

Biomedicine & Culture

LCC 3318 G / Spring 2007 / TR 12:05-1:35pm / Skiles 368

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Description

Our aim in this class will be to develop an understanding of biomedicine that is social, cultural, and political. To do this, we will focus on narratives which deal with medicine, health, and illness (as well as the “big questions” of life and death...). The course materials will span literature, film, history, philosophy, as well as current events. Through these materials, we will be asking a number of general questions: How do recent concerns over “global pandemics” and bioterrorism impact our understanding of social order? How have disease and epidemics been understood in the past? What are the different cultural forms through which a particular society expresses ideas about the body, health, and illness? How do the words, images, and ideas we use to understand disease affect the meanings that are given to it?

Required Texts

All books may be purchased at the GaTech bookstore or through Amazon. Additional readings will be available through the GaTech Electronic Library (GTEL) online reserve.

- Camus, Albert. *The Plague*. New York: Vintage, 1991.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. New York: Perennial, 1998.
- Porter, Roy. *Blood and Guts: A Short History of Medicine*. New York: Norton, 2002.
- Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor/AIDS and Its Metaphors*. New York: Picador, 2001.

Course Requirements

- Three exams = 10% ea. = 30%
- Research paper = 30%
- WebCT = 20%
- Participation & in-class group work = 20%

NOTE: This is an upper-level course, and will require your commitment as a student. Preparation is absolutely essential for this class. The readings are extensive and oftentimes difficult. Students are expected to complete the readings for each class, and to come to class with questions, comments, and ideas. You will also be asked to develop an independent research project that will culminate in a research paper at the end of the term.

Grades: Failure to complete an assignment, exam, or paper will result in a ‘0’ for that assignment. More than three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by half a grade. I will calculate all letter grades according to the following scale:

A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = 1-59

WebCT (webct.gatech.edu) is a course tool that allows students to respond to questions and create a dialogue online. Each week you will also be required to post short responses of at least 400 words on WebCT. Questions will be posted on Thursdays, and you are expected to respond by class time the following Tuesday. All course documents (syllabus, handouts, etc.) will also be available via WebCT.

Honor Code: All students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code, at www.honor.gatech.edu.

Class etiquette: Mobile phones, iPods, and all other gadgets are to be turned OFF and put away while in class. No food is allowed in class.

Students with disabilities should contact Access Disabled Assistance Program for Tech Students (ADAPTS) to discuss accommodations: (404) 894-2564 (voice) / (404) 894-1664 (voice/TDD) or www.adapts.gatech.edu.

Weekly Schedule

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|---------|------------|--|
| Week 1 | 1/9, 1/11 | Research current public health initiatives: Project Bioshield (US); Global Outbreak & Response Network (WHO); Biosurveillance Project (US DHS & HHS; CDC)... |
| Week 2 | 1/16, 1/18 | Sontag, <i>Illness as Metaphor</i> Lupton, "Representations of Medicine, Illness & Disease" (e-reserve) |
| Week 3 | 1/23, 1/25 | Foucault, "Right of Death and Power Over Life" (e-reserve) Agamben, from <i>Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life</i> (e-reserve) |
| Week 4 | 1/30, 2/1 | EXAM #1 |
| Week 5 | 2/6, 2/8 | Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , Part One Porter, <i>Blood & Guts</i> , Chapter 1 ("Disease") |
| Week 6 | 2/13, 2/15 | Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , Part Two Porter, <i>Blood & Guts</i> , Chapter 2 ("Doctors") & Chapter 5 ("Therapies") |
| Week 7 | 2/20, 2/22 | Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , Part Three Porter, <i>Blood & Guts</i> , Chapter 3 ("The Body") |
| Week 8 | 2/27, 3/1 | Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , Part Four Porter, <i>Blood & Guts</i> , Chapter 7 ("The Hospital") |
| Week 9 | 3/6, 3/8 | Camus, <i>The Plague</i> , Part Five Porter, <i>Blood & Guts</i> , Chapter 8 ("Medicine in Modern Society") |
| Week 10 | 3/13, 3/15 | EXAM #2 |
| Week 11 | 3/20, 3/22 | [SPRING BREAK] |
| Week 12 | 3/27, 3/29 | Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i> Fukuyama vs. Stock article (e-reserve) Rifkin, from <i>The Biotech Century</i> (e-reserve) |
| Week 13 | 4/3, 4/5 | Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i> Kay, from <i>Who Wrote the Book of Life?</i> (e-reserve) Research on bio-art... |
| Week 14 | 4/10, 4/12 | Film screening: <i>The Seventh Seal</i> |
| Week 15 | 4/17, 4/19 | EXAM #3 |
| Week 16 | 4/24, 4/26 | RESEARCH PAPER DUE |