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## HIC 2190G-099 Introduction to the Health & Medical Humanities

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*Eastern Illinois University*

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**HIC 2100/2190G-001/099**  
**INTRODUCTION TO THE HEALTH & MEDICAL HUMANITIES**  
**(98671 AND 98672)**  
**“CONTAGION & VACCINATION”**  
**FALL 2023**  
**3 CREDIT HOURS**

Dr. CC Wharram  
Email: ccwharram@eiu.edu  
Office: Booth 1222; Coleman 3010  
Office Hours: TTh 9:30-12:15 (Booth):  
12:45-15:30 (in 3290 Coleman)

Course Information:  
TTh 15:30-16:45  
Sections: 001 and 099  
Room: Coleman 3290

**THE CATALOGUE DESCRIPTION:** This course introduces students to the Health & Medical Humanities, integrating the study of medicine and health with the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Topics may include: the history of medicine; health-care policy and bio-politics; considerations of race, gender, and socio-economic status; narrative medicine; and the roles of music, visual arts, theatre, and literature in health and medicine. Prerequisite: Admission to the University Honors Program. WI

**THE *REAL* DESCRIPTION:** Each version of this introductory course centers on a particular problem in health and/or medicine. During the introductory period (usually Weeks 2-4), an exemplary text in the field of the medical humanities will introduce students up to new ways of thinking about health and medical issues, and the topics to be addressed during the remainder of the semester. For this class, we will read Anne Fadiman’s *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* of 2012. This text foregrounds the role of cultural sensitivity in making informed decisions, and will help us recognize and focus on the value of the study of cultural diversity and communication in the fields of health and medicine.

During the remainder of the course, we will be introduced to the particular problem or issue for this version of the course. For this semester, we will concentrate on “Contagion and Vaccination,” since this topic links to many recent and current controversies and problems in health and medicine, and society and technology. This course will trace the movement from “engrafting” to “vaccination” in the course of the eighteenth century, examining ways to look at “contagion” not merely as a threat to the human body, but also as a means to strengthen and diversify the body’s negotiation of an expanded ecology. Focusing on smallpox inoculation, and later cowpox vaccination, allows for us to address the following topics in an introductory HMH course:

- The advent of international medicine—smallpox inoculation was, in fact, a traditional healing practice in Turkey (as well as China and Africa) and was imported from there into Western Europe;

- The role of women in science, and the key figure of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who brought the practice to Britain;
- The importance of language in our understanding of the human body, “inoculation” being a metaphor of the Turkish language, referring to the horticultural practice of “engrafting”;
- The connection of ideas of horticulture and “improvement” to burgeoning conceptions of private property (through the works of John Locke), and the critique of “private property” propagated by advocates of inoculation;
- The role of class in the history of smallpox inoculation—at first reserved for the wealthy aristocracy, but gradually spreading to the manual-laboring classes through the work of the Suttons in the 1760s and 70s;
- The significance of Locke in (especially) American political history, and the role of “property rights” in the legal histories of vaccinations and abortion, among others;
- The crucial role of cheaper forms of publication that gave rise to hundreds of treatises, pamphlets, and editorials arguing for and against the inoculation, often through the lens of religious doctrine and often expressing cultural openness on the one hand, and profound xenophobia on the other;
- The history of the science of immunology and the role of the concept of contagion within that history in the eighteenth century;
- The ways that eighteenth-century immunology can assist in understanding key “biopolitical” and “immunitary” thinkers (Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Peter Sloterdijk, Roberto Esposito)

This particular topic, centered on events in the eighteenth century, encourages us to approach the general field of health and/or medical humanities from philosophical and historical perspectives, from literary and cultural analysis, through linguistics and global studies, and through the intertwining histories of medicine and law. Moreover, twenty-first-century conceptions of “emotional contagion,” so clearly evident in current research in both psychology and economics find their genesis in the “Werther Effect” springing from Goethe’s novel of 1774, specifically with regard to the (potential) suggestibility of suicide, but more widely seen in examples of both viral media and market contagion. Anthropological analysis of such phenomena also provides insight into contemporary “health trends” through the recognition that ideas, like diseases, can also be contagious.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

In this course, we will aim (1) to *acquire knowledge of concepts in key current debates in the health and medical humanities*. As we (2) *foster a critical consciousness of cultural factors in health matters*, we will work (3) to *advance our self-awareness of cultural attitudes and biases*, enhancing our ability to relate to others. Through our focus on the topic of “contagion and vaccination,” we will (4) *expand our understanding of the various approaches across disciplines that can be used in addressing issues in health and medicine*. Finally, the course will (5) *develop skills in critical thinking, research, and written presentation* through its various assignments and class discussions.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS**

### **AT TEXTBOOK RENTAL:**

Fadiman, Anne. (2012). *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*.

