

Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
HUM 456A: Narrative and Medicine
TR 11-12.15, W 306
3 Credits
Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. Carol-Ann Farkas
Office: F222
Tel: 617.732.2852

Office Hours: MW 11-1; by appointment
Email: Carol-Ann.Farkas@mcphs.edu

Required Texts:

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper" and "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper.'" (online)

Kafka, Franz. "The Metamorphosis." (online)

Lindsay, Rachel. Rx. Grand Central Publishing, 2018. (bookstore) PLUS your choice of one or more narratives from MCPHS's Graphic Medicine collection (details will be on Bb).

Meyer, Annie Nathan. *Helen Brent MD*. (online)

Plath, Sylvia. *The Bell Jar*. New York: Harper Perennial/Modern Classics. 1971.

Selzer, Richard. "Brute," and "Toenails." *Letters to a Young Doctor*. (ebrary)

Tolstoy, Leo. "The Death of Ivan Illych." (online)

Wells, Helen. *Cherry Ames, Student Nurse*. (rentable as a Kindle book on Amazon; some bookstore copies available)

Williams, William Carlos. "The Use of Force." *The Doctor Stories*. Compiled by Robert Coles. New York: New Directions Books, 1984. Print.

Links to online sources are on Bb. You can access the ebrary through the MCPHS University Library catalogue.

We'll also discuss one or more of the following films. I'll take your votes on which to watch in class:

- *Still Alice* (Richard Glatzer, Wash Westmoreland, 2014)
- *Dallas Buyers' Club* (Jean-Marc Vallee, 2013)
- *Contagion* (Soderbergh, 2011)
- *American Psycho* (Harron, 2000)
- *Philadelphia* (Johnathan Demme, 1993).
- *Fight Club* (Fincher, 1999)

Course Description:

This course surveys literary and popular texts to explore the historical and cultural factors affecting narratives about, and popular understandings of, medicine and illness. Students consider how clinical practice is represented in narratives; how different forms of storytelling reflect attitudes toward illness; and how literal and figurative representation of illness can function through narrative as powerful vehicles for social critique.

Note: LIB 111 and LIB 112 or their equivalents are prerequisites for this course. Students should 1) have a basic knowledge of the elements of literature and literary analysis; 2) be able to write coherent, analytical essays using summary, synthesis, and argumentation; 3) be able to read and comprehend complex literary, critical, and journalistic works; 4) be able to write with a high degree of correctness and accuracy.

The Course: Most of us are lucky enough to be more well than ill, most of the time. Nevertheless, no matter to what extent we experience illness in our lives, the stress, fear, and wisdom of it affect us in lasting ways: illness and death play a key role in how we understand life. As with all experiences, we share our encounters with illness—as patients, as care-givers—through narrative. We swap stories of illness and injury; we join support groups; we give and take histories as consumers or practitioners of medicine; we look to medical narratives as a way to immediately understand our patients or ourselves as patients. We also look to medical stories as ways to learn about human behavior in periods of acute or chronic distress. Thus the study of medical stories can tell us a great deal about how we as a society make sense of the mysteries of illness, wellness, curing, and caring.

In this course, we will study a variety of medical narratives (primarily, but not exclusively prose fiction) told from the perspective of both care-giver and patient. We will analyze these stories for their pragmatic meaning, and for any and all metaphoric insights we can extract that will tell us about how we conceive of health and the practice of health care. Students will read, view, research, and analyze the stories that people tell about medicine with the goal of understanding how different forms of story-telling reflect/affect our attitudes towards illness and medical practice. Throughout, we will also consider historical and cultural factors affecting both the development of literary/narrative form and the evolution of our understanding of medicine and illness.

As part of our commitment to helping students reach their full potential in their academic, professional, and civic lives, Arts and Sciences faculty believe that learning in all disciplines is an integrative process, a synthesis of critical reading, thinking, and writing. For this reason, in HUM 456, we will use a Writing Intensive approach that emphasizes mastery of information and concepts AND the application of what you have learned in a variety of forms: you will be actively involved in learning to write and writing to learn.

