

BIOMEDICINE & CULTURE

LCC 3318 B / Fall 2009 / MWF 1:05-1:55pm / Skiles 317

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Description

Our aim in the class will be to develop an understanding of biomedicine that is cultural, philosophical, and political. To do this, we will think about representations of medicine, health, and illness (as well as the “big questions” of life and death...). 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 have disease and epidemics been understood in the past? What are the different ways in which we as a society express ideas about the body, health, and illness? In addition, this course will also focus on the ever-shifting boundary between “life” and “death,” between the natural and supernatural, and between medicine and religion.

Required Texts

All books may be purchased at the GaTech bookstore or through Amazon.

- Aristotle. *De anima* (Penguin Classics, 1987).
- Canguilhem, Georges. *Knowledge of Life* (Fordham University Press, 2009).
- Matheson, Richard. *I Am Legend* (Tor Books, 2007).
- Ohtsuka, Eiji, & Housui Yamazaki. *The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service*, vol. 1 (Dark Horse, 2006).
- Wells, H.G. *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (Broadview Press, 2009).

Course Requirements

- Exams (2 exams, in-class, essay-style) = 30%
- Final Paper (approx. 15 pages) = 40%
- Participation (in-class & online) = 30%

NOTE: *This is an upper-level course, and will require your commitment as a student.* Preparation is absolutely essential for this class. You are expected to complete the assigned readings and to have watched the assigned films. You should come to class with questions, comments, and ideas. You will also be asked to develop an independent research project that will culminate in a paper at the end of the term. Further details are on the next page...

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Below are further details about the class and your grade:

T-square: We will utilize T-square [t-square.gatech.edu] as the central portal for the class. All announcements, class materials, readings, and external resources will be available here. We will also make use of the forums for online assignments. Your grades will also be available via T-square.

Grades: 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

All grades for the course as a whole are final and are not subject to change. *Please note that failure to complete a major course assignment (such as an exam or the final paper) may result in the failure of the course as a whole.*

Exams: The two exams will be in-class, essay-style exams. They will be based on the readings and in-class lectures. We will talk about these in more detail as the term goes on.

Final paper: The final paper will be a scholarly, research paper of approximately 15 pages in length. It will require research outside of class, and should incorporate external, scholarly sources. The final paper will be based on a topic of your choosing that is related to the class. All paper topics must be approved by me. I strongly encourage you to discuss your final paper topic with me in advance. I will give you a handout describing the details of the final paper later in the semester.

Participation: The participation component of the course includes things such as in-class discussion, online assignments, and group activities. Strong in-class participation involves the following:

- Coming to class on time, having completed the readings and/or having watched the assigned film.
- Bringing the day's readings to class with you.
- Both speaking *and* listening in class.
- Working as part of the whole class as well as in smaller groups.

By contrast, there are a number of things which will work against you in terms of participation:

- Failure to complete the readings and/or assignments.
- Being disrespectful towards others in the class when they are talking.
- Class disruptions (e.g. tardiness, chit-chat with your neighbor during class, playing with your phone or browsing the Internet, sleeping during class).
- All mobile devices (including pods and berries) are to be turned OFF and put away while in class.
- No food is allowed in class.

Any serious case of disruptive behavior will be taken up with the relevant GT offices as stipulated in the Student Honor Code.

Honor Code: All students are expected to adhere to the Georgia Tech Honor Code [www.honor.gatech.edu], which defines academic misconduct as:

- Possessing, using, or exchanging improperly acquired written or verbal information in the preparation of any essay, exam, or other assignment included in an academic course;
- Unauthorized collaboration with a student in the commission of academic requirements;
- False claims of performance or work that has been submitted by the claimant;
- Alteration or insertion of any academic grade or rating so as to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Deliberate falsification of a written or verbal statement of fact to a member of the faculty to obtain unearned academic credit;
- Forgery, alteration, or misuse of any institute document relating to the academic status of a student.

The writing you do for any assignment should be your own. If I have reason to suspect that you are plagiarizing, I will take the appropriate actions with the office of the Dean of Students.

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.

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PART I – INTRODUCTION

Week 1

M	8/17	Course Introduction	
W	8/19	Course Introduction	
F	8/21	Screening: <i>Twilight Zone</i> episode	T-square

Week 2

M	8/24	Aristotle, from the <i>De anima</i>	
W	8/26	Canguilhem, “Knowledge and Life”	
F	8/28	Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life”	T-square

PART II – MAD SCIENTISTS & ANGRY MONSTERS

Week 3

M	8/31	Wells, <i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>	
W	9/2	Wells, <i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>	
F	9/4	Wells, <i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>	T-square

Week 4

M	9/7	NO CLASS	
W	9/9	Canguilhem, <i>Knowledge of Life</i>	
F	9/11	Canguilhem, <i>Knowledge of Life</i>	T-square

Week 5

M	9/14	Bear, “Blood Music”	
W	9/16	Kay, “Who Wrote the Book of Life?”	
F	9/18	Thacker, “Biomedica”	T-square

Week 6

M	9/21	Screening: <i>The Fly</i> (dir. Cronenberg, 1986) Screening: <i>The Fly</i> (dir. Neumann, 1958)	
W	9/23	Discussion con’t	
F	9/25	--	EXAM #1

PART III – HEALTH & ILLNESS

Week 7

M	9/28	Matheson, <i>I Am Legend</i>	
W	9/30	Matheson, <i>I Am Legend</i>	
F	10/2	Matheson, <i>I Am Legend</i>	T-square

Week 8

M	10/5	NO CLASS	
W	10/7	Foucault, “Lecture on Biopolitics”	
F	10/9	Thacker, “ <i>Nomos, Nosos, and Bios</i> in the Body Politic”	T-square

Week 9

M	10/12	Screening: <i>Omega Man</i> (dir. Sagal, 1971) Screening: <i>The Last Man on Earth</i> (dir. Ragona/Salkow, 1964)	
W	10/14	Hays, “The Great Plague Pandemic”	
F	10/16	Slack, “Responses to Plague in Early Modern Europe”	T-square

Week 10

M	10/19	Butler, “Bloodchild”	
W	10/21	Cooper, “De anima: Variations on the Living and the Dead”	

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F	10/23	Waldby, "Stem Cells, Tissue Cultures, and the Production of Biovalue"	PAPER TOPICS DUE
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PART IV – NATURAL OR SUPERNATURAL?**Week 11**

M	10/26	Daston, "The Nature of Nature in Early Modern Europe"	
W	10/28	Le Fanu, "Green Tea" Le Fanu, "The Familiar"	
F	10/30	Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"	T-square

Week 12

M	11/2	Hippocrates, "On Sacred Disease"	
W	11/4	Renaissance writings on demonology	
F	11/6	Freud, "A Neurosis of Demoniical Possession"	T-square

Week 13

M	11/9	Screening: <i>A Tale of Two Sisters</i> (dir. Kim, 2003)	
W	11/11	Discussion con't	
F	11/13	--	EXAM #2

Week 14

M	11/16	<i>The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service</i>	
W	11/18	<i>The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service</i>	
F	11/20	<i>The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service</i>	T-square

PART V - CONCLUSION**Week 15**

M	11/23	Screening: <i>Twilight Zone</i> episode	
W	11/25	Discussion con't...	
F	11/27	NO CLASS	T-square

Week 16

M	11/30	Writing workshop	
W	12/2	Writing workshop	
F	12/4	--	FINAL PAPERS DUE