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COM6066/GMH6066
MEDICINE AND ETHICS IN GLOBAL LITERATURE

Credit Value: 15.00

Level: 6

Semester: 2

Time and venue: Mondays, 2-4pm, Bancroft 2.41

Module Organiser: Dr Shital Pravinchandra

Office Hours: Mondays, 11-1pm or by appointment (Arts One, 119B)

Contact: MS Teams and email: s.pravinchandra@qmul.ac.uk

Description

This module discusses contemporary literature from around the globe that invites us to think critically about how human lives and relationships have been changed by medical and technological developments and the complex ethical questions that arise in their wake. While biomedical developments dazzle us with their achievements and possibilities, they also raise difficult questions about ethical decision-making and about where the limits of scientific and medical progress should lie.

Our readings will explore the limits, limitations, goals and responses of medical treatment, and will be framed around three major blocks:

- 1) Humanitarian Healthcare
- 2) Indigenous Communities and Healthcare
- 3) Doctor and Patient Relationships

In each block we will read one long piece of literature (a novel or a piece of literary nonfiction) as well as shorter literary works (short stories, poems, extracts of literary journalism) and critical scholarship from a range of disciplines. Throughout the module, we will reflect on issues of distribution, cultural situatedness and on competing definitions of (medical) care.

BOOKS FOR PURCHASE (in order in which we will read them on the module):

Jonny Steinberg, *Three Letter Plague – A Young Man’s Journey through a Great Epidemic*. (London: Vintage, 2008)

Patricia Grace, *Baby No-Eyes* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998)*

*Please note: this title can be expensive or slow to arrive when purchased second-hand. Please be sure to order it asap

J.M. Coetzee, *The Life and Times of Michael K* (London: Vintage, 2004)

Important note about student engagement

I have deliberately avoided assigning too many novels for this course: I know from experience that many of you struggle to finish them, which makes for a stilted discussion in class. There are, however, three lengthy works that I ask you to read on the course. There is only one 'dense' novel – *Baby No-Eyes*. The novel by Coetzee is short but meaty. Jonny Steinberg's work is literary nonfiction, and I have only assigned about a third of it as mandatory reading. I think this is a very reasonable compromise, and so I expect you to acquire all these books and read them. All other material is available online, or on QM+.

As you will have noticed, this course is run as a two-hour seminar slot. I plan to spend 30-40 minutes speaking to you at the outset, in an informal lecture contextualising the readings. During this informal lecture, I will ask questions, accept interruptions and encourage interaction. The rest of the seminar will be spent on in-depth discussion of the assigned readings. The format will not work unless you come to class prepared, having done the readings and thought carefully about the questions I will ask you to consider in advance of each class.

My expectations of students on this module

I expect you to:

- Read all mandatory materials in preparation for each session
- Be respectful of each other during class discussions
- Speak up in class and be prepared to share your views on the texts we read
- Let me know if you will miss class

What students can expect of me:

I will:

- Monitor attendance
- Respond to emails within 2 working days
- Provide you with timely feedback on all assessment items (within 14 working days)
- Be available for one-to-one consultations during office hours or at other mutually convenient times

Assessment information:

1. Reading Responses x 3 (10% each = 30% total): 3 reading responses (300 words each) to be submitted at the end of each block of the course.

Reading Responses will be due in:

Week 4 Thursday 16th February, 23.55

Week 8 Thursday 16th March, 23.55

Week 11 Thursday, 6th April, 23.55

Questions will be provided. There will be three questions to choose from for each reading response.

A sample Reading Response along with a rationale for the exercise has been uploaded on QM+. Please check the tab labelled “Assessment Information” on QM+ (at the very top of the page)

2. Reflection Exercise (20%): to be submitted at any point in the semester, but no later than the penultimate day of term (23.55, Thursday 13th April)

Guidelines and a rationale for this exercise have been uploaded on QM+. Please check the tab labelled “Assessment Information” on QM+ (at the very top of the page).

3. Essay (50%): 2500 words. Due: 23.55, 2nd May 2023

This essay will ask you to compare at least two of the texts studied on the course. Essay questions will be provided.

MODULE OUTLINE

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION – ORDINARY MEDICINE?

Mandatory reading:

- Atul Gawande, “Introduction.” From *Being Mortal – Illness, Medicine and What Matters in the End* (London: Profile Books, 2014)
- Sharon Kaufman, “Introduction.” From *Ordinary Medicine – Extraordinary Treatments, Longer Lives, and Where to Draw the Line* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015)

Suggested Reading:

- Tony Hope, *Medical Ethics – A very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Frantz Fanon, “Medicine and Colonialism” in *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965)

BLOCK 1: HUMANITARIANISM HEALTHCARE

WEEK 2: REFUGEES AND THE ILLNESS CLAUSE

Mandatory reading:

- Miriam Ticktin, “Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France.” In *American Ethnologist* 33(1) 2006, pp.33-49.
- Chimamanda Adichie, “The American Embassy.” In *This Thing Around Your Neck* (London: Fourth Estate, 2009).
- Hassan Blasim, “The Reality and the Record.” In *The Madman of Freedom Square* (trans. Jonathan Wright) (London: Comma Press, 2009)

Suggested reading:

- Agnes Wooley, “Narrating the ‘Asylum Story’: Between Literary and Legal Story-Telling.” *Interventions* 19(3), 2017.
- Miriam Ticktin, *Casualties of Care – Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011)

WEEK 3: MSF AND AIDS CARE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Mandatory reading:

- Jonny Steinberg, *Three Letter Plague*, “Preface” and **next yr add “testing day”** the following chapters from Part Two: ‘Garden and Home’

- ‘Magic Pills’
- ‘On the Outer Edge’
- ‘The Fence Around AIDS’
- ‘Kate Marrandi’
- ‘AIDS Needle’
- Peter Redfield, excerpts from *Life in Crisis – the Ethical Journey of Doctors without Borders* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013).