Objectives:

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- 1) explain various ways in which illness, health care, patients, and health care providers have appeared in narrative texts, particularly, but not exclusively, literary fiction;
- 2) discuss the value of literature as a means of understanding the human experience of illness and various ways that narrative can be used to elicit the psycho-social dimensions of illness;
- 3) differentiate between “realistic” and “metaphorical” depictions of illness and health care;
- 4) identify and explain the significance of prominent patterns and themes found in narratives of illness and health care;
- 5) use the basic tools of literary analysis to identify and explore thematic and formal patterns to be found in narrative depictions of illness and health care;
- 6) produce critical analyses, synthesizing multiple sources, in the form of well-developed and accurately written argument;
- 7) write coherent essays, including creating a strong thesis, developing logical analysis and synthesis of their own ideas and others’, and organizing paragraphs with strong topic sentences and transition;
- 8) present their own and others’ views about a subject clearly, soundly, and accurately by selecting, documenting, and discussing appropriate evidence;
- 9) quote and/or paraphrase all sources accurately, and cite them using MLA or APA format;
- 10) determine and use an appropriate writing voice;
- 11) demonstrate an understanding of all aspects of the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, revising, and proofreading for mechanical errors;
- 12) generate essays and response papers that demonstrate a strong comprehension of vocabulary and usage, and a low error rate (fewer than 2-3 vocabulary/mechanical errors per page).

Course Policies:

- **Attendance:** Required. I allow 3 absences, no questions asked, no excuses necessary. Absences beyond that WILL be subject to a penalty of 5% of your total course grade. To be clear: absences can quickly add up to a failing grade. Being egregiously late will count as half an absence.
- **Participation:** Required. Our actions can be read rhetorically: for example, your engagement in class (demonstration that you’ve read and thought about the assigned texts; ability to ask questions/make contributions to discussion; collegial cooperation with classmates on group assignments etc.) contributes to your overall *ethos* in the course—including your work as a writer and presenter. Sitting in class blankly, passively, and with no indication of preparation, interest, or capability detracts from your ethos. While I don’t grade participation/engagement separately, I’ll take it into account when assessing your appeal to ethos in your written work. So: come to class prepared (read, research, think, write). Bring assigned reading and implements for writing, and USE THEM. Contribute to class discussion.
- A note on **Technology:** you should come to every class prepared to write by hand in your notebook; we will also use computers for research, group work, drafting and revision. Use tools as they’re intended, for helping you to learn. Respect your classmates by paying attention to the work you’re all doing in class.
- A note on **Classroom Culture** – come to class to with curiosity, respect, and a commitment to becoming a more educated citizen. On any given day, if you can’t meet that requirement, do NOT bring indifference, disrespect, distraction, and negativity with you.
- **Deadlines:** meet them. **Don’t fall behind in your work. Deadlines will be strictly enforced—late drafts and revisions will lose 5% per day, applied to the final assignment grade.** If you’re having trouble meeting deadlines, talk to me so that we can find solutions.
- **The Writing Center:** The Writing Center (W400) offers free individual consultation on any aspect of your writing, from gathering ideas, to refocusing a draft, to revising and editing a paper. At the Writing Center, you’ll work one-on-one with very friendly, helpful tutors to improve your reading, writing, revising, and editing skills. All students are encouraged to go to the Center for help. Make an appointment online: look for the **Writing Center** link at <http://my.mcphs.edu>.
- **Intellectual Honesty:** Don’t cheat. Don’t plagiarize from other sources. Don’t do another person’s work for him/her. Don’t hand in work that someone else did for you. Don’t hand in anything that you wrote for another course (that’s plagiarism of yourself). Don’t hand in anything you did in high school (also a form of plagiarism, plus it’s lazy). Cite all sources carefully and thoroughly all the time. See the University Catalog for more details.

Students must abide by the Academic Policies and Procedures set forth in the MCPHS University Catalog. *Important information regarding Excused Absence Approval, Disability Support Services for students, Academic Honesty and Plagiarism and other academic policies is set forth in the Academic Policies and Procedures section of the MCPHS Catalog.* <https://my.mcphs.edu/CollegeCatalog>. Students must read, understand, and comply with all of these policies and procedures.

