MEDICINE AND THE HUMANITIES
Comparative Studies 305
Spring 2004

Monday and Wednesday, 11:30-1:18

Professor David Horn

Office Hours: Monday, 3:30-5:00 or by appointment, 308 Dulles.
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I. Course Description

This interdisciplinary course explores medical arts and sciences, concepts of illness and
disease, and representations of the human body in a range of cultural and historical contexts.
Topics include metaphors and images of the body, the meanings and symbolism constructed
around pathology (cancer, AIDS), the social consequences of "medicalizing" racial and sexual
differences, and the social concerns raised by new medical procedures. The goal of this course is
to introduce you to the comparative and critical traditions of the humanities, and to explore
their utility for the study of medical discourses, practices, and ethics. Like other courses in
Comparative Studies, it prepares you to explore the relations among systems of authoritative
knowledge, cultural assumptions, and forms of power. Finally, by bringing together texts from a
variety of humanistic genres and disciplines (literary criticism, history, poetry, cultural studies,
gender studies, cultural anthropology) as well as visual materials, it helps train you to think about
the possibilities and limits of particular theories, methods, and media.

II. Requirements

Class meetings will be devoted largely to careful consideration of the issues raised by the
texts and visual materials; it is therefore essential that you complete assignments before coming
to class. You will be evaluated on the basis of your attendance and participation in discussion
(10%), and on the basis of your performance on a midterm exam (30%), a 5-7 page paper (30%),
and a final exam (30%). Guidelines for the exams and paper will be discussed in class. Please
note that work completed after the due dates may not be evaluated.

III. Texts (available at SBX)

Paul Farmer, AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame
Shirley Lindenbaum and Margaret Lock, Knowledge, Power, and Practice
Audre Lorde, The Cancer Journals
Emily Martin, The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction
Susan Sontag, Illness as Metaphor
Photocopied articles (indicated by asterisk), available at Cop-Ez, Bricker Hall
IV. Schedule of Readings

A. Medicine and the Humanities

March 30  Introductions

B. Language and Medicine

April 1  Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, pp. 3-87
April 6  Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body*, pp. 3-67
April 8  Video: *The Miracle of Life* (Swedish Television/WGBH Boston, 1983)

C. Class, Culture, and Medicine

April 13  Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body*, pp. 71-155
April 15  Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body*, pp. 166-178

D. Doctors and Patients

April 20  Byron Good, "Learning Medicine": The Constructing of Medical Knowledge at Harvard Medical School," in *Knowledge, Power, and Practice*, pp. 81-107
April 22  Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*, pp. 9-77
April 27  In-class midterm exam

E. Mind and Body

May 6  * Susan Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture," in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (Boston:
Northeastern University Press, 1988), pp. 97-117

F. Disease and Difference


May 13    Farmer, AIDS and Accusation, pp. 1-32, 61-109

May 18    Farmer, AIDS and Accusation, pp. 110-120, 208-264

May 20    Video: Doctors, Liars, and Women, Jean Carlomusto and Maria Maggenti (Gay Men's Health Crisis), 1988

G. Science, Risk and “Choice”

May 25    TBA


Paper due

June 1    Rayna Rapp, “Accounting for Amniocentesis,” in Knowledge, Power and Practice, pp. 55-76

June 3    Conclusions and evaluations

June 8    Final exam, 7:30-9:18