

Department of English
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

ENGE2170 Literature and Medicine

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About the Course

The goal of this course is to introduce students to medical themes as represented in both science and literature. We examine fictions and narratives that challenge our assumptions about the body and mind, the organic and the artificial, and the normal and the pathological. This course also aims to introduce students to graphic medicine, which uses comics to address the challenges of conveying experiences of pain and suffering. By the end of the course, you will have a broader understanding of the “medical”, from the clinical encounter to technoscientific and social imaginaries of the concept of the human.

Learning Outcomes

Having successfully completed this course you should be able to:

- explain the intersections between universal themes and science and technology
- compare and contrast the ethical and sociocultural implications of biomedical discourses
- apply interdisciplinary and theoretical approaches in the interpretation of narratives of illness and healthcare
- investigate, discuss and write critically, reflectively, and analytically

Set Texts

*Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2007. (excerpt)

*Burns, Charles. *Black Hole*. New York: Pantheon, 2008. (excerpt)

Dear, Nick. *Frankenstein, based on the novel by Mary Shelley*. London: Faber & Faber, 2011.

*Ferris, Emil. *My Favorite Thing Is Monsters*. Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2017. (excerpt)

*Jarman, Derek. *Pharmacopoeia: A Dungeness Notebook*. London: Vintage, 2022. (excerpt)

Winterson, Jeanette. *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. London: Vintage, 2020.

Note: Please purchase a copy of these specific editions of the texts from the University Bookstore or online bookstores (e.g. bookdepository.com, amazon.com). All page references in class will be based on them. Texts marked with * are included in the course pack available on Blackboard.

Recommended Readings

Ball, Philip. *The Modern Myths: Adventures in the Machinery of the Popular Imagination*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Oxford: Polity, 2013.

Chute, Hillary L. *Outside the Box: Interviews with Contemporary Cartoonists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

MK Czerwicz, Ian Williams, Susan Merrill Squier, Michael J. Green, Kimberly R. Myers, and Scott T. Smith. *Graphic Medicine Manifesto*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2015.

Kleinman, Arthur. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and The Human Condition*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.

Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Smith, Andrew. *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Sontag, Susan. *Illness as Metaphor & AIDS and its Metaphors*. London: Penguin, 2009.

Online Resources

Literature, Arts and Medicine Database (New York University School of Medicine)

<https://medhum.med.nyu.edu/>

Graphic Medicine

<https://www.graphicmedicine.org/>

Assessment

Tutorial attendance, preparation and participation 10%

Tutorial presentation 20%

Mid-term paper 30%

Final paper 40%

Grade Descriptors

Grade A / Excellent: Outstanding performance on ALL learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would surpass the normal expectations at this level and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study. The 'A' grade should be reserved for truly excellent work that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students and are expected to be achieved only by a small minority.

Grade A- / Very Good: Generally outstanding performance on ALMOST ALL learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would fully fulfill the normal expectations at this level and occasionally reaches standards that may be common at higher levels of study.

Grade B+ / Good (Plus): HIGH performance on all learning outcomes, OR HIGH performance on some learning outcomes which compensates WELL for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

Demonstrates the ability to apply WELL the principles or skills learned in the course in a comprehensive manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level WELL.

Grade B / Good: SUBSTANTIAL performance on all learning outcomes, OR SUBSTANTIAL performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a MORE COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade B- / Good (Minus): GOOD performance on all learning outcomes, OR GOOD performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for slightly less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a COMPREHENSIVE manner that would sufficiently fulfill the normal expectations at this level.

Grade C+ / Fair (Plus): VERY SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a SOMEWHAT SUSTAINED manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C / Fair: SATISFACTORY performance on the majority of learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to partially apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the basic requirement at this level.

Grade C- / Fair (Minus): SOMEWHAT SATISFACTORY performance on A NUMBER OF learning outcomes.

Demonstrates the ability to SOMEWHAT apply the principles or skills learned in the course in a manner that would meet the BARE basic requirement at this level.

Grade D+ / Pass (Plus): BARELY SATISFACTORY performance on A FEW learning

outcomes.

Addresses the course inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in some areas while responding minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade D / Pass: ALMOST BARELY satisfactory performance on VERY FEW learning outcomes.

Addresses the course inadequately by meeting the basic requirement at this level only in very few areas while responding very minimally with possibly tangential content in others.

Grade F / Failure: Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Fails to address the course and likely does not understand what the course requires. In other words, the work completely misses the point.