

**MED HUM 1**  
**Health, Wellness, and the Body**  
**UC Irvine, Spring 2023**

**<https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/courses/54037>**

Class Meeting Time: Tu/Th 5:00pm-6:20pm (ALP 1700)

Section Meeting Time: Wednesdays

Dis 1 [Course Code 30201] 3:00 pm-3:50 pm

Dis 2 [Course Code 30202] 4:00 pm-4:50 pm

Instructor: Professor Rena Beatrice Goldstein

[renag@uci.edu](mailto:renag@uci.edu)

[https://www.faculty.uci.edu/profile.cfm?faculty\\_id=7106](https://www.faculty.uci.edu/profile.cfm?faculty_id=7106)

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:45pm-1:45pm (HIB 69)

Virtual office hours by appointment: <https://calendly.com/renag>

**Syllabus Version:** April 4, 2023<sup>1</sup>

**Course overview:** Medical humanities has a critical stake in the interdisciplinary study of health and wellness, illuminating how people are not merely objects of biomedicine, but active agents shaping their own conceptions of health, healing, and the body. Using historical and contemporary case studies, this introductory course explores social and cultural dimensions of biomedical and clinical experiences. We will examine some of these questions: What is considered a “healthy” or “sick” body? How and why did Western biomedicine establish certain bodies as “normal” and others as non-normative, and what are the consequences for doing so? We will also consider where stories of illness begin—and end? How do experiences of disease or disability shape one’s sense of self? How do patient narratives engage with, respond to, and/or critique medical discourses? In this course, we will examine autobiographical illness narratives in a variety of media—print, graphic, and digital—in order to analyze how patient-writers narrate their experiences of illness and construct themselves as subjects within their wider social and cultural contexts. This is an ideal course for students who are planning to work in health-related fields. This course fulfills General Education Categories III (Social & Behavioral Sciences), & IV (Arts and Humanities).

**Materials**

Carel, Havi. *Illness: The Cry of the Flesh*. Third edition. London ; New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to revision

Lindsay, Rachel. *Rx*. New York: Grand Central Pub., 2018.

Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor*. 1st Vintage Books edition. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

### **Course Format**

Assignment instructions, quizzes, and deadlines will be available on Canvas. All the deadlines for this course are for the US west coast, that is Pacific Standard Time.

This course will have both teaching and learning assistants. Teaching assistants (TAs) are largely responsible for conducting discussion, grading assignments, holding office hours, and providing input into the development of assignments or exams. Learning Assistants (LAs) are undergraduate peer educators that work with students in the classroom setting to support and facilitate active learning in courses that are traditionally difficult or have high enrollment. The main responsibility of an LA is to support their professor and TAs by assisting students while they are engaged in active learning. LAs are expected to interact with students to facilitate collaborative activities and discussions. LAs are not expected to be content experts.

### **Teaching Assistants:**

- Romina Samplina [rsamplin@uci.edu](mailto:rsamplin@uci.edu)

### **Learning Assistants:**

- Alex Duy Ngo
- Cheryl Godbee
- Christine Hien Ngoc Vu
- Hannah Xiao Fan Jian

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites for this course.

**Requirements for Medical Humanities Minor:** Med Hum 1 satisfies a requirement for the minor in medical humanities. If you would like information about the Medical Humanities minor at UCI, please contact Program co-director, Professor Sven Bernecker at [s.bernecker@uci.edu](mailto:s.bernecker@uci.edu).

For a list of courses, please visit the Medical Humanities program website:  
<http://www.humanities.uci.edu/medicalhumanities/program/index.php#>

**General Education Category III:** Med Hum 1 satisfies the General Education Category III (Social & Behavioral Sciences). General Education Category III courses focus on principles, sources, and interpretations of human behavior and on how people organize, govern, understand, and explain social life. This category includes the analysis of human behavior at all levels, from the individual to collective social, economic, and political life, and on the scientific methods used in the acquisition of knowledge and the testing of competing theories.

**General Education Category IV:** Med Hum 1 also satisfies the General Education Category IV (Arts and Humanities). General Education Category IV courses expand the student's sense of diverse forms of cultural expression, past and present. Students develop their critical capacity as they discover how meaning is created and experience is variously interpreted.

