

# Seminar: Medical Rhetoric and Ecologies

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English 680

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Office Hours: TR: 1:30-2:30

The purpose of this course is to explore the intersecting fields of the Medical Humanities and the Rhetoric of Health and Medicine (RHM). These two fields have been hesitantly put under the umbrella label “Medical Rhetoric,” and they are among the fastest growing in our discipline. There is growing demand for better communications in healthcare, as well as students who can work as medical writers and healthcare communicators. Meanwhile, the demand for professors who research and teach health and medical communications is outstripping supply.

What’s the difference between the Medical Humanities and RHM? The Medical Humanities is a broader field that draws from rhetoric, philosophy, literature, history, anthropology, psychology, law, design, political science, sociology, languages, classics, among others. In contrast, RHM is a subfield within rhetoric that generally uses analytical and empirical methods to study healthcare workplaces and communications. There is a good amount of overlap between these two fields, but some contrasts and even conflicts exist. We will explore and discuss these overlaps and conflicts in this seminar.

I will be bringing my own background in environmentalism and entrepreneurship into the mix. Many of the problems that affect the health of human beings have their origins in problems that are impacting the environment. Cancer is a good example because most cancers are related to environmental factors. Likewise, environmental problems, such as agricultural run-off or air pollution, often have their origins in health problems among humans. Indeed, the solutions to medical issues and environmental issues are almost always related. Any attempts to address medical problems like cancer, obesity, and even mental illness invariably lead us to rethink our relationship with the environment. Meanwhile, attempts to solve environmental problems inevitably require us to change our lives in ways that make us healthier. Medical science and ecological science are on a common spectrum, which means their rhetorics tend to overlap and intersect.

In the same way, I believe entrepreneurship, especially social entrepreneurship, is one way to approach many of our medical and ecological problems. Large corporations and the government have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, while entrepreneurs challenge that status quo. Our society desperately needs to train a new generation of entrepreneurial leaders who can navigate the complex relationships among medicine, health, and the environment.

My hunch is that rhetoric, as a field that studies leadership, not simply persuasion, can offer pathways toward improving medicine, health, and the environment. I hope this seminar will establish a direction and that we can explore these new pathways in productive and meaningful ways.

## Readings

The course will involve quite a bit of reading. I have listed the books we will be reading below, and I will give you the other readings in electronic form. I would like you to have access to these readings on the days they are being discussed.

*The Cambridge History of Medicine* (2006), by Roy Porter, ISBN-13: 978-0521682893

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (2011), by Rebecca Skloot, ISBN-13: 978-0804190107

*The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* (2011), by Siddhartha Mukherjee, ISBN-13: 978-1439170915

I would also like each of us to take turns leading the class discussion. On your day, we will ask you to write and read an opinionated response to our readings. I will ask you to e-mail me your response, and I will post it on our course Blackboard site.

## Assignments

The goal of any seminar should be to produce a publishable article of some kind. The assignments in this course are designed to scaffold you up to that level of writing.

Here are the assignments and their weight.

7 percent	First white paper (medical humanities issue) with bibliography
23 percent	First conference-length paper
7 percent	Second white paper (RHM issue) with bibliography
23 percent	Second conference-length paper
35 percent	Final article that is an extension of one of the conference papers.
5 percent	Responses to Readings

## Attendance and Late Work

I will keep track of attendance. If you need to miss a class, send me an e-mail or give me a call, so I can tell you what we are doing in class. If you miss five classes, your grade will be lowered by one letter grade. If you miss seven or more classes, I will ask you to drop the class or you will earn a no pass, depending on how far we are into the semester.

Of course there are good reasons why some people run up against these attendance policies. Please talk to me if you are experiencing problems. Don't just disappear.

If you need to hand work in late, please send me an email that tells me a) the work will be late and b) when you will have it completed. Unless special circumstances exist (e.g. your work will be two weeks late) I don't need to know *why* you are going to hand work in after the due date. I'm sure you have good reasons. Just send me that e-mail. If I do not receive the e-mail, I will penalize your work one grade for every day it is late.

## **Grading**

Here's the meaning behind the numbers I will put on your work (you can use these statements as clues about how you might work toward a higher grade):

A- to A (90-100)—You did what the assignment asked for at a high quality level, *and your work shows originality and creativity*. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed below for a B; but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in inventing the content, solving a problem, or developing a verbal or visual style. If you receive an A on a paper or article, I'm signaling that you are probably one or two major revisions away from presenting your work at a conference or sending it to a journal.

