Philosophy of Healthcare: 
An Interdisciplinary Approach

Course IDSEM-UG1294 Spring 2013
Thurs 3:30-6:10 1 Washington Place #401
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Office hours (please schedule in advance):
Tues (2:00 to 3:30), Thursday (2:00 to 3:30), and Friday (1:00 to 3:00)

Overview

This course considers broad theoretical and philosophical issues in U.S. healthcare. We unpack the underlying concepts and principles that organize contemporary medical research, practice, and education. We look at the problems with today’s dominant models of medicine and the possibilities of alternative conceptual frames. We also consider how much the contemporary “healthcare crisis” comes from cultural and conceptual issues as much as the more obvious financial and administrative problems. Our inquiry will be an interdisciplinary approach that draws from medicine, philosophy, history, psychology, literary theory, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, disability studies, cultural studies, poetry, drama, and documentary.

Texts

W;t, Margaret Edson
*Necessary Losses*, Judith Viorst
*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Anne Fadiman

Class Schedule

1.) Jan 31 —Introduction

   In Class:
   Donne: “Death be not proud”
   W;t (start)

2.) Feb 7—Biomedical Model

   Flexner: Medical Education in the U.S.
   Reiser: Becoming a Doctor
   Edson: W;t
   Campo: “Technology and Medicine”

   In Class: W;t (finish)
3.) Feb 14—Philosophical and Cultural Reflection

Leder: A Tale of Two Bodies
Marcum: Reflections on Humanizing Biomedicine
Egnew: Suffering, Meaning, and Healing: Challenges of Contemporary Medicine
Gaines and Davis-Floyd: Biomedicine

4.) Feb 21—Reform Efforts from 1970’s: Biopsychosocial Model, Patient-Centered Care, and Family Medicine

Engel: The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine
Cassel: The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine
McWhinney: Are we on the brink of a major transformation of clinical method?
Stephens: Family Medicine as Counterculture

In Class:
Marcus Welby Pilot: A Matter of Humanities (selection)

5.) Feb 28—Medical Humanities, Narrative medicine, PCMH

Charon: Narrative and Medicine
Lewis: Narrative Medicine and Health Care Reform
Rogers: Assembling PCMH—The Care Principles
Rogers: The PCMH Movement—Promise and Peril for Family Medicine

Video: Rita Charon

6.) March 7—Primary Care and Integrative Care

Easthope: Alternative Medicine
Davis-Floyd: Holistic Model of Health

Site Visit: Continuum for Health and Healing
http://www.healthandhealingny.org/center/about.asp

7.) March 14—Psychotherapy

Greenberg: Psychological Impact of Acute and Chronic Illness (selections)
Viorst: Necessary Losses Pt I, IV

***Turn in first paper ***

March 21 SPRING BREAK

8.) Mar 28—Cross-Cultural Encounters
Fadiman: *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*
Kleinman: *Culture, Illness and Care*

9.) April 4—Medical Sociology/Public Health

Farmer: On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below
WHO Report 1995: Bridging the Gaps
McKinlay and McKinlay: Medical Measures and the Decline of Mortality
Weitz: Expense of Healthcare
Gawande: The Cost Conundrum
Starfield: Is U.S. Health Really the Best in the World?
Campo: “Ten Patients and Another”

10.) April 11—Biomedicalization, Science Studies and Cultural Studies

Clark, et al: Biomedicalization
Angell: Excess in the Pharmaceutical Industry
Angell: Industry Sponsored Research
Sismondo: Ghost Management
Lewis: High Theory/Mass Markets: Newsweek Magazine and the Circuits of Medical Culture

In class: *Big Bucks, Big Pharma*

11.) April 18—Gender Studies

*Our Bodies, Our Selves* excerpts from first edition
Passau-Buck: “Caring vs. Curing” in *Socialization, Sexism, and Stereotyping: Women’s Issues in Nursing*
Ratcliff: *Women and Health: Power, Technology, Inequality and Conflict in a Gendered World* excerpts

In Class: *Business of Being Born*

12.) April 25—Religion and Spirituality

Koenig: Religion, Spirituality, and Medicine
Garces-Foley: Buddhism, Hospice, and the American Way of Dying
Giles and Miller: *The Arts of Contemplative Care* (selections)

Start *Sound and Fury*

13.) May 2— Disability Studies

Davis: Constructing Normalcy
Linton: Reassigning Meaning
Garland-Thomson: Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory
Edwards: Hearing Aids are Not Deaf

In Class: Finish Sound and Fury

14.) May 14—Disability Studies

Couser: Disability, Life Narrative, and Representation
Wade: “I Am Not One of the” and “Cripple Lullaby”
Taylor and Butler: Interdependence

In Class: Examined Life—Sunara Taylor and Judith Butler

***Final paper due***

Course Requirements

Grades are based on three parts: attendance/participation (20%) and 2 papers (40% each). Late papers are graded down. There will be an opportunity to rewrite the first paper if you desire. The attendance/participation grade is composed of weekly class attendance and participation.

On the days we do not have a film or guest lecturer, class will begin with a short lecture on the material for that week. We then move to round robin class discussion initiated by your selections from the material. To prepare for this part of the class please type a quote from each week’s readings which you have comments or questions (include page numbers so we can find your quotes). We will then go around the class reading and discussing the quotes selected. Your quotes for each half of the class are turned in with your papers.

The papers are 7 pages type written, double spaced. Please use the material from the class to develop the topic question I hand out. Back up your thesis with arguments and examples from the class readings (include internal citations with page numbers and a reference list at the end). A good paper demonstrates that you have integrated the material from the class discussions and readings and can use it to analyze your topic. Use the bulk of your energy reading closely and thinking seriously about the materials you have (rather than doing outside research). Also, be sure and give your paper a title.

The grading scale for the class will be as follows: 93-100% (A) 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 70-76 (C), 63-69 (D), and below (F).

Paper Topic One:

Based on our research, what are your reflections on humanizing healthcare?

Paper Topic Two:

The phrase “crisis in healthcare” generally refers to fiscal and administrative issues of escalating costs, insurance cut backs, and rising numbers of uninsured patients.
Considering the social, cultural, and political issues covered in the second half of class, how do you see the “crisis in healthcare?”