Evaluation Method:

(note: for values between the stated grade ranges, instructors will round down/up. For example, 92.3=92; 92.6=93):

A =	93-100	B =	83-86	C =	73-76
A- =	90-92	B- =	80-82	C- =	70-72
B+ =	87-89	C+ =	77-79	D =	60-69

Assignments:

Quizzes (12.5% x 4)	50%
Research Papers (7-10 pages, 25% x 2)	50%

Research/Reading for the Quizzes and the Research Papers:

The goals of both the Quizzes and the Research Papers are for you to practice 1) active and engaged reading of your primary sources; 2) finding, evaluating, citing, and USING a variety of good secondary sources; 3) synthesizing those sources to answer research questions about a work's potential meaning to different kinds of readers.

The instructions below also function as a grading rubric for both the quizzes and the first steps of the research paper. I will not accept or grade an assignment unless you have done, and UNDERSTOOD, all of the work.

You can work in partners on both quizzes and the research papers—a good way to share the work! (But: stronger students - you're not helping your friends by doing their work for them. If that starts to happen, we can switch you back to working independently). Just be clear that's what you're doing, so that everyone gets graded!

1. Look at the assigned primary sources (see details for what to read when in Bb). **Formulate good preliminary questions** to sharpen your attention as you read: who's the author? what time period were they writing in? when does the narrative take place? what seems to be the central issue or conflict? What do you already know about the context and issues? what are you going to need to pay attention to in order to understand the text better: vocabulary? history? plot? character? setting? conflict? how can you learn more on your own?
2. Now **read** the assigned primary sources (see details in Bb), taking notes to answer the questions you have from step 1, and taking note of things that you think are interesting, or which lead you to more questions. What do you think is meaningful about a given work?
 - **Hint: the two big questions to ask in this course -**
 - in telling a story about illness, what beliefs and assumptions (including biases) does the author reveal (explicitly or implicitly)? how might those beliefs reflect or challenge readers' beliefs about illness?
 - sometimes the illness in the illness narrative is a metaphor for something else: what? how does the author use illness figuratively, to explore some other/additional meaning (like challenging certain cultural beliefs or practices, for example)?
3. Now **investigate secondary sources**. I'll give you some; you'll also have to find your own. Read them, take notes (seriously: take NOTES, on PAPER - highlighting a pdf is next to useless). What questions do they answer? how? what questions are left unanswered?
 - For each quiz, the minimum number of secondary source to use is 1;
 - For each research paper, the minimum number of secondary source to use is 3;
 - Challenge yourself to go beyond the minimum requirement!
 - To do well, no matter how many sources you use, USE them - a couple of quotations dropped into a paragraph won't count; you must engage with (explain, respond to, connect) the sources.

Quizzes (4 x 12.5%, 2-3 pages):

1. choose one secondary source that deals with a chosen primary source and/or that deals with an issue/problem that you see *in* the primary source (i.e., you might find a work of literary criticism about "race in 'The Use of Force'"; you might find an article about race in culture that you then apply to the literary work).
2. Basic option: what's the author's thesis (what argument are they making, and why?). Do you agree with the secondary source in relation to the primary source? why or why not?
3. More advanced option: make your own argument about the primary source and use the secondary source to strengthen your analysis (making the quiz a mini-research paper).
4. Use examples from both the primary and secondary sources in your responses. CITE everything in the text of your answers.

5. VITAL: these are quizzes and NOT subject to revision.

- BUT you can and should ask for help and advice as you prepare for each one.
- Your grade for each quiz will be a combination of content and grammar/mechanics, including citation – a brilliant answer could lose a lot of points if there are too many errors and/or the citations aren't done properly.
- Provide a Works Cited or Reference list (MLA or APA) for all primary and secondary sources (hint: you MUST understand what kind of source you have in order to cite it properly). NOTE: I will not accept work that does not have correct in-text and bibliographic citations. If you don't already know how to use a citation manager, such as RefWorks, EndNote, or Mendeley, now's the time to learn!

Research Papers (2 x 25%, 7-10 pages each):

Follow all the steps for the Research/Reading Assignments through #3 above. Choose a topic from the options below or formulate your own, in consultation with me. You must **use a minimum of 4 GOOD secondary sources** to pass the assignment, 4 or more secondary sources to do better than just passing.

