

Case Histories: patient and physician narratives of self and disease

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Class Time: Wednesday 6:30-830 via Zoom

Office Hours: by appointment, via Zoom

Disease is the great equalizer. We will all be patients eventually. But who are we to the physicians who encounter our pathological selves, who are we to ourselves, and who are doctors under those white coats? This class endeavors to use disease as a common ground to discuss case histories as autobiographical and biographical tools. We will read physician memoirs to better understand how they imagine themselves as people and professionals, and how they relate to their oddly narrative art--the act of writing is embedded in medical practice through case notes. We will read patient memoirs and think about the nature of pain, the ways in which disease shapes us and how we resist its warping, and think about the person behind the case histories. In short, this is a course that looks through both sides of the patient-physician mirror to try to grasp some very human truths.

The first part of the course focuses on the history of medicine, using scholarly articles from the history of medicine and patient and physician narratives to demonstrate both changes in medical practice and attitude and the constancy of patient and practitioner roles and struggles. The second part of the course is deeply modern—in fact, present—and includes modern patient and practitioner narratives combined with the words of practitioners and patients willing to give us their time. We will hear from a brave infectious diseases specialist who started the first HIV clinic in upstate NY, an HIV+ physician diagnosed in the 1980s who had to choose between his privacy and his profession, a pediatric cardiologist detailing the daily reality of working with very sick children, a large animal veterinarian who has spent his career coaxing horses and their humans back to life, a stage 4 bone cancer patient on living with untreatable cancer, and ... Colleen??

Readings: Online, listed in the syllabus and available via Blackboard

Means of Evaluation:

Meaningful and consistent class participation (demonstrating knowledge of assigned sources, engagement with speakers, willingness to be respectful of others' views while engaging in scholarly argument, ability to reference and effectively introduce relevant material from outside the course)-20%

10 short reviews of readings (Your choice of readings, no more than 1 single-spaced page each, the goal for scholarly works is to define the argument, discuss the evidence, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the argument and for literary or historical sources to consider how you would use the source in your own work)—30%

Final paper proposal: topic, primary source review, scholarly source review, introduction (no more than 5 pages)-10%

Final paper: 10-15 pages, topic of your choice, biography or scholarly analysis, brilliant- 40%

Week One: 8/25

Introductions

Week Two: 9/1 Early modern health and disease

Read: Hannah Newton, "Nature concocts and expels: The agents and processes of recovery from disease in early modern England," *Social History of Medicine* 28(3): 465-486.

Read: Lauren Kassell, "Casebooks in early modern England: Medicine, Astrology, and Written Records," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 88(4) Winter 2014: 595-625.

Jennifer Evans, "Patients, practitioners, and lodgers: Male sexual health patients' and their healers' use of location in early modern medical encounters" *Gender and History* 31(1) March 2019: 220-239.

Week Three: 9/8 No class

Week Four: 9/15 No class

Week Five: 9/22 Breast cancer-c18-20—Fanny Burney

Read/see: Fanny Burney Mastectomy Diary—read the transcript: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/letter-from-frances-burney-to-her-sister-esther-about-her-mastectomy>

Read: Heather Meek, "Frances Burney's Mastectomy Narrative and Discourses of Breast Cancer in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Literature and Medicine* (2017): 35(1) 27-45.

Read: excerpt from *A Darker Ribbon* re: breast cancer in the early 20th century

Week Six: 9/29 Early modern widwifery and pediatrics

Read: Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Diary of Martha Ballard* (Excerpts)

Hannah Newton, "Children's physic: medical perceptions and treatment of sick children in early modern England, ca. 1580-1720," *Social History of Medicine* December 2010 vol. 23(3):456-474.

Week Seven: 10/6 Early modern epidemics

Read: Caulfield, "The Great Throat Distemper of 1735-1740" part 2

Lawrence C. Kleinman, "To end an epidemics: lessons from the history of diphtheria," *JAMA* 1992-03-12, Vol.326 (11), p.773-777

Week Eight: 10/13 Modern Epidemics—encephalitis lethargica

Read: Oliver Sacks, M.D. *Awakenings* excerpts;

Robert Lopez-Alberola, et al, "Contemporary Encephalitis Lethargica: Phenotype, Laboratory Findings, and Treatment Outcomes," *Journal of Neurology* March 2009 vol. 256 (3): 396-404.

Watch: *Awakenings* (dir. Penny Marshall) available on Amazon

Week Nine: 10/20 Modern Epidemics—polio

Read: Maurice Becker, "polio narrative"

Judith Shaw Beatty, "My polio story is an inconvenient truth to those who refuse vaccines"; https://www.huffpost.com/entry/my-polio-story-is-an-inconvenient-truth-to-those-who-refuse-vaccines_b_57b22672e4b07184041270f6

Daniel J. Wilson, "Psychological Trauma and its Treatment in the Polio Epidemics," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* vol.82(4) Winter 2008:848-877.

Week Ten: 10/27 3 Modern Epidemics—AIDS

Speaker: Dr. William M. Valenti, Dept of Infectious Diseases, University of Rochester Medical Campus

Read: William M. Valenti, M.D., *AIDS: A Matter of Urgency A Doctor's Memoir*

Paul Monette, *On Borrowed Time: An AIDS Memoir* (NY: Mariner Books, 1998)

Week Eleven: 11/3 Modern Epidemics--AIDS

Speaker: Lawrence Stern, M.D.

Read: Ann Japenga, "The Secret" *Health* September 1992: 41-52.

Watch: "The Normal Heart" (available through amazon)

Week Twelve: 11/10 Modern Epidemics--AIDS

Speaker: Lawrence Stern, M.D.

Read: Ann Japenga, "The Secret" *Health* September 1992: 41-52.

Watch: "The Normal Heart" (available through amazon)

Week Thirteen: 11/17 Pediatrics

Speaker: Rae-Ellen Kavey, M.D.

Read: Excerpts Perri Klass, *Other Women's Children* (NY: Random House, 1990)

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving, no class

Week Fifteen: 12/1 Patienthood

Speaker: Bettina Drummond, Living with cancer

Week Sixteen: 12/8 Conclusions