



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of

English

Course: English 108X Literature and Medicine

Winter 2022

Remote class via Zoom Tuesdays 1-2.20

I will send zoom links weekly via email

Instructor: Carol Acton

Office, SJ Sweeney Hall 2201: 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)

Donoghue, Emma, *The Pull of the Stars* – the only text you need to buy. This is available at the UW bookstore, but also from regular and online bookstores.

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

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

(optional reading) 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 and post the classes on Learn.

Week 1 Jan 11 Medical stories – small group introduction

Poetry: Marva Dawn, ‘The Color Red’; Coulehan, ‘Anatomy Lesson’

Secondary Readings: Harriet Staff, ‘The Medicine in Poetry’

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2017/11/the-medicine-in-poetry>

[Mary Clare Beytagh: Finding poetry in medicine | MIT News | Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#)

Week 2 Jan 18: Medical meditations: Prose, Francis ‘Transformation’; Campo, ‘Fifteen minutes after Gary died’, (digital reserve) Gawande, ‘Things Fall apart’ (digital reserve)

Secondary reading: Interview with Raphael Campo

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2020/08/wired-interviews-rafael-campo-poetry-editor-at-the-journal-of-the-american-medical-association>

Week 3 Jan 25:

Experience of illness:

Poetry, Campo, ‘The Distant Moon’; Kenyon, ‘Otherwise’; Hall, ‘The Ship Pounding’;

Short story, Moore, ‘People like that... Canonical babbling’ (digital reserve)

Secondary reading: Fergus Shanahan, from The Language of Illness (digital reserve)

Reflection assignment 1 due Friday Jan 28th 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: Campo 'Ten patients and another' (digital reserve)

Optional secondary reading: Fong, *Trauma* (digital reserve)

Week 5 Feb 8: Medicine and War

First World War:

Mary Borden, memoir, from *The Forbidden Zone*, 'Conspiracy', 'Blind'

Owen, poetry, 'Disabled', 'Mental Cases'

Week 6 Feb 15: Medical practice and mental health

O'Reilly, 'Abused Child'

Cannon, 'Breaking', 'Birthstones', from *Breaking and Mending* (digital reserve)

Secondary readings: Danielle Ofri, 'Can we build a better doctor', from *What Doctors Feel*

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

Reflection assignment 2 due Friday Feb 18th 5pm

Reading Week (21-25)

Week 7 March 1: Pandemic

Donoghue, *The Pull of the Stars*

Week 8 March 8: *The Pull of the Stars*

Week 9 March 15: Covid 19

Roddy Doyle, short story, 'Nurse' <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/roddy-doyle-s-nurse-an-exclusive-new-short-story-1.4382706>

Louise Curtis, 'It's here', from *A Nurse's Story* (digital reserve)

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

Reflection Assignment 3 due Friday March 18th by 5pm

Week 10 March 22

Medical history and gender:

Mental Health – short story, Gilman, ‘Yellow Wallpaper’

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

Harjo, Personal Essay, ‘Three Generations’ (digital reserve)

Secondary reading: Cleghorn, ‘Our bodies, Our selves’ (digital reserve)

Week 11 March 29

Making decisions

Carolyn Kizer, ‘Medicine’

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?contentId=39295>

Marsh ‘Aneurysm’

Week 12 April 5:

Reflection and discussion + any presentations

Final reflection 4 due Friday April 8th by 5pm (your time)

Additional optional reading

Pauline Chen, *Resurrectionist* (digital reserve)

Jacalyn Duffin, ‘Plagues and Peoples’ from *History of Medicine* (digital reserve)

Katherine Ann Porter, ‘Pale Horse. Pale Rider’ (1918/19 influenza pandemic)

<https://ia601602.us.archive.org/2/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.184599/2015.184599.Pale-Horse-pale-Rider.pdf>

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

William Carlos Williams, ‘The Practice’ and ‘The Use of Force’ (digital reserve)

Ongoing Covid experiences by frontline workers:

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

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/ 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. 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/ 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. 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. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, 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.

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. Her office is Sweeney Hall 1016.

On Campus (UW)

- Counselling Services: 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).