The topics which follow are meant to give you ideas for your paper; YOU have to settle on a strong thesis and purpose for the essay. In the pre-writing stage, try answering the questions associated with a topic and see how that spurs your thinking. When you settle down to draft your essay do NOT attempt to provide answers to all the questions, or you'll end up rambling. Use the pre-writing stage to figure out what ONE idea you want to explore. Be prepared/willing to read around your topic—historical, cultural, medical, literary, biographical research will be necessary in order for you to thoroughly understand your topic and write an effective analysis (as in: do the research). Any sources you use should be cited carefully and correctly using MLA citation format (or APA—just don't make one up). I will not accept work if the citations aren't correct. Yes, you may choose your own topic. Yes, you may write about film, tv, memoir, graphic fiction, and/or documentary—just check with me first!

Do not: 1) summarize what we've discussed in class—try to find something new; or 2) write a history paper or case study; 3) “double-dip” with a project in any course that you have taken here or elsewhere.

You WILL be revising these. For grading criteria, refer to the Rubric for Argument Synthesis. AND as with the quizzes,

- Your grade for each quiz will be a combination of content and grammar/mechanics, including citation – a brilliant answer could lose a lot of points if there are too many errors and/or the citations aren't done properly.
- Provide a Works Cited or Reference list (MLA or APA) for all primary and secondary sources (hint: you MUST understand what kind of source you have in order to cite it properly). NOTE: I will not accept work that does not have correct in-text and bibliographic citations. Most of you should have Writer's Help - use it or a similar resource to review MLA or APA format!

Suggested essay topics:

1. Many of the works we study this semester portray physicians or the health care system in a negative or critical light. Many also suggest a doctor/patient relationship that is adversarial and/or condescending, even contemptuous—but is that really what's going on? Who are the protagonists/antagonists in these stories? Is anyone actually heroic? Why do we like stories about doctors who are both highly competent, and highly contemptuous of their own patients? Why do so many authors/storytellers portray physicians as threats (or choose your terms: dangerous, unstable, callous)? Why might we enjoy such portrayals? Discuss, using 3-4 examples.
2. By contrast to (1), many narratives about doctors romanticize the profession, elevating certain qualities or characteristics to lofty, possibly unattainable standards. Choose a quality or ideal and consider how it is portrayed—accurately or not—in 3-4 different narratives. What do these portrayals suggest about the needs and beliefs of lay people? Of doctors themselves? OR how might these narratives influence the beliefs of each group about the medical profession?
3. How do fictional portrayals reflect society's collective needs/fears/desires about health care providers?
4. Why are most narratives about health care providers about doctors (and, until recently, white, middle-class men)? What issues of class/sex/race make doctor stories more popular or interesting to readers? Where are the nurses, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals as subjects or authors?
5. Compare how female and male medical professionals are portrayed (or portray themselves). How did their and their patients' expectations of themselves differ according to sex? What comparisons can you make with 19th century portrayals of gender in medicine with contemporary situations? What do sex and gender have to do with professional behavior? What beliefs and expectations have changed/stayed the same? Why?
6. Choose two or three comparable illness memoirs (check the Arts, Literature, and Medicine database). How do writers use narrative to tell the patient's story, or rather, the story of an illness? How do the memoirs reflect Frank's patterns of quest, restitution, or chaos narrative? Of the available metaphors writers use to understand illness, which do you find the most interesting or useful (see Sontag on “Illness as Metaphor”)? Why? How? How do physicians/physician-authors use metaphors for developing medical narratives? If doctors and patients tell stories of illness differently, why? How?

7. How do authors use illness experiences as a means of providing social critique—about the way our culture stigmatizes people according to race, class, sex, particular illness (physical or mental)? How can narrative about illness or medical practice be used as a way of critiquing the health care system?
8. How is mental illness portrayed in fictional narrative? How do authors use literary techniques and narrative structure—plot, character, setting, point of view, figurative language, metaphor—to represent or comment on the experience of mental illness and/or give it more symbolic meaning?
9. How do we learn about illness (the experience of providing care, of being ill) from television and/or film?
10. How do illness narratives created in the past, or set in the past, help us understand illness, history, and/or culture differently? For example, what do you learn about early history of the AIDS epidemic from *Philadelphia* or *Dallas Buyers' Club*? Do those films portray history accurately? What do they emphasize, leave out, or misrepresent? Why is that important? Do they perform social critique? What difference does it make if the film was made *during* the height of the epidemic (early 1990s) or was made recently *about* that era?

