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### ENG 1009G-150: Stories Matter

Terri Fredrick

*Eastern Illinois University*

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## ***Because I could not stop for death: The Body, Illness, & the Stories They Tell***



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### **Partner High School Instructors:**

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### **Texts**

Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal* (2015)

Caitlin Doughty, *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*  
(2014)

Jonathan Gottschall, *The Storytelling Animal*  
(2012)

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

Richard Preston, *The Hot Zone* (1994)

*Outbreak* (Dir. by W. Petersen, 1995)

*Contagion* (Dir. by S. Soderbergh, 2011)

*Girl, Interrupted* (Dir. by J. Mangold, 1999)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)

Additional short stories & nonfiction excerpts

### **Requirements**

Unit 1 narrative assignment 10%

Unit 2 analytical paper 20%

Unit 3 team presentation 15%

Unit 4 reflective paper 15%

Final exam 15%

Response papers, quizzes, posts 25%

### **Graduate Assistants for this Course:**

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### **Course Description**

As part of the Humanities segment of EIU's General Education program, English 1009G offers rigorous reading and writing instruction as it promotes "an intellectual foundation for students' future academic, professional, and personal lives."

The selected theme for this course is Health & Medicine. This course investigates the vibrant, fundamental ways that humanities and medical/health studies complement each other's focus on health, illness, and the complexity of what it means to be human—to confront our mortality.

Through fiction, non-fiction, and film and a variety of writing projects, students will develop critical thinking skills alongside an appreciation of cultural and historical differences toward such topics as death and dying, wellness/illness, patient-professional relationships, medical technologies, epidemics and contagious diseases, and mental health.

This course primarily involves reading, discussion and writing. You should prepare for activities by completing the reading carefully, taking notes, identifying important passages, and participating in all activities in a timely way.

### Minimum Technological Requirements

- Reliable access to the Internet
- Ability to navigate D2L (EIU's learning management system)
- Ability to read documents using Word, PowerPoint, and Adobe Acrobat
- Ability to create and post documents using Microsoft Word or a comparable format
- Ability to record and post a short video of yourself

If you need help with any of these technological requirements, please contact me ASAP.

### Grading Scale

90–100	A
80–89.9	B
70–79.9	C
60–69.9	D
0–59.9	F

### Course Goals

1. Read and understand the perspectives represented by a diverse collection of texts that represent plural traditions, historical eras, and/or literary genres.
2. Analyze texts and develop arguments from a series of different reading experiences in formal and informal written assignments and essay exams.
3. Develop written communication skills by practicing various aspects of the writing process (e.g., drafting, outlining, and revising based on instructor feedback) throughout the semester in formal written assignments.
4. Listen and respond articulately to the ideas and perspectives represented by instructor and peers.
5. Reflect on the value of a text for yourself as an individual and for the world in which we live.
6. Examine the value of expression and creativity, especially in literature and literary analysis.

### Academic Honesty

Students are responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University's regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism, even if unknowing or accidental, can result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Please note the English Department's statement on plagiarism: Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me to clarify.

## Course Etiquette

In an online course, most communication is done through written messages either in private posts or public discussions. It is important that students in online courses be especially sensitive to how messages and sentiment are communicated and received. Accordingly, I abide by EIU's policy on acceptable etiquette for online courses, which is as follows:

Eastern Illinois University (EIU) is committed to open, frank, and insightful dialogue in all of its courses. Diversity has many manifestations, including diversity of thought, opinion, and values. We encourage all learners to be respectful of that diversity and to refrain from inappropriate commentary. Should such inappropriate comments occur, the instructor will intervene, removing inappropriate content. The instructor may also recommend university disciplinary action. Learners as well as faculty should be guided by common sense and basic etiquette. The following are good guidelines to follow:

- Never post, transmit, promote, or distribute content that is known to be illegal.
- Never post harassing, threatening, or embarrassing comments. If you disagree with someone, respond to the subject, not the person. Conflicts of ideas are encouraged, while conflicts of feelings are discouraged.
- Never post content that is harmful, abusive; racially or culturally insensitive, or religiously offensive, vulgar; sexually explicit, or otherwise potentially offensive.

