

University of Puerto Rico  
Río Piedras Campus  
College of Humanities  
English Department  
Undergraduate Program

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

**45 hours/ 3 credit hours. Pre-Requisites:** Level 4 or 5 on the English Department Placement Test, Advanced Placement in English Levels 4 Or 5, or 580 and above on the CEEB.

**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 a 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. Survey of on-line sources (see list of on-line sources in the bibliography). Readings: Excerpts from Rita’s Charon’s *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness*, Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan’s “What Can Narrative Theory Learn From Illness Narratives?” ; Ernest Hemingway’s short story “Indian Camp.”
- II. Historical Overview of Representations of Medical Practitioners, Traditional Healers, Healing professions, and “the Body” in literature, from the Outrageous to the Mundane (covering briefly the pre-19<sup>th</sup> Century periods and focusing primarily on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries). Lecture and discussion informed by references to and brief reading excerpts

from S. Gilman, Healy, Graham and Sewell, Browner, Caldwell, and Jordanova.

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*.

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 19<sup>th</sup> Century ; The ‘Madwoman in the Attic’ Then (19<sup>th</sup> Century) and Now (20<sup>th</sup> Century). Readings: Excerpts from Gilbert and Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*; 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*.

**OR**

The Colonial Legacy: Self-Image, Womanhood, Eating Disorders and the “Nervous Condition” of being Colonized. Reading Assignment: Tsitsi Dangarembga’s novel *Nervous Conditions* (Zimbabwe); brief excerpts from Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*

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*; and excerpts from Audre Lourde’s *The Cancer Journals*.

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

VI. 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.

VII. 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. Readings: Selections from nurse Courtney Davis’ poetry volume *Leopold’s Maneuvers*, Doctor Rafael Campo’s poetry collection *The Enemy* (the experiences of a Cuban-American, gay

doctor in the era of AIDS, Cultural Wars over gay marriage, and Warfare). Selections from Frank Huylar's shortstory collection *The Blood of Strangers: Stories from Emergency Medicine*. Selections from the following anthologies: *Intensive Care: More Poetry and Prose by Nurses*; *The Healing Art: A Doctor's Black Bag of Poetry*; and *Body Language: Poems of the Medical Training Experience*.

VIII. Physical and Spiritual Healing from Historical Trauma: Identity and the Legacy of Plantation Slavery in the Americas.

Experimental Prose; the African American Ghost Story Tradition. Readings: Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*; Excerpts from poetry collections by Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison and Haitian poet Marilène Phipps; Short story by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat, "Water Babies."

IX. 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 segment of television program *Gray's Anatomy*; 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).

XII. Alternative Narrative Forms: the Graphic Novel. Readings: Brian Fies' graphic novel *Mom's Cancer*.

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%).

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%
<u>Final Research/ Writing Project and Presentation</u>	<u>15%</u>
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**

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- , "The Narrative Road to Empathy." In *Empathy and the Medical Profession: Beyond Pills and the Scalpel*. Ed. Howard Spiro. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993: 147-59.
- , "Narrative Contributions to Medical Ethics: Recognition, Formulation, Interpretation, and Validation in the Practice of the Ethicist." In *Beyond Principlism: Currents in U.S. Bioethics*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1994: 260-83.
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- \*\*\* Cohen, Jennifer. "'But Have Some Art With You:,' An Interview with Nawal El Saadwi." *Literature and Medicine*. 14.1 (1995): 60-71.
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**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. Alphonso Cuaron, 2006)

*Dirty Pretty Things* (Britain, Dir. Stephen Frears, 2003)

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

*The English Patient* (U.S., Dir. Anthony Minghella, 1996)

### **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/](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.hslls.pitt.edu/guides/histmed/researchresources/dissertations/index\\_html](http://www.hslls.pitt.edu/guides/histmed/researchresources/dissertations/index_html)