Please read the following:

- Chapter 2, A Secular Value of Life
Focus on the following sections (highlighted in yellow on the PDF):
‘December 1971’;
‘A Being Not Meant to Suffer’;
‘Secular Humanitarianism and Sacred Life’
- Chapter 6, The Problem of Triage
Focus on the section entitled ‘Death and Life’
- Chapter 7, The Longue Durée of Disease
Focus on section entitled:
‘A Human question’
‘Crisis Beyond Emergencies’

Suggested Reading:

- Peter Redfield, *Life in Crisis – the Ethical Journey of Doctors without Borders* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013).
- Claire Laurier Decoteau, *Ancestors and Retrovirals – The Biopolitics of HIV/AIDS in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Rosemary Jolly, “Fictions of the Human Right to Health: Writing Against the Postcolonial Exotic in Western Medicine” in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*, (eds Sarah Atkinson et al) (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

WEEK 4: TRIAGE AND REFUSAL

Mandatory Reading:

- Phaswane Mpe, selection of poems from *Brooding Clouds* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2008). Please read the following poems:

‘HIV Nights’
‘Elegy For the Trio’
‘loveLife’
- Vinh-Kim Nguyen, “Introduction.” *The Republic of Therapy: Triage and Sovereignty in West Africa’s Time of AIDS* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010)
- Look closely at images from loveLife Campaign in Kylie Thomas’s article (see below)

- Kylie Thomas, “A Better Life for Some: the loveLife Campaign and HIV/AIDS in South Africa.” In *Agenda*, 18:62, pp.29-35, 2004.

Suggested Reading:

- Didier Fassin, *When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).
- Neville Hoad, “The Intellectual, the Archive, and the Pandemic: Thabo Mbeki’s AIDS Blues” in *African Intimacies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

READING RESPONSE 1 DUE ON THURSDAY OF WEEK 4 at 23.55

BLOCK 2: INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND HEALTH CARE

WEEK 5: INDIGENOUS STORIES

Mandatory Reading:

- Patricia Grace, *Baby No-Eyes* – Chapters 1-18
- Daniel Justice, “Introduction.” *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2018).

Suggested Reading:

- Alice Te Punga Somerville, *Once Were Pacific—Māori Connections to Oceania*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016)
- Michelle Keown, *Postcolonial Pacific Writing: Representations of the Body* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005)

WEEK 6: THE HUMAN GENOME DIVERSITY PROJECT

Mandatory Reading:

- Patricia Grace, *Baby No-Eyes* – finish novel
- Clare Barker, “‘The Ancestors Within’: Genetics, Biocolonialism, and Medical Ethics in Patricia Grace’s *Baby No-Eyes*.” In *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* 7(2), 2013, pp.141–158

Suggested Reading:

- Jenny Reardon, *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005)

- Joanna Radin, “When Futures Arrive: Lives After ‘Time’” in her *Life on Ice: A History of New Uses for Old Blood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017)

WEEK 7: NO CLASS (READING WEEK)

WEEK 8: ANONYMOUS CARE

Mandatory Reading:

- Norma Dunning, “Kakoot.” In *Annie Muktuk and Other Stories* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2017).
- Lisa Stevenson, “Introduction.” From *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

Suggested Reading:

- Mark Rifkin, “Indigenising Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the ‘Peculiar’ Status of Native Peoples” in *Cultural Critique* 73(1), pp.88-124.
- Kevin Patterson, *Consumption* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2008).

READING RESPONSE 2 DUE ON THURSDAY OF WEEK 8 at 23.55

BLOCK 3: DOCTOR PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS

WEEK 9: THE OUTCAST

Mandatory Reading:

- J.M. Coetzee, *The Life and Times of Michael K* – Read Part One.
- Derek Attridge, selections from *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) Ch 2, ‘Against Allegory’ – parts 1, 2 and 4.

Suggested Reading:

- David Attwell, *J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993)

WEEK 10: UNDOING MASTERY?

Mandatory Reading:

- J.M. Coetzee, *The Life and Times of Michael K* – finish novel

- Julietta Singh, “Posthumanitarian Fictions” (p.95-114). In *Unthinking Mastery* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

Suggested Reading:

- Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

WEEK 11: THE CULTURE OF WESTERN MEDICINE

Mandatory Reading:

- Anne Fadiman, “Preface” and the following chapters from *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down* (New York: Noonday Press, 1997):
- 1-8
- Anne Fadiman, “‘The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down’: Epilepsy and the Hmong” *Epilepsy & Behavior* 1 (1)2000, pp.S3-S8

Suggested Reading:

- M.E. Chiu, “Medical, Racist, and Colonial Constructions of Power in Anne Fadiman’s *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*” in *Hmong Studies Journal* 5 (2004-5)
- Anne Fadiman, chs 17-18 of *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*

READING RESPONSE 3 DUE ON THURSDAY OF WEEK 8 at 23.55

WEEK 12: ESSAY WORKSHOPS

No class this week due to bank holiday: instead, I will schedule individual, one-to-one 15-20 minute consultations with you on Mon 17-Tues 18th April to discuss your ideas for the essay.