**General Education Objectives:** After completing Med Hum 1, successful students should be able to do the following:

- (III) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of principles, sources, and interpretations of human behavior and how people organize, govern, understand, and explain social life;
- (III) Demonstrate an understanding of contemporary and historical perspectives on human behavior;
- (III) Understand and explain the scientific methods used in the acquisition of knowledge and the testing of competing theories in the social and behavioral sciences;
- (III) Critically evaluate methods, findings, and conclusions in the research literature on human behavior.
- (IV) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how visual and verbal communication is used in literature and film, art and music, and philosophy and history;
- (IV) Communicate an understanding and appreciation of diverse forms of cultural expression, past and present;
- (IV) Understand and explain the research methods used in the acquisition of knowledge and the testing of competing theories in the arts and humanities;
- (IV) Think critically about how meaning is created and how experience is variously interpreted.

**Med Hum 1 Learning Outcomes:**

- Interpret strategies of self-representation in autobiographical genres using a variety of critical and theoretical approaches (eg feminist theory, disability theory, queer theory).
- Apply the skills of close reading to a variety of texts (print, graphic, and digital).
- Construct a complex critical argument supported by textual evidence.
- Create autobiographical narratives that reflect critically on how identity is produced.
- Analyze the ways in which subjectivity and the experience of embodiment are shaped by broader social, cultural, and discursive factors, and the ways in which these factors affect individuals' relationships to health care.
- Assess the stakes of self-representation for differently-embodied subjects, and identify concrete implications of storytelling in medical practice and cultural meaning-making.

**Communication:** We will send course announcements to the official course mailing list, so you should check your email regularly. Note that this mailing list goes to the email address that the registrar has for you. If you prefer to read your email on another account, you should set your account to forward your email to your preferred account. To reach the professor and the teaching

assistants, please use the email addresses listed above. If you have questions about your grades for your discussion posts or your essays, then in the first instance please contact the teaching assistant assigned to your discussion group.

### **Course Requirements**

-Attendance (10%): The large class will be lecture-based, with some in-class group activities and collective discussions. As part of your participation grade, you are required to attend your discussion section. The TA's will record attendance at the beginning of each class. Your attendance may be marked down if you are (1) consistently absent, (2) consistently late, and/or (3) you are disruptive/disrespectful in class.

-Weekly Reading Posts (20%): Each week you are required to post one substantial question and respond to two peers' comments on a reading of your choice. This assignment will help you to think critically and generate intellectual curiosity as you complete the assigned readings. There will be no way to make up for the loss of points incurred by missing or late weekly questions. Instructions for generating a substantial question and response are on the Canvas Course Webpage.

-Medical Humanities Event Review (20%): Either attend a campus Medical Humanities event of your choice and write a short 1 - 2 page review (think short blog post!) **OR** watch 2 videos from the conference "Epistemic Injustice in the Conference". Reviews due on Canvas within one week of the event. I will do my best to post events on Canvas as they are finalized, but check the UCI Center for Medical Humanities website for event listing:

<https://www.humanities.uci.edu/centermedicalhumanities/events>

<https://www.humanities.uci.edu/events/epistemic-injustice-medical-context-conference>

-Graphic Narrative (25%): For this assignment, you will create a 6-10 panel graphic narrative that tells a story of an experience you have had either during the COVID-19 pandemic or a recent medical experience. You may create your comic by hand, or use any app. Your graphic narrative will not be assessed in terms of your technical ability, but on your ability to effectively combine both words and images to tell a compelling story.

Your graphic narrative should be accompanied by a brief artist statement (200-300 word paragraph) in which you explain your comic, including your artistic choices and their intended effect.

-Digital Anthology Project (25%): For this project, you will work collaboratively to create an online anthology of digital illness narratives: blogs, Twitter feeds, Instagram accounts, Facebook groups, etc. In groups of 3-5, you will select a subset of illness narratives to explore, which you may choose to categorize by specific disease (eg breast cancer, cerebral palsy, diabetes, Huntington's) or by a broader unifying characteristic (eg chronic pain, mental/invisible illnesses, caregiver narratives, collectively-authored blogs, web comics).