B- to B+ (80-89)—You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range needs little revision, is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to style and visual design. If you receive a B on a paper or article, I'm signaling that you are doing the kind of work expected of graduate students but that you need to step up the quality of your work if you want to work professionally as an academic in the field.

C- to C+ (70-79)—You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range tends to need some revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style, verbal and visual, is straightforward but unremarkable. If you receive a C on a paper or article, I'm signaling that you are not doing the kind of work expected at the graduate level.

If you hand in work that would earn below a C, I will give it back to you without a grade, so you can re-write it.

You have one week after an assignment is returned to revise for more feedback and a higher grade. The original grade will be replaced. Note: The final article cannot be used as a revision of one of your conference papers.

## **Equal Access**

I will make any reasonable accommodations if you have special needs. If you have a disability that might affect your performance in this course, please tell me about it during the first two weeks of class. Your disability must be registered with Disability Resource Center through the Dean of Students for me to make accommodations.

## **Academic Integrity**

As far as I know, no graduate student has ever plagiarized something for my classes. Nevertheless, if you present someone else's work as your own, I will fail you for the course and seek to have you removed from English Studies program and Purdue.

A common practice that I would like you to avoid is "double dipping" academic work. This practice involves handing in the same or similar work for two different classes in the same semester or different semesters. I would like the work done in this class to be original to the class.

**Professionalism**

Please turn off and stow your mobile phone and any other electronic beeping menaces before you come to class. We will be using laptops in class for research and drafting, but refrain from checking e-mail, monitoring social networking, or reading websites that are not related to the class.

Also, if history is our guide, I expect us to have some passionate discussions in the class. Be mindful of situations where you might cross over into provocation or verbal abuse. Go out of your way to be courteous and respectful of the ideas and views of others.

**Emergencies**

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Information about changes to the course can be obtained by contacting the instructor via e-mail or phone. You are responsible for checking your Purdue e-mail on a frequent basis.

**Grief Absence Policy**

Students will be excused for funeral leave and given the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family. A student should contact the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) to request that a notice of his or her leave be sent to instructors. The student will provide documentation of the death or funeral service attended to the ODOS.

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Week	Subject	Assignment
Week One Jan. 9 & 11	Introduction to Medical Rhetoric	Heifferon(a); Angeli(a); Lyne
Week Two Jan. 16 & 18	What are the Medical Humanities?	Macnaughton; Grant; Atkinson HOM: Ch 1-2
Week Three Jan. 23 & 25	Narrative	<b>Due: White Paper 1 (1/23)</b> Charon; Davis; Solomon HOM: Ch 3-4; Skloot, Ch. 1-11
Week Four Jan. 30 & Feb. 1	Culture and Narrative	Schleifer; Kohn; Lerner HOM: 5-6, Skloot, Ch. 12-22
Week Five Feb. 6 & 8	Metaphor and Framing	Rademaekers; Lawrence; Hauser HOM: 7-8
Week Six Feb. 13 & 15	Rhetoric and Publics	Jensen; Keranen; Kopelson <b>Due: Conference Paper 1 (2/15)</b>
Week Seven Feb. 20 & 22	Social and Political	Hodges; Bristow; Foucault, Ch. 1, 4, 8 Skloot, Ch. 23-31
Week Eight Feb. 27 & Mar. 1	What is RHM?	Meloncon; Scott; Heifferon(b) Skloot, Ch. 32-38
Week Nine Mar. 6 & 8	Rhetorical Analysis	Mogull; Segal; Bell <b>Due: White Paper 2 (3/8)</b>
Week Ten Mar. 13 & 15	<b>Spring Break</b> (No Meeting)	
Week Eleven Mar. 20 & 22	Teaching Health and Medical Writing	Crowson; Dant; Schryer, Salmon Mukherjee, Parts 1-2
Week Twelve Mar. 27 & 29	Healthcare Workplace Studies	Graham; Angeli(b); Popham Mukherjee, Parts 3-4
Week Thirteen Apr. 3 & 5	Healthcare Workplace Studies	<b>Due: Conference Paper 2 (4/3)</b> Burleson; Arduser; Lindsley, Mirel
Week Fourteen Apr. 10 & 12	Epidemiology	Ding, Walkup, Welhausen Mukherjee, Parts 5-6
Week Fifteen Apr. 17 & 18	Conferences	
Week Sixteen Apr. 24 & 26	Presentations	
Finals Week	No Meeting	<b>Due: Article (5/1)</b>