RACE, CULTURE & SCIENCE IN THE
HISTORY OF AMERICAN MEDICINE

History 622

SPRING 2012 SYLLABUS

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Class Meetings
Cullimore Hall 307, NJIT Campus
Thursdays 5:30-8:00 p.m.

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Office Hours
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays by appointment

This graduate seminar in American history examines how race, culture, and science have figured prominently in American medicine and public health in the past two centuries. The particular focus will be on the health status of African-Americans in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the persistent disparities that African-Americans have experienced in health outcomes as they have engaged with American medicine and public health across the decades.

Readings

There are ten books to read over the course of the semester with a selection of additional essays. The books are regarded, in most cases, as an exemplary work on their subject. In several cases, the book is quite lengthy (over 300 pages). In those cases, I will provide advance notice of the pages that will be our focus. Before coming to class, you should familiarize yourself with the factual content of the work as well as the author’s argument and his or her use of sources. In class, I will encourage you to think critically about issues raised in the readings. This goal will only be attainable if you come prepared.

Full citations for the assigned books appear in the attached bibliography at the end of this syllabus. There is also a separate bibliography of suggested book-length readings that we will not be able to read together this semester, but that are also useful resources.
These books for the course can be purchased through the NJIT bookstore in the Campus Center. Their contact information: Phone: (973) 596-3200; Fax: (973) 596-2821; Email: njit@bkstr.com. Online booksellers also sell these books.

Copies of any assigned and/or recommended articles will be available online through our course web page (see below).

Course Webpage. There is a Moodle webpage for this course that the professor and class will utilize throughout the semester. (Moodle is the NJIT version of Blackboard.) Please consult the website at your first opportunity, and familiarize yourself with its contents. It contains the syllabus, assignments, readings, discussion forums, and other features that will enhance your learning experience this semester. As I post new material, I will alert you. You will need to obtain a UCID number from NJIT to get access to this secure web page. Login to the following web address using your UCID number:
http://moodle.njit.edu/

Assignments and Grading

The primary goal of this course is to promote critical thinking about modern medicine and society, both past and present. All students will be evaluated on their written and oral communication over the course of the semester. In addition to in-class participation, the student will write two short essays and complete a longer historiographical paper for the final grade.

Attendance and Class Participation

Class participation should involve active listening and engagement. Attendance is both expected and required.

Discussion Responsibility

Each student will help lead a book discussion during the semester. During the first or second class, I will assign responsibilities for leading book discussions to each student based on his or her stated preferences. The goal of the discussion is to facilitate critical interpretation of the reading and topic. In preparing talking points for the discussion, students should strive for more than a restatement of the reading material. A series of questions or a provocative argument are often conversation starters. Areas on which the student should focus class discussion include: the author’s argument/s, the author’s use of sources, his or her methodology, the organization of the book and whether or not it works successfully, and how the readings for that week relate to the other material we have examined during the semester. A more detailed outline of discussion responsibilities will be posted on the course moodle page by the second class.
Two Short Essays

Each student will write two short essays focused on one or more of the readings assigned in the preceding weeks. The essay should discuss a key matter in the reading that you feel compelled to identify and discuss. You should consult with the professor on your topic. The basic idea is for you to engage with a critical issue at stake in the scholarly work, rather than merely summarize the reading material. Beyond that, the basic requirements follow. The essay need be no longer than 5-8 pages. Less than five is not recommended, more than six pages is subject to the task you set for yourself – the point you are trying to make. Try to keep it under eight pages. These short essays are due on February 16th and March 22. No later papers will be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances.

Final Essay

Each student will write a final historiographical paper of 15-25 pages in length, and will craft her or his paper in consultation with the professor. Details about this assignment will be provided over the course of the semester, well in advance of the due date. The final paper assignment is due without exception by 5 pm on May 4th.

Grading

15% for attendance & participation
15% for leading discussion of reading
15% for first essay
15% for second essay
40% for final essay
Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

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.

The Honor Code

The honor code and academic integrity are enforced in this course. Please consult me if you have any questions or concerns about the honor code or its meaning.
**Semester Schedule (THURSDAY SCHEDULE)**


Week 3. Feb. 2.

Marie Jenkins Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South*


Samuel Roberts, *Infectious Fear: Politics, Disease, and the Health Effects of Segregation*

Week 5. Feb. 16.

First Essay Due

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Sat., Feb. 18 Marion Thompson Wright Lecture Series

(Attendance Highly Recommended)

“Taking Good Care: Health and Medicine in the Black Community”

9:30 am to 3:30 pm. at the Robeson Campus Center. Talks by Dr. Joycelyn Elders, Dr. Sharla Fett, Dr. Dorothy Roberts, and Dr. Priscilla Wald.

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Week 6. Feb. 23.

James H. Jones, *Bad Blood, The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment*


Susan Reverby, *Examining Tuskegee: The Infamous Syphilis Study and Its Legacy*


Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*

Spring Break – No Class on Mar. 15.

Second Essay Due

Week 10. Mar. 29.

Rebecca Skloot, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

Week 11. Apr. 5.

Jonathan Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*


Keith Wailoo, *How Cancer Crossed the Color Line*


Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*


Finals Papers (Due Fri., May 4 by 5 pm)
Course Bibliography

Required Reading: Books


Supplemental Reading: Books


