

# **MEDICINE IN MEDIA:**

## **THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF “DIS-EASE” IN RECENT AMERICAN HISTORY**

HSS 404 Senior History Seminar

### **SPRING 2018 SYLLABUS**

**Prof. Stephen Pemberton**

Federated Department of History  
New Jersey Institute of Technology

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#### **Class Meetings**

Central King Building (CKB) 220  
6–9:00 PM Mondays

#### **Office & Contact**

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#### **Office Hours**

Thursdays, 10–11:20 a.m., and by appointment on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

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This course examines medicine and health through the lens of prominent sociocultural developments in American society and media from 1900 to the present. Historical cases are the focus throughout the course, and will include discussions of influential disease problems for the advancement of both science-based healing and public health – among them: polio, cancer, AIDS, and the nation’s current opioid epidemic. As signaled in the course title, the dominant course theme is the evolving ways that medical and health information have been mediated and interpreted in American culture and society, and how that impacts such events as well as our understanding of them. Significant course themes also include the evolving doctor-patient relationship, the character and quality of American healthcare delivery, the roles of government in promoting health, the rise of disease advocacy and patient activism, and (last but not least) the benefits and problems of consumer capitalism in American medicine. In covering these case studies and themes, the professor will also outline how issues of class, race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality have impacted cultural understandings of the body, disease and health as well as interactions between medical professionals, scientists, industry, government, and the public. Finally, the topics, readings, and in-class activities in this course will prepare each student to undertake and complete an individual research project on a significant medical or health issue in the United States today, and challenge the student to develop historical and critical perspective on that issue.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- *Identify and describe* a substantive problem, controversy, or event related to medicine or health in American society, and *explain* the significance of that phenomenon in American society in a way that reflects historical as well as contemporary thinking.
- *Write* effective essays that *describe* and critically *evaluate* the merits of a certain argument in a specific place and time.
- *Research, write, and orally present* arguments of historical significance using primary and secondary sources.
- *Demonstrate* information literacy consistent with being an upper-level undergraduate: including (1) locating, retrieving and evaluating information relevant to the writing of a college-level argumentative essay; (2) organizing, synthesizing and communicating that information in clear, persuasive prose; and (3) producing a finished research paper that employs principles consistent with the ethical and legal uses of information.

### **Prerequisites and Honors Credit**

HUM 102 and one from among HUM 211, HUM 212 and HIST 213 or their equivalents, all with a grade of C or better. Completion of either the LIT/HIST/PHIL/STS or Open Elective in Humanities and Social Science, with a grade of C or better.

Students taking the course for honors credit must be enrolled in the honors section.

**Course Webpage.** There is a Moodle webpage for this course that the professor and class will utilize throughout the semester. Please consult this website regularly, and familiarize yourself with its contents. It contains the syllabus, assignments, readings, and other features that will enhance your learning experience this semester. Login to the following web address using your UCID number: <http://njit2.mrooms.net>.

### **Readings**

The required readings for this course include a variety of book chapters, magazine articles, scholarly essays, and journal articles. Students should follow the semester schedule to determine what readings to complete for each class period. These readings will be posted on the course webpage as pdfs.

### **Assignments and Grading**

The primary goal of this course is to promote critical thinking about medicine and health in society – both past and present. All students will be evaluated on their written and oral communication over the course of the semester. This requires that each student do the reading and writing assignments dutifully. Specifically, each student should attend class regularly, read the texts assigned for each class, participate in online discussion forums, choose and develop a research project, present and discuss their project in class in consultation with other students, and write a final research paper that includes both primary and secondary source material.

### Assignments for Honors Students

This course is offered in an **honors format** for students seeking honors credit as well as a **standard format**. The number of course readings and assignments are the same for students in the honors section and standard section of this class, however, many of the course assignments are modified for students in the honors section to allow them to demonstrate a higher level of competency.

<u>Assignments</u>		<u>Grading Scale for Assignments</u>
Participation	40%	A = 89.5 to 100
Project Proposal	10%	B+ = 86.5 to 89.4
Annotated Bibliography	5%	B = 79.5 to 86.4
Rough Draft / Peer Review	10%	C+ = 76.5 to 79.4
Project Presentations	15%	D = 59.5 to 69.4
Final Paper	20%	F = 59.4 to 0
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Course Grade	100%	
Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.		

