

HLTH AGE 4J03: Narratives of Illness
Winter 2017

Instructor: Dr. Mat Savelli
E-mail: savellm@mcmaster.ca

Office: Kenneth Taylor Hall Rm 230
Office Hours: Wed, 3:30-6pm

Course Description: Increasingly, personal stories and experiences relating to experiencing disease, chronic illnesses, and disability are being recognized as fundamental to the study of health. This course asks students to examine narratives of illness through a variety of mediums, including film, literature, autobiography, poetry, music, blogging, diaries, and visual art. Beyond the narratives themselves, the course encourages students to consider the role that narrative plays both in how individuals experience illness, as well as how they interact with the medical system and other forms of health care. The course is discussion based, and students are expected to complete all of the weekly readings prior to coming to class.

Course Objectives: After the course, students should have a strong grasp on how illness narratives help to shape popular conceptions of health and professional approaches to care. They should come to appreciate the commonalities and differences across narratives, according to both narrative theme as well as the medium employed. They should develop a strong grasp of how narratives can be used to inform and create research-based knowledge, as well as how they may provide meaning for the individuals who craft these autobiographies. They should also develop an appreciation for how new types of illness narratives may differ from traditional storytelling relating to illness and disease.

Required Texts:

- 1) All materials are available on [Avenue to Learn](#).

Classes:

Wed Jan 4 - Introduction to Illness Narratives

Wed Jan 11 - Illness Narratives (secondary readings)

Readings: Frank, Narratives and Deep Illness; Williams, the Genesis of Chronic Illness; Bury, Chronic Illness as Biographical Disruption

Wed Jan 18 - Illness Narratives (secondary readings)

Readings: Carricaburu and Pierret, From Biographical Disruption to Biographical Reinforcement; Clark and Mishler, Attending to Patients' Stories; Charon, Novelization of the Body

Wed Jan 25 - Illness Narratives (secondary readings)

Readings: Readings: Bury, Illness Narratives: Fact or Fiction?; Atkinson, Narrative Turn or Blind Alle?; Woods, The Limits of Narrative

Wed Feb 1 – Cancer Stories

Readings: Teva Harrison's Three Ways to Disappear in *The Walrus*; Collection of cancer poetry; Hall, *Eleven Days*

Wed Feb 8 – Chronic and Contested Illnesses (**Annotated bibliography due**)

Readings: Contested illnesses in photo form; O'Rourke, *What's Wrong with Me?*; Altman, *Life with Migraines* podcast

Wed Feb 15 – Mental Illness

Readings: Binge pilot and interview w/ Angela Gulner; Tauchert, *Notes from My Psychosis*; Lukach, *My Lovely Wife in a Psych Ward*

Wed Feb 22 – No class (reading week)

Wed Mar 1 – LGBTQA Health and Illness Narratives (**Outline due**)

Reading: Sievewright, *Queer in Common Country*; Morrissey, *Remedial Asexuality*; Lorde, *Cancer Journals*

Wed Mar 8 – Disability and Difference

Reading: *Rolling* (documentary film); the comedy of Greg Walloch; Steedly, *the Unspeakable Gift*

Wed Mar 15 – Addiction

Reading: Roberge, *Liar*; Heldman, *My Rehab: Coming of Age in Purgatory*; Fiorello, *Hell and Back*

Wed Mar 22 – Caregiver and Family Narratives

Reading: Rieff, *Illness as More than Metaphor*; Curtis, *Small Mercies*; Kiper, *The Deviousness of Dementia*

Wed Mar 29 – Medical Uses of Narratives (**Final essay due**)

Readings: Sacks, *Man Who Mistook His Wife*; Kleinman, *the Illness Narratives*

Wed April 5 – Final Class wrap-up

Grade breakdown:

Annotated Bibliography: 10%

Essay Outline: 10%

Essay or Illness Narrative: 35%

Presentation: 20%

Weekly Participation: 25%

Annotated Bibliography: In preparation for their major essay, students are required to complete an annotated bibliography. Please be sure to use APA formatting for the bibliography and provide a short summary for each source and discuss how you will be using it within your major essay. You should include a MINIMUM of eight sources at this stage, although it is expected that students will continue to consult new sources while completing their essay. Annotations should be no longer than 1-2 bullet points covering the main argument of the piece and how you intend to use it for your final assignment.

Final Assignment Outline: Students are required to submit a 2 page preliminary outline of their final paper or assignment in point-form. It should outline how you plan to introduce your subject, your major argument (thesis), and how you plan to support your thesis. The outline should be fully cited! For those choosing to create an illness narrative, they need to outline the primary arc of the narrative, explain the format that it will take, and discuss how the written component of the assignment will incorporate secondary sources.

Weekly Participation: Class attendance and participation are mandatory requirements to succeed in this course. Classes primarily take the form of discussion, and students will be graded for the quality of their contributions. Students should aim to ground their comments in both course material and real world experience. Although some people will naturally speak more than others, it is important that all students aim for regular contributions to the discussion. It is critical that students stay on top of the reading material in order to ensure a good class discussion.

Presentation: Each student will be responsible for leading a 30 minute portion of class. During this time, students should provide a critical summary of the reading/narrative assigned for that week. This should NOT simply be a summary of what the narrative is about; instead, students should ground their presentation in the broader context of discussions and understandings of narratives of health and illness. In addition to analyzing their material, students should prepare questions for the rest of the class. Sign up for topics begins during the first class.

Essay: Students are required to complete a 10-12 page, double spaced final paper in APA format on any subject relating to illness narratives. For example, you might choose to focus on a specific medium or instead investigate a particular theme across different genres/media. The paper should incorporate both primary materials (the narratives under discussion) as well as secondary material (scholarly work on illness narratives). You may write on any topic of your choosing, but ALL topics should be cleared with the instructor well in advance.

Illness Narrative: Rather than a formal essay, students may also choose to create an illness narrative. You may use any medium you desire for this project, but all assignments must include a written portion that incorporates secondary literature on illness narratives. Those students choosing to do this type of assignment **MUST** obtain instructor permission in advance.

Other Crucial Course Notes

- 1) Do not email the course instructor via Avenue to Learn. Direct all communication to my McMaster email address.
- 2) The use of laptops and cell phones is prohibited in this course.
- 3) Students making use of MSAF's will have to complete all assignments at a later date. In other words, there is no chance that the grade for missed assignments or tests will be tacked onto the final exam.
- 4) Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day.
- 5) There will be absolutely no leniency on plagiarism. Don't copy and paste anything directly into your essay...even if you cite it!

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact the Department of Health, Aging & Society at 905.525.9140 ext. 27227 or hasdept@mcmaster.ca.

Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities: Students who require academic accommodations must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652, or by email at sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation for Students with

Disabilities: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-

67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Avenue to Learn: Course material will be posted on Avenue to Learn. Please check the site often to keep informed of important course information or announcements.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy: Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link

Academic Integrity

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.

3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.