### **Remember you are communicating with real people.**

Students and instructors in your course have feelings, lives, jobs, families and a myriad of other issues that you may know little about. Once you have finished writing something, and before you send it, re-read it looking at your words from someone else's perspective. How would they see it? Could it be misinterpreted? Could you rephrase to make it clearer or more on topic?

### **Write clearly & professionally.**

In any course-related communication (emails, chats, discussions), use standard proper English with correct grammar. Using slang, errors in mechanics, and shortcuts maybe difficult for others to understand. Avoid ALL CAPS, bolding and underlining. It could be misinterpreted. Avoid offensive language. Also make sure to sign your name to any post.

### **Be kind and ethical.**

Do not belittle other students or the instructor. You may disagree with what someone says, but focus on the issue, not the person. Behave online as you would in person. Be forgiving of the mistakes of others.

### **Help others.**

If someone asks a question, answer it if you are sure of the correct answer or if you have insight that could be helpful.

## Additional Course Policies

### Deadlines

Each assignment and activity will have a deadline (date and time). Since this class is held online, please plan to submit assignments by the deadline even if you do not attend school that day. Late projects will be docked 5% or 2 points, whichever is greater, per day until they are submitted.

All four of the unit projects and the final exam must be submitted in order to pass the course.

### Prompt, professional communication

Online communication is common at universities and within many professional organizations, and this class will offer you plenty of opportunity to practice. Participation looks different in an online environment than a face-to-face environment, but active, positive interaction remains an important part of successful classes. To that end, I direct your attention to the following course policies:

- Meet deadlines established for the course, including those your team sets in the Unit 3 project.
- Log into D2L at regular intervals (at least four times per week) to see if there are emails, discussion board posts, or assignment feedback that you should respond to.
- Write all class correspondence (e.g., emails, discussion posts, text messages) professionally. I may provide you with (private) feedback on the style, tone, content, and organization of your emails, texts, discussion board posts, etc. To help you get started, here's an old, but still useful, blog post of [tips for emailing a professor](#).
- Communicate regularly with classmates and course instructors. If you receive a message but you cannot immediately provide what has been requested, send an acknowledgment that you have received the message and indicate *when* you will provide the requested information or material.

## Units of Study

### **Unit 1: *Narrative Medicine: How and Why We Tell Stories* (Weeks 1–3)**

This unit focuses why and how we tell stories as humans, identifying how the practices and discourses of the human body (medicine and health) closely aligns with the practice of the humanities — the constructing and telling of stories. Students will read a variety of excerpts of contemporary thinkers (from health and humanities) on the importance of narratives and the importance of “listening” to those narratives. Most importantly, students will become acquainted with “how” a story is told, not just what it says.

### **Unit 2: *Death is Normal: Technology, Death, and the Human Body* (Weeks 4–7)**

This unit focuses on the matrix of death, mortality, and technology as it studies a historical text (Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*) alongside a contemporary narrative (Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*). Students will also read excerpts from writers such as Atul Gawande, Caitlin Doughty, and Paul Kalanithi.

### **Unit 3: *I Contain Multitudes: Contagion, Viruses, and Metaphors* (Weeks 8–11)**

This unit studies a variety of fictional and non-fictional contagion narratives, studying the role of narratives in how we use metaphors to talk about disease. We will read excerpts from contagion stories alongside how professionals describe disease and contagion. We will also look at cinematic portrayals of disease and contagion.

### **Unit 4: *I’m Depressed: Mind, Memory, and Trauma* (Weeks 12–15)**

In this unit, students will read non-fictional accounts of two different ways health is problematized in contemporary society, focusing in particular on mental health and related institutions. The central text of this unit shows the collision between medicine and law, as it profiles our depictions of motherhood, mental health, and gender.