Medical Humanities: A cultural Study

Dr. Joshua Myers Fall 2025

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**Office Hours:** **M** 11-12 Noon **&** 1-5 p.m., **T** 12:30-4:30 p.m., **W** **& F** 11-12 Noon.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The medical humanities is an academic field that examines the intersectionality of language and medicine. By studying readings from textbooks that cover different fields of English as an academic study – 1) literature, 2) rhetoric and composition, 3) cultural historicity – the study will increase student knowledge of how language influences and shapes educational and institutional polices related to the practice of health and medicine.

Topics will range widely due to many of the stories and readings focusing on a diverse variety of subjects, including but not limited to, both fictional and non-fiction representations of: medical environments (medical classrooms, labs, hospitals, morgues); the portrayal of bodies as relates to anatomical and medical study; disease, illness, and public health polices; pharmaceuticals, biology, and chemistry and, most especially, the language and communications involved in all of these things.

LEARNING OUTCOMES & GOALS

* Introduce student to the medical humanities and the intricacies of that field as relates to academic study.
* Read ongoing portrayals of medicine in both fiction and non-fiction during different time periods, as well as learning of the historical and social consequences of such depictions.
* Enhance student’s understanding of the overlap between sciences and the humanities.
* Assist student in continuing to develop effective time management and communication skills for collaborative academic projects.
* Gain awareness and experience in interdisciplinary study and research.

MEETING SCHEDULE: We plan to meet every other Tuesday at 1 p.m. throughout the course of the semester, the Tuesdays when Dr. Myers does not have to attend a faculty meeting. We will meet in Dr. Myers’s office in Elliot Hall. If additional meetings are needed, we will schedule a day and time that fits both our schedules. Additionally, we will communicate via email and on Canvas throughout the course of the semester.

REQUIRED TEXTS & SUPPLIES

* Notebook and pens.
* Selected readings from books on medical rhetoric, provided by Dr. Myers:

*Rhetoric in the Flesh: Vision, Technical Expertise, and the Gross Anatomy Lab*

This textbook focuses on the technical design of medical texts, especially anatomy textbooks and the anatomy coloring books that are used as introductory materials for medical students. The chapters are organized around the way that rhetoric and composition, as utilized in medical texts, facilities learning about health and medicine to provide a perspective as to how language facilities social and educational practices of medicine.

*Generating Bodies & Selves: Rhetoric of Reproduction in Early Modern England*

This textbook examines the emergence of new medical approaches in Early Modern England as represented by the literature of the time. The book analyzes both official medical books about childbirth, as well as descriptions of popular guides for midwifes and parents, to examine the way that conflicting views about approaches of medicine influenced social policies, especially regarding pregnancy and childcare, and how debates and discourses about family medicine were approached differently amid barriers of gender and class.

*The Literary Companion to Medicine*

This literary anthology is a collection of short stories and poems specifically related to portrayals of medicine, providing extensive opportunity for critical discussion and analysis of how the cultural imagination depicts issues related to health, sickness, and healing.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Participation 50%

 (This entails following the schedule, attending meetings regularly, being prepared, actively conversing about course readings/materials by articulating ideas, interpretations, questions, etc.)

Notes & Materials 20%

(This entails bringing materials to the meeting that show evidence of effort, including but not limited to: the current reading that was assigned, hand-written notes about the reading (to show evidence of thoughts about the text), any form of independent research agreed upon at the prior meeting (i.e., the student can show what they have discovered as relates to the directed study: scholarship, a new reading, a link to an interesting webpage/source, etc.)

Course Theme Paper 15%: (4-6 page paper about overarching theme or concept)

Culminating Final Project 15%: (to be determined by the student, with instructor guidance)

**Grade Scale:** A (94-100%); A – (90-93%); B+ (87-89%); B (84-86%); B – (80-83%); C+ (77-79%); C (74-76%); C – (70-73%); D (69% and below)

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE POLICY

Attendance is mandatory. Students may receive excused absences at the professional discretion of the school nurse, the associate director of mental health services, the associate director of college counseling and student engagement, the director of academic affairs, and the executive director of the Indiana Academy. Unexcused absences occur when students miss class without prior approval from the aforementioned designated school officials. Continued absences (both excused and unexcused) from Academy classes increase the likelihood of unsuccessful completion.

Alongside steady attendance, students are expected to maintain consistent healthy habits of decorum, respect, and kindness towards their classmates, instructors, and teaching assistants. When students fail to meet these classroom behavioral standards and academic habits, it is the expectation faculty engage appropriately to bring quick and immediate resolution. When students consistently fail to meet these behavioral standards and academic habits in the classroom, an administrative consequence ladder will be adopted, and recorded, in attempt to administratively address, engage, and rectify ongoing challenges.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY:

Pursuant to Indiana Code 20-26-5-40.7, The Indiana Academy for Science, Mathematics and Humanities prohibits student use of wireless communication devices for non-instructional purposes in the classroom. As such, any and all portable wireless devices, that have the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, must only be used for academic purposes directly tied to the classroom activity or related educational task. Exceptions to this wireless device policy are eligible through academic accommodations, individualized education programs, or with instructor approval permitting the use of a wireless device for justification related to health, safety, and/or well-being. The improper use of a wireless device in an active classroom setting is subject to disciplinary action including but not limited to; a verbal warning, temporary seizure of said device by a school official, an unexcused absence for the class in question, written communication to parent/guardian, among other elevated consequences for repeated improper use.

