

HL4036

LITERATURE AND MEDICINE

Graham Matthews



This module explores the literary representation of health and sickness. Our understanding of illness is not simply determined by physical symptoms but influenced by class, gender, and ethnicity, and perceived differently by patients, practitioners, and policy-makers. This module examines the myths and metaphors that contribute to our understanding of health and sickness.

Together we will read a selection of short literary texts, graphic novels, and memoirs, by authors such as A.S. Byatt, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Ian McEwan and you will be introduced to a selection of material from the history, philosophy and sociology of medicine. Teaching and learning are supported by a comprehensive website and videos designed specifically for this course.

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11/08: Introduction to the Medical Humanities: extracts from Kathryn Montgomery, *How Doctors Think* (2006) and Rita Charon, *Narrative Medicine* (2006).

18/08: What is a Disease?: A.S. Byatt, 'A Stone Woman' (2003)

25/08: The Social Construction of Health and Sickness: Extracts from James Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) and David Lodge, *Therapy*

01/09: Mental Health Stigma: Yeoh Jo-Ann, 'The Thing' (2017); O Thiam Chin, 'The Cat that Disappeared' (2015)

08/09: A Condition of Doubt: Graham Swift, 'The Hypochondriac'

15/09: Pathography: Extracts from Sarah Manguso, *The Two Kinds of Decay* (2008) and Susanne Antonetta, *Body Toxic* (2002)

22/09: Graphic Medicine: extracts from M.K. Czerwicz, *Taking Turns*; Marisa Acocella Marchetto, *Cancer Vixen*; Ian Williams, *The Bad Doctor*

29/09: Recess Week

06/10: Gender Bias in Medicine: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (1892)

13/10: Key Concepts in the Medical Humanities (Home Based Learning)

20/10: Public Holiday

27/10: What is a 'Good' Doctor?: Ian McEwan, *Saturday* (2005)

03/11: Epidemic Narratives: *Outbreak* (1995) and *Contagion* (2011)

10/11: Creative Project exhibition

Please purchase: *Saturday* by Ian McEwan.



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Assessment

1. Graphic (10%)

You will design a graphic that dramatises a key concept in the medical humanities, showing how your skills as a literary scholar relate to issues of urgent concern.

2. Concept Map (10%)

Each week your group will contribute to a concept map that establishes links between key theories and texts on the course.

3. Final Essay (40%)

Your essay will defend an original thesis about two of the texts read in class and forge interdisciplinary links between literature and the history, sociology, or philosophy of medicine. Plenty of advice and constructive feedback will be provided through tutorials and office hours.

4. Creative Project (40%)

You will be invited to reflect on the literary texts studied for the module in relation to a real-world public health issue. You can film yourself, or take stills and put them together with text on powerpoint, or make posters. You can even create an installation, or paint, or draw or use digital media, as long as you forge a connection between the arts and humanities and current debates on health and healthcare.



