigmund Freud, *Dora*
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"
- UNIT 3 **MEDICAL SPECIALIZATION: GYNECOLOGY**
- Emily Dickinson, selected poems
- Edith Wharton, "Diagnosis"
- UNIT 4 **THE HERMAPHRODITE**
- *Herculine Barbin*
- UNIT 5 **PAIN**
- Knut Hamsun, *Hunger*

- UNIT 6 **DEATH**
- Leo Tolstoy, “The Death of Ivan Illych”
- *UNIT 7 **THE DOCTOR AS HERO/ANTI-HERO**
- Sinclair Lewis, *Arrowsmith*
- Anton Chekhov, *Uncle Vanya*
- UNIT 8 **SYPHILIS**
- Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts*
- Arnold Sundgaard, *Spirochete*
- *UNIT 9 **INSTITUTIONAL MEDICINE**
- Raymond Carver, “Autopsy Room”
- Frederick Wiseman, *Hospital* and *Titicut Follies*
- Theodore Roethke, selected poems
- *UNIT 10 **MODERN PLAGUES I: CHOLERA**
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*
- Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*
- UNIT 11 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- *UNIT 12 **HYSTERIA II**
- E. M. Forster, *Howards End*
- Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*
- Alfred Hitchcock, *Marnie*
- UNIT 13 **DISABLED VOICES**
- Tarjei Vesaas, *The Birds*
- UNIT 14 **MODERN PLAGUES II: CANCER**
- Akira Kurosawa, *Ikiru*
- UNIT 15 **HOMOSEXUALITY AS DISEASE**
- Martin Duberman, *Cures*
- Simon LeVay, “On the Hypothalamic Structure of Gay Men...”
- *UNIT 16 **MODERN PLAGUES III: HIV**
- Thom Gunn, *The Man with Night Sweats*
- Tony Kushner, *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches*
- Derek Jarman, *Blue*
- *UNIT 17 **DIAGNOSING DOCTORS**
- W. H. Auden, “The Art of Healing”
- Todd Haynes, *Safe*
- Charles Bukowski, “My Doctor”
- UNIT 18 **MEDICINE & FAITH**
- Jonathan Glazer, *Birth*
- UNIT 19 **FINAL EXAM**