



# ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

**St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo  
Department of  
English**

**Course: Engl 108X Literature and Medicine**

Zoom class Wednesdays 1-2.20

I will send zoom links weekly via email

**Winter 2021**

**Instructor: Carol Acton**

Office, SJ Sweeney Hall 2201: [cgacton@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:cgacton@uwaterloo.ca)

NB Please always include the **course number** in the subject heading of your e-mails. E-mails should be addressed to Dr. Acton or Prof. Acton and include your full name at the end.

Office hrs: via Zoom – email for an appointment

I will be happy to discuss assignments with you on an individual basis. Please remember to include the course number in any e-mails you send (otherwise I tend to treat them as spam) and to give your full name in the e-mail text.

## **Course Description**

How can literature help us understand the body, illness and healing? The course considers the perspectives of patients and medical practitioners across a range of texts including poetry, fiction, nonfiction and media such as TV. More specifically, the course includes texts that relate to medical practice and the relationship between medical practitioner and patient in the past and present. The works we will be reading offer ways of thinking about the subjective experience of illness from the position of medical practitioner, patient and family member, as well as the larger social and cultural issues round illness and death.

## **Course Goals and Learning Outcomes**

The aim of this course is to have you consider the role of literature and language in conveying experiences of illness and dying from a range of perspectives. Medical Humanities is often incorporated into medical training as a way of developing practitioners' understanding of the patient as person as well as illness and to allow patients to speak. Story telling is embedded in medicine, from the case history to the patient-doctor exchange. Critical close reading of literary texts offers an important approach to the telling of and listening to narratives of illness. This course is designed to develop an ongoing exchange in understanding medicine, the individual self and the body and mind through class discussion, individual writing assignments and presentations (if possible in a covid term) which will reflect on the experiences we have had with literature and medicine throughout the term. As it is a literature course our focus on the literary texts will involve the close reading that is central to English as a discipline.

## Required Texts

Most of your texts are available as digital reserves (scroll down the left hand side of the course site on Learn and find Reserves – click on this link and it will bring you to the library site. Sign in and the list of course reserves, with links, will be available. Check ahead on the course schedule so you have the readings for each week. The others are listed here:

Borden, Mary. *The Forbidden Zone* available online at

<https://archive.org/details/forbiddenzone00bord/page/18/mode/2up>

(You may have to set up a free account on Archive.org if you don't already have one) The book is also available through the UW library site with Hathi Trust

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins, *The Yellow Wallpaper* online at

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1952/1952-h/1952-h.htm>

Katherine Ann Porter, 'Pale Horse. Pale Rider' online at

<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.184599>

Owen, Wilfred. 'Mental Cases', 'Disabled' online at

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57285/disabled>

<https://poets.org/poem/mental-cases>

## Course Requirements and Assessment

Written assignments – due dates on the course outline – these should be emailed to me directly as a **Word** file attachment. I will then make in text comments and return them.

Reflective response 1 @ 20% - 2-3 pages 11/12 pt font

Reflective response 2 @ 20% 2-3 pages

Reflective response 3 @ 25% 3-4 pages

Reflective response 4 @ 35% 4-5 pages **or** 5 min oral presentation in one of the final 3 classes of the term

Further information will be provided on Learn and via e-mail

**Course Outline / Class Schedule** The following schedule may be subject to minor changes. I will notify you if I will be making changes so please check your UW e-mail regularly. Please read the assigned texts before the class as preparation for analysis and discussion and again afterwards to reconsider the class analysis and make connections with other texts.

**Please have the text available at each discussion** - in English we engage in ‘close reading’ which means you need to have a copy of the text to refer to during discussions and when you are writing an assignment. For shorter texts it is ideal if you print these out so you can write notes on them as you think about them both before, during and after our discussions.

**Schedule – we will more or less follow the readings as set out below. At times we may continue a work from one week to the next if we need to discuss it further.**

**We have 80 mins a week on Zoom. I will record the beginnings and endings of the discussions, but most of the time we’ll use small group discussion in breakout rooms which can’t be recorded.**

The week date given is the Monday of that week

**Week 1 Jan 11** Your medical stories – small group introductions

Brian Turner: ‘AB Negative’ and ‘Line 9 Medevac’ in Brian Turner, *Here Bullet*, available through UW library Hathi Trust

**Week 2 Jan 18:** Medical meditations: Prose, Francis ‘Transformation’; Chen ‘Resurrectionist’; Marsh, ‘Aneurism’ (digital reserve)

Poetry, Marva Dawn, ‘The Color Red’; Coulehan, ‘Anatomy Lesson’; Foy, ‘Autopsy’; (digital reserve)

**Week 3 Jan 25:** Patients and observers: Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 12 (4 on the pdf text) beginning ‘Physical pain happens, of course’...to p.16 (8) ‘the doctor knows best’ – online through Hathi trust access UW library

Poetry, Campo, ‘The Distant Moon’; Kenyon, ‘Otherwise’; Hall, ‘The Ship Pounding’; Short story, Moore, ‘People like that... Canonical babbling’ (digital reserve)

**Reflection assignment 1 due Friday Jan 29th by 5pm your time**

**Week 4 Feb 1:** Emergency: Short story, Lam, ‘Before Light’; Memoir, Maskalyk, ‘U is for Urban’; Goldman ‘I never forget’; Poetry, O’Reilly, ‘Abused Child’; Campo ‘Ten patients and another’ (digital reserve)

**Week 5 Feb 8:** TV and medicine – considering the narratives in hospital documentaries. There may be some changes to these depending on availability:

‘24 hrs in A&E’ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezsNevusZOU>

and ‘Surgeons at the edge of Life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-g02kCFSKs>

from *The Language of Medicine* TBA.