### Participation

Participation will count **40%** of your final course grade. The class participation grade will reflect (1) the student's attendance record, (2) the student's performance in classroom activities, and (3) the student's written and oral engagement with the required reading. The professor will consider improvement and other factors in his assessment of each student's participation grade, and he reserves the right to award extra credit to students who make substantial contributions to the in-class learning environment

**Attendance Policy.** The student's regular attendance accounts for one-fourth of the participation grade, or 10% of the final course grade. Missing even a single class is not recommended. However, each student is allowed to miss one full class period without penalty to his or her participation grade. It is recommended that you consult with the professor about missed class time. Any class time missed beyond any "excused" classes will result in substantial reductions in the student's participation grade (as calculated as a percentage of formal contact hours in the classroom for the semester). The professor will consider excusing repeat absences under extraordinary circumstances that can be verified by the Dean of Students Office. See the section below on "Student Communication and Accommodations" for additional details on university policies regarding student presence, privacy and reasonable accommodations.

**Classroom Performance.** The student's active engagement with classroom activities accounts for one-fourth of the participation grade, or 10% of the final course grade. Each student should come to class promptly and regularly, actively listen to the lectures, and be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for the day. Students should respect the learning environment by arriving on time and staying the full term of the session. The student's comprehension of the assigned readings is graded in this course. The professor will evaluate reading comprehension, in part, by taking account of each student's contributions to in-class discussions. Students should

promptly communicate any concerns about their ability to meet these requirements with the professor. Students who participate regularly in discussion and in-class activities, and do so constructively, will be rewarded with higher grades in their classroom participation grade. Merely coming to class does not constitute engagement (because attendance is considered a separate component of participation). The student must contribute to the learning environment to receive credit in this area.

**Reading and Discussion Forums.** Reading participation accounts for half of the participation grade, equivalent to 20% of your final course grade. Each student should complete the reading assignments before class because our discussions for each class meeting will draw directly on the reading assignment for that week.

When reading for this class, the goal is not only to understand the factual information being presented, but also to think critically about the author's argument and the interpretation of the events and issues discussed throughout the assigned text.

Each student's ability to discuss the readings in written and oral form is assessed throughout this course. The professor will evaluate the student's competency at discussing the readings in writing, in part, by reviewing each student's contributions to the written online discussion forums that will be posted on the course webpage on Moodle. Every student is expected to complete written responses to the Professor's discussion forum writing prompt for each class for which a reading is assigned.

**Reading Groups.** Each student will be assigned to one of four reading groups for the semester: **Group A, B, C, or D.** The reading assignment for each group may vary in emphasis each class depending on what group the student belongs. Students are expected to be familiar with all the readings assigned each week. However, when a particular reading is assigned to a particular group, every student in that group should make that reading their principal focus for the week and expect to be called upon to discuss it in detail. There are group designations next to each reading in the semester schedule below. Thus, for example, when an A appears next to a reading, primary discussion duty for that article belongs to every student in Group A. When "B, D" appear next to a reading, discussion responsibilities for that reading belong primarily to Group B and Group D. Finally, when "A-D" appears next to reading, all Groups are equally responsible for comprehension and discussion of that article. This reading tactic will help distribute the reading and discussion burden for each class.

**Discussion Forums.** Every Sunday afternoon of the semester (by 5:00 p.m.), the student will post a "reader's response" on a Moodle "Discussion Forum" pertaining to the reading assigned for the next day's class (Monday). The professor will post the prompt for assigned reading no later than 5 p.m. the previous Thursday in the Discussion Forum. Student "responses" will vary according to the prompt for the particular reading. The response might simply entail responding to a question or series of questions about the assigned text. But your response can also take a variety of other forms – a few sentences, a full paragraph, several questions or observations you had about the reading. However, you choose to respond, the response should demonstrate some understanding of the reading's major argument or interpretation of the subject matter or event – e.g., what is the author's main point. Students should refrain from speculating about things the authors have not addressed or included. These responses should also not be a mere restatement of the reading, but reflect your considered opinion or question about a significant aspect of the reading. Questions of comparison between that week's readings and earlier readings or discussions are especially welcome.

Please keep in mind that the goal of these reading responses is to facilitate high-level discussion and speculation during class itself. These reader's responses by each student will usually not be individually graded, but the professor will read them in preparation for Monday's class, actually using them to help inform the class discussion of the reading. The professor may

call upon individual students to explain or expand upon something they wrote in discussion forum regarding the day's assigned reading.

Collectively, each student's reader responses will amount to half of the student's participation grade for the course; doing them therefore matters considerably to your chances of success in this course! Late postings will not be accepted, and missing postings could bring your participation grade down considerably.