Using the concepts, theories, and terminology we will become familiar with throughout this course, you and your group members will select a group of sites and collectively author a concise

heading essay (~500 words) that explains and analyzes the connections and differences among the digital narratives you have chosen.

Each group member will also be responsible for authoring paragraph-length descriptions/short analyses of **2 sites** in your collection (~200 words each).

You should address questions such as:

- o Who is/are the author/s?
- o How much do we learn about the author's identity? What is the balance of disclosure and privacy?
- o How does the author establish authority and authenticity?
- o How does the author use words and images, and for what purposes?
- o What is the author's tone? What is the intended effect on the audience?
- o Who is the audience? What kind of traffic does the site seem to receive? Has it been featured/linked to on other sites? To what extent and in what ways do readers participate in comments sections?
- o How does this site participate in broader social networks/conversations?

## Grading

All grading will be done by the teaching assistants. **Papers must be submitted to Canvas.** If you have questions about the essays, please don't hesitate to contact either your TA or myself. We are also willing to give feedback on essay plans (no more than one page), though naturally you will need to do this well in advance of the essay deadline. **Please note that in the interests of fairness, neither I nor the TAs will provide feedback on essay drafts.** Essays don't need to use a particular style of formatting or referencing. All that is important is that they are clearly written throughout (and full references are given somewhere, where appropriate). Note that we give guidance in the course itself in terms of what we are expecting from the essays, so you need to carefully attend to that advice.

The breakdown for the 100% over the course is as follows:

- Attendance: 10%
- Weekly Reading Posts: 20%
- Medical Humanities Event Review: 20%
- Graphic Narrative: 25%
- Digital Anthology Project: 25%

Overall grading for the course follows the standard UCI grading scheme:

A+ = 96.5% A = 93.5% A- = 90%  
B+ = 86.5% B = 83.5% B- = 80%  
C+ = 76.5% C = 73.5% C- = 70%  
D+ = 66.5% D = 63.5% D- = 60%  
F = Less than 60%

## **Late Penalties**

For all assessed work, for each day, or part of the day, that the assessment is late we will deduct one grade (e.g., a one-day late penalty means that A+ goes down to A, B- goes down C+, and so on). If you have a good excuse for being late—and please note that a good excuse doesn't mean 'I forgot about the deadline', or 'I left it to the very last minute and my computer broke down', and so on—then it is important that you get in touch with both myself and your TA ASAP to explain the situation.

## **Class Policies**

Respect: This class involves significant discussion of topics on which you and your classmates may have differences of opinion. You may also have opinions that differ from those of the instructors. Please be respectful of classmates, the professor, and teaching assistants at all times.

Academic Honesty: Please familiarize yourself with UC Irvine's academic honesty policy (<http://honesty.uci.edu>).

Academic Dishonesty: All students are expected to adhere to the UCI Academic Dishonesty Policies. The consequences of academic dishonesty (e.g., course failure and not learning the material) are not worth the small artificial benefits to your grade and the impugning of your character. The penalty for any violation of academic integrity—including but not limited to plagiarism—failure for the course and a letter recording the violation sent to the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Student Services in the School of Humanities. Note that submitting work for assessment that you have previously submitted for assessment is also a case of academic misconduct. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, it is always better to ask than to guess. All students are expected to adhere to the UCI Academic Dishonesty Policies.

**Disability Services:** There will be accommodations for students eligible for disability services. Contact the Disability Services Center (DSC) and make the appropriate arrangement.