Schedule:

Week	Work
1 9/3 and 9/5	Intro to course; start Meyer
2 9/10 and 9/12	Meyer. Prep for Quiz 1 and Essay 1.
3 9/17 and 9/19	Meyer. Start Williams and Selzer. Work on Quiz 1 and Essay 1.
4 9/24 and 9/26	Williams, Selzer. Work on Quiz 1 and Essay 1. Quiz 1 due 9/24.
5 10/1 and 10/3	Williams, Selzer, Wells. Draft of Essay 1 due 10/3. Start on Quiz 2.
6 10/8 and 10/10	Wells. Work on Essay 1 Revisions.

Week	Work
7 10/15 and 10/17	Gilman. Quiz 2 due 10/15. Essay 1 Final due 10/18.
8 10/22 and 10/24	Tolstoy. Start work on Quiz 3 and Essay 2.
9 10/29 and 10/31	Kafka. Work on Quiz 3 and Essay 2.
10 11/5 and 11/7	Plath. Quiz 3 due 11/5. Work on Essay 2.
11 11/12 and 11/14	Plath. Draft of Essay 2 due 11/15.
12 11/19 and 11/21	Film. Work on Quiz 4 and Essay 2 revision.
13 11/26 and 11/28	Lindsay and Graphic Medicine. Quiz 4 Due 11/26. Thanksgiving Holiday!
14 12/3 and 12/5	Graphic Medicine. Essay 2 Final due 12/5.
Finals	

Grading Criteria for Argument Synthesis

A/A-

An **excellent** paper: a paper at this level displays sophisticated, analytical thinking—the author is able to synthesize information from multiple sources, making use of it to develop and support her own original ideas on a topic and argue convincingly for them. The author has a clear and effective thesis statement, identifying the topic and her position on the issue. The introductory paragraph(s) give an overview of the topic, including background and definitions. The author demonstrates an understanding of her source materials and the complexity of the issue. The opposition point of view is treated fairly and thoroughly. The author’s argument is developed with an effective and convincing blend of reason and evidence (logos), authority and credibility (ethos), and, where appropriate, emotion (pathos). Each paragraph has a clear topic, relevant supporting evidence, and thorough explanation. Sources are grammatically and logically integrated into the argument. The author synthesizes her sources and does not merely summarize them. There are few to no errors of grammar, punctuation, or usage.

B+/B/B-

A **good** paper. Papers at this level demonstrate a high level of thoroughness, correctness, and competence, but lack the overall presentation, quality, and effective rhetorical strategy of A-range work. The author has a clear thesis and develops it carefully and with adequate thoroughness. The author understands the source material and issues, and is able to analyze and synthesize the sources, though in a more general, less nuanced way. The author’s use of reason, authority, and emotion is again competent and demonstrates sufficient self-control and fairness towards opponents, but is not strongly compelling or forceful. There may be areas in the paper where the logical connections between ideas are not clearly shown; some logical fallacies may appear which weaken the argument without undermining it completely. There are few to no errors of grammar, punctuation, or usage.

C+/C/C-

A **satisfactory** paper, one that is acceptable according to the minimum standards of the assignment. It has few mechanical errors and is reasonably well-developed and organized, with a clear thesis and organizational structure, but the information may be thin, vague, or common-place. Often the author has settled for generalities instead of providing strong specific evidence which would demonstrate the author’s knowledge, and thereby, establish his credibility. The author may be prone to logical fallacies, which weaken his appeal to reason and/or authority. The author may not thoroughly understand the source readings well enough to use them effectively. In using sources, the author may tend to summarize rather than analyze or synthesize; evidence from sources is useful but may not be smoothly or logically integrated into the argument. At the lower level of the C range, the number of errors in grammar and usage may be somewhat distracting and may detract from effectiveness or readability.

D/F

Unsatisfactory work. Papers in this range may relate to the assignment, but are marred by enough errors in syntax, mechanics, or grammar to be a serious distraction to the reader. The author fails to demonstrate an adequate level of reading comprehension and, as a result, cannot analyze, synthesize, or argue logically or effectively. The author may lack a clear thesis and purpose for writing, and does not show understanding and/or fair treatment of opposing viewpoints and complexities of the issue at hand. Use of sources is inconsistent and logical fallacies are frequent. The author may demonstrate a rudimentary treatment of the subject, unclear organization, awkward or ambiguous sentences, and little evidence of careful proofreading. Finally, the author may simply not have understood or adhered to the instructions for the assignment.