### **Research Project and Final Paper**

The principal activity of this course is the student's research project, one that will address a major issue or theme in the course of interest to the student, and will involve some significant reading on the part of the student beyond the assigned reading. The research project comprises **60% of the final course grade**, and is composed of five distinct assignments that will help each student progress toward a final research paper that represents the student's considered, historically-informed opinion on a significant medical or health issue in the United States – past or present. These assignments are the project proposal (worth 5% of the final course grade), an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources (5%), a rough draft of the paper followed by a peer-review of that draft (10%), a presentation of the project to the class (15%) as well as the final paper itself (20%). The parameters of each of these assignments will be explained in separate documents that will appear on the course webpage as the semester unfolds. The due dates for these assignments appear in the semester schedule below.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is enforced in this course. Plagiarism involves using the written or oral work of others without acknowledgement, and/or representing that work as your own. Plagiarism or any other academic integrity violations will be reported to the Dean of Students. All instructors and students are responsible for upholding the integrity of NJIT by reporting any violation of academic to the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). The identity of the student filing the report always remains anonymous.

There are several web-based resources that you should consult if you have any questions about academic integrity, plagiarism or proper citation. First, NJIT's academic integrity policy is explained [here](#).

Tutorials that explain what is acceptable academic writing for this course are available at the Van Houghton library website, [here](#).

The Library also maintains another web page on how to cite sources in your academic writing, [here](#). Proper citation will help you avoid plagiarism. Students can use the APA, MLA or Chicago citation styles in their written work. One only need to pick one of these standard styles and apply it properly.

Tutorials on how to evaluate appropriate online source material can be found [here](#).

Tutorials appropriate to doing coursework in a history class, such as this one, can be found [here](#).

NJIT Librarian David Scharf is the expert to contact to field your questions about how the library's resources (highlighted on these webpages) can help you succeed in this class. Her contact information is [here](#).

Again, all students are expected to abide by the norms outlined in these websites, this syllabus as well as the Moodle course page for this class, and will be penalized for failure to do so. Please consult the professor if you have any concerns about academic integrity, academic reading, writing and citation, plagiarism or their meanings in actual practice.

Students will be required to submit their written work to [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com), an online service used by NJIT instructors to detect plagiarism and irregularities in sourcing and citation of the written word and claims. Details for using the service will be provided along with guidelines for the specific writing assignments.

All of the above links can also be accessed on the course webpage on Moodle.

### **Respect for Persons and the Learning Environment**

In the interest of an open exchange of ideas and collegiality, everyone participating in the class should strive to respect their classmates as persons. The professor will make every effort to facilitate a respectful environment for learning, but students should keep in mind their own responsibilities in the classroom.

Students are expected to limit cell phone, tablet, and lap top use to class-related activities only. Texting and social media in class are not allowed. Web-surfing unrelated to class, along with texting and social media usage, are disruptive of a respectful learning environment.

The professor reserves the right to ask you to leave the classroom for any behaviors that do not meet the expectations of a proper, professional learning environment.

### **Student Communication and Accommodations**

If a student needs accommodation in the classroom for illness, disability, death in family, religious reasons, etc., University Policy dictates that the student must inform the Dean of Students Office. Instructors can only accommodate a student at the direction of the Dean's Office.

Students with disabilities should also contact NJIT's Student Disability Services (SDS) for any necessary accommodations related to their disability. SDS will communicate your specific needs to the professor, ensuring that your disability-related accommodations for the class and assignments are met without your having to divulge any private health information to the professor or anyone else in the class.

Students who have concerns that might impact their learning experience beyond the issues stated above may identify the nature of that concern with the professor so that he may advise you appropriately. The professor will hold all individual communication with students in confidence.

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## Semester Schedule

### **Mon, Jan 22. Introduction to “Medicine in Media”: What it all means?**

In-Class: *How to Survive a Plague* (2012 Documentary Movie)

### **Mon, Jan 29. How Americans Learned to Embrace to Medical “Breakthroughs”**

#### **Part I. Popular Understanding of Medicine and Media Representations**

Reading: Bert Hansen, “Medicine in the Public Eye” (2009) **A-D**

#### **Part II. Diseases and Doctors in the Pictorial Press, 1860-1890**

Reading: Hansen, “Before There Were Medical Breakthroughs” (2009) **A, C**

#### **Part III. Pasteur, Rabies, and the “Newark Boys”**

Reading: Hansen, “How Medicine Became Hot News, 1885” (2009) **B, D**

### **Mon, Feb 5. Disease and Medical Innovation in Cultural Perspective**

In-Class: *A Paralyzing Fear: The Story of Polio in America* (1998 Documentary Movie)

#### **Part I. Polio in America, 1910s-1960s**

Reading: Naomi Rogers, “Polio Since FDR” (1992) **A-D**

David Oshinsky, “The Biggest Public Health Experiment Ever” (2005) **A, C**

#### **Part II. Magazine Photography and the American Public, 1930s-1960s**

Reading: Hansen, “*Life* Looks at Medicine” (2009) **B, D**

### **Mon, Feb 12. AIDS in America: Interpreting the First Decade**

“Project Proposal: Finding a Topic & Source” Assignment Due

#### **Part I. How Americans Learned about AIDS**

In-Class: *And The Band Played On* (HBO movie, 1993)