## SCHEDULE

Date	Lecture	Readings	Assignments
Week 1 April 4 April 6	Tu: Course Overview	Tu: Syllabus	Post 1 substantial question and 2 responses to peers' comments by Thursday 11:59AM
	Topic: What is Medical Humanities?	Th: Zola, Irving Kenneth. "Medicine as an Institution of Social Control." <i>Ekistics</i> 41, no. 245 (1976): 210–14. <a href="http://www.jstor.org/stable/43618673">http://www.jstor.org/stable/43618673</a> .  Viney W, Callard F, Woods, "Critical medical humanities: embracing entanglement, taking risks," <i>Medical Humanities</i> 2015; 41: 2-7.	
Week 2 April 11 April 13	Topic Cont.:What is Medical Humanities?	Tu: Travis Chi Wing Lau, " <a href="#">Against Medical Humanities?</a> "	Choose one reading to post 1 substantial question and 2 responses to peers' comments
		Th: Jonathan M. Metzl, <i>Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality</i> (NYU Press, 2010). Introduction: "Why 'Against Health'?" pp. 1-12.	
Week 3 April 18 April 20	Topic: Illness as Story	Tu: Susan Sontag "Illness as Metaphor" chpts. 1-2, & 8  Rachel Fraser, " <a href="#">Illness as Fantasy</a> "  Optional: Broyard - 1993 - <i>Intoxicated by my illness</i>	Choose one reading to post 1 substantial question and 2 responses to peers' comments

		<p>Th: Arthur Frank, “Illness as a Call for Stories”</p> <p>Arthur Kleinman, “The Meaning of Symptoms and Disorders”</p>	
<p>Week 4 April 25 April 27</p>	<p>Topic: On Graphic Portrayal of Illness</p>	<p>Ian Williams, “Comics and the Iconography of Illness”</p> <p>“<a href="#">Mayo Clinic Transform 2013 Symposium, Insights with MK Czerwiec and Michael Green</a>” (video, 33 minutes)</p> <p>Browse <a href="#">graphicmedicine.org</a>, especially <a href="#">COVID-19 Comics</a></p>	<p>Choose one reading to post 1 substantial question and 2 responses to peers’ comments</p>
<p>Week 5 May 2 May 4</p>	<p>Topic cont.: On Graphic Portrayal of Illness</p>	<p>Lindsey, Rx</p> <p>Lindsey, Rx</p>	<p><b>Due: Graphic Novel</b></p>
<p>Week 6 May 9 May 11</p>	<p>Topic: Phenomenology of Illness</p>	<p>Carel, <i>Illness</i>, Introduction, chpt. 2</p> <p>Margaret Price, “The Bodymind Problem and the Possibilities of Pain,” <i>Hypatia</i> 30.1 (2015), 268–284</p>	<p>Choose one reading to post 1 substantial question and 2 responses to peers’ comments</p>
<p>Week 7 May 16 May 18</p>	<p>Topic Cont.: Phenomenology of Illness</p>	<p>Carel, <i>Illness</i>, Introduction, chpt. 3</p> <p>Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept,” <i>Hypatia</i> vol. 26, no. 3 (Summer, 2011), 591 - 609.</p>	<p>Choose one reading to post 1 substantial question and 2 responses to peers’ comments</p>

Week 8 May 23 May 25	Topic: Epistemic Injustice in the Medical Context  No lecture	Attend Event OR watch two videos from <a href="#">“Epistemic Injustice Conference in the Medical Field”</a>	<b>Due: Event or Conference Reflection</b>
Week 9 May 30 June 1	Topic: Digital autobiographical illness narratives	<p>Madeleine Sorapure, “Autobiography Scholarship 2.0?”</p> <p>Chris Elliott, “<a href="#">Why an article on Lisa Bonchek Adams was removed</a>”</p> <p>Please also look at Lisa Adams’s <a href="#">Twitter feed</a> and <a href="#">obituary</a>. &amp; Dr. Nadia Chaudhri’s <a href="#">Twitter feed</a> and <a href="#">obituary</a></p> <p>Bill Keller, “<a href="#">Heroic Measures</a>”</p> <p>Margaret Sullivan, “<a href="#">Readers Lash Out About Bill Keller’s Column</a>”</p>	Choose one reading to post 1 substantial question and 2 responses to peers’ comments
Week 10 June 6 June 8	No lecture	Students work on Digital Anthology Project in class	<b>In-class preparation and group work</b>
Week 11 Finals Week	No lecture	No readings	<b>Due: Digital Anthology Project Writings and Group Evaluations</b>