*Reading Week*

**Week 6 Feb 22:** as above and Cannon, from her memoir *Breaking and Mending*, ‘Breaking’, ‘Birthstones’ (digital reserve)

**Reflection assignment 2 due Friday Feb 26<sup>th</sup> 5pm**

**Week 7 March 1:** Medicine, war and the wounded body: First World War, selections from *The Forbidden Zone* (‘Conspiracy’, ‘In the Operating Room’, ‘Blind’); Vietnam War, poetry, ‘Coffee Room Soldier’, ‘Wounds of War’ (digital reserve)

**Week 8 March 8:** Medicine and War contin: First World War Owen, poetry, ‘Disabled’, ‘Mental Cases’; Second World War, Diary, Mary Morris from *A Very Private Diary* ‘Fever Nursing’ and ‘Normandy Invasion’ (digital reserve)

**Week 9 March 15:** Medical history and gender: Harjo, Personal Essay, ‘Three Generations’ (digital reserve) Mental Health – short story, Gilman, ‘Yellow Wallpaper’

Additional optional reading, Medics and mental health:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/oct/08/take-life-grateful-alive-surgeon-suicide-attempt>

**Reflection Assignment 3 due Friday March 19<sup>th</sup> by 5pm**

**Week 10 March 22:** Historical practice: short stories, Bulgakov, ‘The Steel Windpipe’; Williams, ‘The Practice’, ‘The Use of Force’ (digital reserve)

**Week 11 March 29** Covid 19, where we were, where we are, where we might be:

1918-19 influenza epidemic: short story, Katherine Ann Porter, ‘Pale Horse. Pale Rider’

Covid-19

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/20/were-clearing-the-decks-a-gp-on-watching-the-coronavirus-pandemic-unfold>

Francis, *Intensive Care*, readings TBA (digital reserve)

Additional optional reading

Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors*, chapt 7 online e-book

Ongoing Covid experiences by frontline workers:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/series/blood-sweat-and-tears>

Roddy Doyle, short story, ‘Nurse’ <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/roddy-doyle-s->

[nurse-an-exclusive-new-short-story-1.4382706](#)

**Week 12 April 5:** Reflection and discussion + any presentations

**Final reflection 4 due Friday April 9<sup>th</sup> by 5pm (your time)**

**Late assignments** will have 2% deducted per day late. However, if you request an extension via e-mail at least 24hrs before the deadline, I can arrange a new deadline with you without penalty. It is in your own best interest to hand work in on time so you don't become overwhelmed with overdue work. Please let me know if ongoing illness or family or personal issues cause problems during the term as it makes it much easier for me help you plan work accordingly if I know about such issues.

### **Important Information**

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information.]

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, [www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload\\_file/PLCY\\_AOM\\_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances\\_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf](http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf). When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline, [www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY\\_AOM\\_Student-Discipline\\_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf](http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm).

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals,

[www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY\\_AOM\\_Student-Appeals\\_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf](http://www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf).

**Note for students with disabilities:** The [AccessAbility Services \(AS\) Office](#), located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

**Mental Health Services:** Lindsay Thomson is St. Jerome's University's Wellness Coordinator. She can be contacted at 519-884-8111 x28361 or at [lindsay.thompson@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:lindsay.thompson@uwaterloo.ca). Her office is Sweeney Hall 1016.

### On Campus (UW)

- Counselling Services: [counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca) / 519-888-4567 x32655
- [MATES](#): one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek from the Student Life Centre

### Off campus, 24/7

- [Good2Talk](#): Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Extended Assessment Unit Phone: 519-749-4300 x6880
- [Here 24/7](#): Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- [OK2BME](#): Support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 x222

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts [website](#).

Download [UW and regional mental health resources \(PDF\)](#)

Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

## B. TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. St. Jerome's University is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

## C. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Students should be aware that this course contains the intellectual property of their instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome's University. Intellectual property includes items such as:

- Lecture content, spoken and written (and any audio/video recording thereof);
- Lecture handouts, presentations, and other materials prepared for the course (e.g., PowerPoint slides);
- Questions or solution sets from various types of assessments (e.g., assignments, quizzes, tests, final exams); and
- Work protected by copyright (e.g., any work authored by the instructor or TA or used by the instructor or TA with permission of the copyright owner).

Course materials and the intellectual property contained therein, are used to enhance a student's educational experience. However, sharing this intellectual property without the intellectual property owner's permission is a violation of intellectual property rights. For this reason, it is necessary to ask the instructor, TA, and/or St. Jerome's University for permission before uploading and sharing the intellectual property of others online (e.g., to an online repository).

Permission from an instructor, TA, or the University is also necessary before sharing the intellectual property of others from completed courses with students taking the same/similar courses in subsequent terms/years. In many cases, instructors might be happy to allow distribution of certain materials. However, doing so without expressed permission is considered a violation of intellectual property rights.

Please alert the instructor if you become aware of intellectual property belonging to others (past or present) circulating, either through the student body or online. The intellectual property rights owner deserves to know (and may have already given their consent).