#### **Part II. Randy Shilts and Media Coverage of AIDS**

Reading: *And The Band Played On* (selections from 1987 book) **A-D**

Douglas Crimp, “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic” (1987) **A-D**

Crimp, “Randy Shilts’ Miserable Failure” (2002) **A-D**

### **Mon, Feb 19. Celebrity, Advocacy, and the Paradox of Cultural Visibility**

#### **Part I. Celebrity Patients and Diseases**

Reading: Barron Lerner, “The First Modern Patient: The Public Death of Lou Gehrig” (2006) **A-D**

Reading: Nancy Tomes, “Celebrity Disease”(2007) **A-D**

#### **Part II. The Pros and Cons of Disease Celebrity**

Reading: Keith Wailoo, “Promising Therapy: Government Medicine on Beale Street” (2001) **A-D**

### **Part III. Group Discussions of Individual Topics**

#### **Mon, Feb 26. Social Activism and Disease in Cultural Perspective**

##### **Part I. Sickle Cell Anemia and Black Power**

Reading: Alondra Nelson, “Introduction: Serving the People Body and Soul” **A, C**  
Nelson, “Spin Doctors” **A, C**

In-Class: The War on Cancer From Nixon to Now (*NY Times Retro Report* Video)

##### **Part II. “Cancer Wars”**

Reading: Jerome Groopman, “The Thirty Years War” (2001) **B, D**  
Barron Lerner, “No Shrinking Violet: Rose Kushner and the Maturation of Breast Cancer Activism” (2001) **B, D**

#### **Mon, Mar 5. Individual Meetings Week**

Revised “Project Proposal” Due to Turnitin.com

Required Individual Meetings

#### **Spring Break**

#### **Mon, Mar 19. Pain and the Opioid Epidemic: A Historical Perspective**

##### **Part I. The Liberal Case for Pain Management**

Reading: Keith Wailoo, “Introduction” (2016) **A-D**  
Wailoo, “Gates of Relief” (2016) **A, C**

##### **Part II. The Conservative Case for Pain Management**

Reading: Wailoo, “Conservative Case Against Learned Helplessness” (2016) **B, D**

##### **Part III. The American Dilemma: Undertreated and Overmedicated**

Reading: Wailoo, “Oxycontin Unleashed” (2016) **A-D**

#### **Mon, Mar 26. Epidemic of Signification: Stigma, Representation, and Power**

Annotated Bibliography Due

##### **Part I. Illness and Representation**

Reading: Susan Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor” (Selection from 1978 Essay) **A**

##### **Part II. Disease and Representation**

Reading: Sander Gilman, “Seeing the AIDS Patient” (1987) **B**

##### **Part III. AIDS and Syphilis**

Reading: Allan Brandt, “The AIDS Epidemic and its Relation to Syphilis” (1988) **C**

##### **Part IV. AIDS as Sociocultural Phenomenon**

Reading: Charles Rosenberg, “Disease and Social Order in America” (1988) **D**



**Part V. Combating Stigma at a Time of Crisis**

Reading: Sontag, “AIDS and its Metaphors” (1989) **A-D**

**Mon, Apr 2. AIDS again, and the “Right to Health”**

Rough Draft Due to Turnitin.com and Your Writing Partner

**Part I. How to Survive a Plague, Redux**

Reading: David France, *How to Survive A Plague* (Selection from 2016 Book) **A-D**

**Part II. In-Class Writing Workshop**

**Mon, Apr 9. Consumerism and Capitalism in American Medicine**

Peer Review Due to Turnitin.com

**Part I. The 1930s**

Reading: Tomes, “The Guinea Pigs’ Revolt” (2016) **A**

**Part II. 1964 – 1974**

Reading: Tomes, “The Patient Must Prescribe for the Doctor” (2016) **B**

**Part III. 1974 – 1979**

Reading: Tomes, “Get Ready for a New Breed of Patients” (2016) **C**

**Part IV. 1980 – 1999**

Reading: Tomes, “Medicine-Chest Roulette” (2016) **D**

**Part V. The 1990s and Early 2000s**

Reading: Carl Elliott, “The Detail Men” (2010) **A-D**

**Mon, Apr 16. Medicare and the “Right to Care”**

**Part I. Medicare at 50**

Reading: Keith Wailoo, “The Era of Big Government: Why It Never Ended” (2015) **A-D**

**Part II. Project Workshop**

**Mon, Apr 23. Student Presentations**

**Mon, Apr 30. Student Presentations**

**Finals Week. Final Research Paper Due**