



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

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

English

Course: English 108X Literature and Medicine

Tues/Thurs 10-11.20 SJ2 2007

Winter 2023

Instructor: Carol Acton

Office: SJU Sweeney Hall 2201

cgacton@uwaterloo.ca

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: Wed 1-2.20 or on Zoom or by telephone by appointment

You will need to wear a KN95 mask to any in-person meetings

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.

Four reflective assignments – no final examination

Format

- Assignments must be **emailed to me directly as a Word attachment** – I will return with comments
- They should be double spaced in 11 or 12 pt font. Do not double space between paragraphs.

- All written work must indicate use of secondary sources with clear in-text citation and a bibliography/works cited at the end
- Further information on the above assignments will be available via a Learn e-mail/on the Learn site

Online writing help: <https://www.trentu.ca/academicskills/how-guides/how-write-university>

This guide includes documentation/citation guidelines and samples; how to write an English essay; moving beyond the five paragraph essay; and advice on the mechanics of style and grammar with sample essays.

Full guidelines and topics are on the Assignments document under ‘content’ on the Learn site.

Important dates/Assignment due dates are also in the schedule

Reflective response 1 @ 20% - 2-3 pages due Jan 27th 5pm

Reflective response 2 @ 20% 2-3 pages due Feb 17th

Reflective response 3 @ 25% 3-4 pages March 17th

Reflective response 4 @ 35% 4-5 pages **or** 5 min oral presentation in one of the final 3 classes of the term due April 7th

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 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.

Week 1 Jan 10/12 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 17/19: 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 24/26:

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 27th by 5pm your time

Week 4 Jan 31/Feb 2: 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 7/9: Medicine and War

First World War:

Mary Borden, memoir, from *The Forbidden Zone*, ‘Conspiracy’, ‘Blind’

Owen, poetry, ‘Disabled’, ‘Mental Cases’

Second World War: Diary, Mary Morris from *A Very Private Diary* ‘Fever Nursing’ and ‘Normandy Invasion’ (digital reserve)

David Nott, *War Doctor*

Week 6 Feb 14/16: 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 (20-24)

Week 7 Feb 28/March 2: Pandemic

Donoghue, *The Pull of the Stars*

Week 8 March 7/9: *The Pull of the Stars*

Week 9 March 14/16: 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 21/23

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 28/30

Making decisions

Carolyn Kizer, 'Medicine'

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

Marsh 'Aneurysm'

Week 12 April 4/6:

Reflection and discussion + any presentations

Final reflection 4 due Friday April 7th 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.

Alternate arrangements for

a short-term (e.g., one-week) cancellation of in-person classes, whether for the particular course or University-wide:

students should continue to follow the weekly readings and use the notes as a guide

If I am not ill, I will continue weekly classes via Zoom. Classes will be recorded and the recordings placed on the Learn site under content for any student who cannot attend these.

If I am ill I will arrange Zoom classes as soon as I am able

Classes will be cancelled if I am too ill to teach – you will be advised through an announcement on the Learn site and/or through the administration at St Jerome's

a longer-term cancellation of in-person meetings, whether for the particular course or University-wide

as above

accommodation available for students who cannot attend classes due to self-isolation

students should continue with the readings and notes as far as possible, depending on illness

contact me to discuss catching up on any missed assignment dates and/or requesting an extension as noted in the course outline

Please do not come to class if you have any symptoms of illness

Wearing a well fitting KN95 mask will protect you and those around you and so mitigate the spread of illness throughout the term

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: All of us need a support system. The SJU faculty and staff encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

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).