

Philosophy of Medicine: A Biocultural Approach

Spring 2008 Course K20.1294

Thursday 3:30-6-10 WAVE 370

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Office hours: Monday (Noon to 2:30), Thursday (Noon to 2:30),
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Overview

This course considers broad theoretical and philosophical issues in U.S. healthcare. We unpack the underlying concepts and principles that organize contemporary medical practice, teaching, and research. We look at the consequences of different conceptual frames for medicine and the problems with today's dominant theories and models of medicine. Most important, we consider how much the contemporary "healthcare crisis" comes from deep theoretical and philosophical problems as much as the more obvious financial and administrative problems.

Although these issues are central to understanding medicine, they are rarely considered within medicine itself. Most medical inquiry focuses on narrow issues of disease from within a biomedical framework. It rarely steps back from the particulars to ask larger theoretical and philosophic questions. Our task will be to focus on the larger questions that medicine tends to neglect. We do so to help imagine a future with different health care systems and with different modes of practice. And we do so to help prepare ourselves for the day when we or our loved ones become ill and in need of medical care.

Over the course of the semester, we will be guided by an interdisciplinary approach that draws from biomedicine, philosophy, history, psychology, literary theory, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, disability studies, cultural studies, poetry,

drama, and documentary. This interdisciplinary approach to medicine is increasingly known as a “biocultural” approach.

Texts:

W;t, Margaret Edson
The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, Anne Fadiman
Overtreated, Shannon Brownlee

Academic Year Calendar Spring 2008

Spring Classes Begin	Tuesday, January 22
Holiday: Presidents' Day	Monday, February 18
Spring Recess	Monday, March 17 - Saturday, March 22
Last Day of Classes	Monday, May 5
Commencement	Thursday, May 15

Class Schedule

1.) Jan 24—Introduction

Davis and Morris: *Biocultures Manifesto*

2.) Jan 31—Starting with Death

Rimpoche: *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (selections)
Viorst: *Necessary Losses* (excerpts)

3.) Feb 7—Biomedical Model

Parchman: “Historical Overview of Patient Care”
Flexner: “Medical Education in the US and Canada”
Odegaard: “Flexner Curriculum”
Reiser: “Becoming a Doctor”

In class: *Griffith's 5-Minute Clinical Consult* “Ovarian cancer”

4.) Feb 14—Biomedical Model Continued

Donne: “Death be not proud”
Edson: *W;t*

In class: Film: *Wit*

5.) Feb 21—Biopsychosocial Model and Patient-Centered Care

Engel: "The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine"
Cassel: "The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine"
McWhinney: "Are we on the brink of a major transformation of clinical method?"
Quill: "Fourteen Years of Colds, Conflicts, Cardiac Disease, and Cancer: A
Clinical Narrative Illustrating the Biopsychosocial Approach"

Suggested:

Leder: *A Tale of Two Bodies: The Cartesian Corpse and the Lived Body*

6.) Feb 28—Medical Humanities and Narrative Medicine

Lewis: "What is Narrative Medicine?"
Husserl: "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity"
Charon: "Narrative Medicine: Attention, Representation, Affiliation"
Aull: "Telling and Listening: Constraints and Opportunities"

In class: Campo: "Technology and Medicine"

****Turn in first paper****

7.) Mar 6—Sociology of Medicine

Mihill: "Poverty is World's Greatest Killer"
Freund, et. al.: "Who Becomes Sick Injured or Dies"
McKinlay and McKinlay: "Medical Measures and the Decline of Mortality"
Starfield: "Is U.S. Health Really the Best in the World"
Wilkinson: "Health Inequalities: Relative or Absolute Material Standards"

In Class: Campo: "Ten Patients and Another"

8.) Mar 13—Gender Studies

Boston Women's Health Collective: *Our Bodies, Our Selves* excerpts
Ratcliff: *Women and Health: Power, Technology, Inequality and Conflict in a Gendered World* excerpts.
Passau-Buck: "Caring vs. Curing" in *Socialization, Sexism, and Stereotyping: Women's Issues in Nursing*
Bernhard: "Women's Health Nurse Practitioners, Feminism, and Women's Studies"

Suggested:

Muff: "Why doesn't a Smart Girl Like You Go to Medical School?" in
Socialization, Sexism, and Stereotyping: Women's Issues in Nursing
Hughes: "Little Girls Grow up to be Wives and Mommies" in
Socialization, Sexism, and Stereotyping: Women's Issues in Nursing

In Class Film: *The Business of Being Born* (if available)

Mar 17-21—HOLIDAY: SPRING BREAK

9.) Mar 27—Medical Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Encounters

Fadiman: *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

*****Turn in second paper*****

10.) April 3—Disability Studies

Davis: "The Need for Disability Studies"

Wendell: "Toward a Feminist Theory of Disability"

Garland-Thomson: "Feminist Theory, the Body, and the Disabled Figure"

Hahn: "Constructions of Deafness"

In Class: Film: *Sound and Fury*

11.) April 10—Internal Politics: Family Practice Case Example—Professor Away

Graham: Family Practice Status Report

Stephens: Family Medicine as Counter Culture

Bodenheimer: Primary Care: Will it Survive?

Woo: Primary Care: Best Job in Medicine?

Suggested:

Starfield: "Contribution of Primary Care to Health Systems and Health"

12.) April 17—Cultural Studies

Lewis: "High Theory/Mass Markets: Newsweek magazine and the circuits of medical culture" (please see images as well)

Lewis: "The New Global Health Movement: Rx for the World"

Angel: *Truth about Drug Companies* (overview in CAMJ and chapters 7, 8, 9)

Suggested:

Lewis: "Reading Cultural Studies of Medicine"

Elliot: "Guinea-pigging"

13.) April 24—Overtreated and Underinsured Part I

Brownlee: *Overtreated*—to chapter 6

Rose: "Healthcare Expenditures"

Moore: Siko (in class) part I

14.) May 1—Overtreated and Underinsured Part II—LAST CLASS—

Brownlee: *Overtreated*—finish

Callahan: *False Hopes: Why America's Quest for Perfect Health is a Recipe for Failure* excerpts

Krugman: "The Health Care Crisis and What to Do about It"

More: Siko (in class) part II

*****Final paper due on Monday May 5th*****

Course Requirements

Grades are based on four parts: attendance/participation (25%) and 3 papers (25% each). Late papers are graded down. The attendance/participation grade is composed of weekly class attendance and participation.

This is a seminar type class which means that discussion begins with student initiative. Please type out or mark two quotes from the week's readings about which you have questions or comments. In class, I will often ask you to read your quotes and discuss your questions or comments. Regardless of whether you are asked, doing this assignment carefully not only helps you prepare for your papers and increases your participation grade; it also helps your classmates because it increases the quality of our conversations together.

The papers are 5 pages type written, double spaced. Please use the material from the class to develop the topic question I hand out. Back up your thesis with arguments and examples from the class readings. A good paper demonstrates that you've integrated the material from the class discussions and class readings and can use it to analyze your topic. You do not need outside research for these papers. Use your energy reading closely and thinking seriously about the materials you have.

The grading scale for the class will be as follows: 93-100% (A) 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 70-76 (C), 63-69 (D), and below (F).