E-MAIL POLICY

--- I check my e-mail regularly and often and so should you.

--- My response may not be instantaneous since, like you, I have a life outside of this classroom. I will always reply as soon as possible, so please be patient.

--- Please feel free to e-mail me anytime, but if you e-mail me after 6 p.m. you might not get a response until the next morning.

--- **Considering all of the above, you will ALWAYS get a response within 24 hours. If a full 24 hours go by, and you do not receive an emailed reply from me, then you should resend your e-mail because I did not receive it. THUS, please be aware that email mishaps are not acceptable excuses for missed work.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

You are responsible for the integrity of your work, and you must produce work that is

academically honest. This means that all your coursework must be your own and must be created specifically for this course. Failing to maintain the integrity of your work can have serious consequences. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to, the following: submitting someone else’s paper, including papers you obtain online, as your own writing; and, attempting to take credit for someone else’s (or an AI’s) words or ideas without properly citing them. **If you are even remotely uncertain about whether or not any part of your work is academically honest, please contact me for assistance before you submit your work for grading.** Also, please refer to the student handbook for additional information, especially the quoted portions below:

* *Plagiarism: representing as one’s own work any material obtained on the Internet (such as term papers, articles, etc.). When Internet sources are used in student work, the author, publisher and website must be identified. (See policy on Academic Dishonesty in the student handbook.)*
* *Students are prohibited from using any electronic device to capture, record, and/or transmit test, quiz, exam, or other class information or any other information in a manner constituting fraud, theft, cheating, or academic dishonesty and students are prohibited from using electronic devices to receive such information.*
* *Plagiarism or violations of procedures prescribed to protect the integrity of an assignment, such as: a. Submitting an assignment purporting to be one’s original work, which has been wholly or partially created by another person; b. Presenting as one’s own work ideas, representations, or words of another person without customary and proper acknowledgment of sources; c. Submitting as new work, without the faculty member’s prior consent or knowledge, one’s own work which has been previously presented for another class elsewhere; d. Knowingly permitting one’s work to be submitted by another person as if it were the submitter’s original work; e. Cooperation with another person in academic dishonesty, either directly or indirectly, as an intermediary agent or broker; f. Knowingly destroying or altering another’s work, whether in written or digital form, computer files, artwork, or other format; g. Aiding, abetting, or attempting to commit an act or action that constitutes academic dishonesty.*

AI POLICY:  
 From the Humanities Division of the Academy (History, Languages, English):

* *“The Humanities Division recognizes that artificial intelligence (AI) provides some exciting new tools for academic work. However,* ***AI also poses significant dangers for academic integrity. Passing off as your own any research, words, or ideas which you did not create is plagiarism. That is always the case whether the source is print, internet content, or generated by AI.****It is vital to read the policies your individual humanities instructors have regarding AI, and ask them any questions you may have about the use of AI in their course.”*
* **On that note, here is my AI policy specifically for this study:**

**I consider any and all usage of AI a violation of academic integrity. As a professor, scholar, and devotee of the Arts & Humanities, I find AI to be antithetical to the passion of the human spirit, a threat to the nature of individuality, and a mockery of artistic creation.**

* + - **If I discover you have used any type of AI for any work you do for this class, you will receive a 0 on the assignment and I will report you to the administration for violating academic integrity.** 
      * **This includes, *but is not limited to*, AI generation of ideas/brainstorming, AI generated writing, AI organizing or attribution of sources, and using AI to revise and edit your writings.**

**To limit your temptation to use AI, and to assess your learning, the following steps will be taken regarding assignments:**

* As much work as possible will be handwritten and completed in class.
* Longer writings will be composed gradually and reviewed in meetings, etc.
* Assignments of significant writing length that need completed outside of class will be typed on a Google Doc created by Dr. Myers and shared with the student, so that Dr. Myers can monitor students’ writing processes.

READING CONTENT / SUBJECT MATTER POLICY:

From the Humanities Division of the Academy (History, Languages, English):

“As with many classes, the lectures, readings, and discussions will include a range of topics that may be triggering, emotionally distressing, and difficult for some students … Literary studies seek to understand how writing communicates and expresses the experiences, thought processes, and cultures of former generations, whether for good or ill. Sometimes the language and word choices used by people in the past may be insensitive or politically incorrect today. Nevertheless, the goal of the humanities is to understand people and the past within their own context and time.” If a reading, image, or discussion is *truly* troubling to anyone, please do not hesitate to talk to your instructor. In most circumstances, an alternative reading or assignment can be arranged.

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY BENIFICENCE PLEDGE

Ball State University aspires to be a university that attracts and retains outstanding faculty, staff, and students. Ball State is committed to ensuring that all members of the campus community are welcome through our practice of valuing the varied experiences and worldviews of the people whom we serve. We promote a culture of respect and civil discourse as evident in our Beneficence Pledge. As a reflection of Ball State’s commitment to respect, civil discourse, and the Beneficence Pledge, inclusiveness at the Indiana Academy emerges as one of the priorities of our living and learning community. We strive to exist together respectfully and compassionately, creating an environment where every member can thrive.

DISABILITY SERVICES

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at **765-285-5293** or [**dsd@bsu.edu**](mailto:dsd@bsu.edu)

If you ever have any questions or concerns about the course policies outlined on this syllabus, please reach out to your instructor: Dr. Joshua Myers [jmyers3@bsu.edu](mailto:jmyers3@bsu.edu)

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