Gawande, Atul. (2014). *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*.

Goethe, J.W. von. (1779). *Werther*.

Hume, David. *Selected Essays*.

Uriarte, Maximilian (2016). *The White Donkey*.

### **OTHER VALUABLE OBJECTS AND/OR ABSTRACT QUALITIES:**

Paper for writing down notes and ideas; a sense of humor; a willingness to think, to listen, and to take chances both in speaking and writing.

### **SCHEDULING CAVEAT:**

Many of the activities for this class are contingent on our ability to meet with professors from varying disciplines across the social sciences, the arts, and humanities. Because of various circumstances, scheduling will be challenging for these activities. Similarly, it is possible that we will have absences due to COVID infections and quarantining. Please be patient with your colleagues, with me, and with yourself during this period of time.

### **ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION:**

Class Participation: 15%

Response Papers 50%, likely including

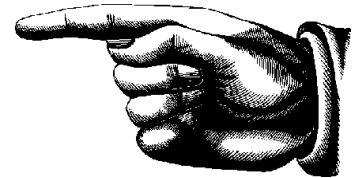
\*Visual Analysis Response Paper: 10%

\*Applied Theatre Response: 10%

Midterm Exam (take-home): 10%

Final Research Project and Presentation: 20%

Final Exam 5%



\*These assignments are contingent on scheduling; that is, COVID-19 or other factors may interfere. If so, these will be replaced with similar response papers.

### **GRADING SCALE:**

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

**RESPONSE PAPERS: 50%**

I will be asking you to write out “responses” to our class discussions during **at least** 7 of the 15 weeks of the semester. You must write a response to the first week’s discussion, just to get you started. These responses should be written well (that is, you should think about them deeply and revise them after completing a first draft), and they should at times include reference—*by name*—to other students’ ideas expressed in class. You will submit these responses at the end of the week (any time from the end of class on Friday to the end of the weekend) to a folder in our class D2L page. (I would like to spend my Mondays reading—and assessing—your responses, so if you get them done Sunday-night-slash-wee-hours-of-Monday, that’s fine.) Responses should be a minimum of 450 words, but you may write as much as you like. If you find yourself engaged in a particular topic, and you write an awful lot, please do tell me that you got carried away because the topic was so interesting for you, and ask me if maybe it could count as two responses. That seems fair, doesn’t it?

**QUIZZES: 0%**

I may give you quizzes throughout the semester to track your reading, and your retention of important facts and content. If your reading practice is such that you often forget the things you read days or even hours after you read them, then I suggest two things: 1) change your reading practice, and 2) complete your readings at least twice—once for basic comprehension, and twice for retention of the main ideas and facts. If I had a magic elixir to give you that would help you remember everything you read, I would give it to you. We will, however, discuss in class some of the ways you can improve *how* you read.

**MIDTERMS AND FINAL: 15%**

There will be one midterm exam in this class, worth 10% (to be written at home), and a final, worth 5% of your grade. The midterm will involve you writing out that you understand some of the key ideas we have covered in the first half of the semester. The final exam will ask you to comment on some of the facets of the course that you will take with you into future years.

**(HONORS) FINAL PROJECT: 20%**

Those of you who are honors students are required to write a sustained research paper on a topic you will arrange with me during the course of the semester. Those of you not taking this course for honors credit will write a significantly shorter, yet important paper. Part of the assessment for this paper will include a project proposal, and a brief presentation of your work. This presentation will be informal and is intended solely to give you an opportunity to hone your skills in a friendly environment. That is, the presentation is required, but not graded. We all want to hear about what you are working on, thinking about, and/or some of the discoveries you have made.

As we all know, success in learning is more about one’s attitude than one’s skills. To succeed in this course, your biggest assets will be an abiding curiosity about ideas unfamiliar or new to you and the desire to succeed. Meeting all deadlines, working hard, and having a positive attitude when facing challenges are key drivers for successful learning. If a reading feels “boring” or “too hard,” I encourage you to embrace that feeling, and recognize it as a spur to better yourself. For your responses, always focus on finding something you want to say—something that the world needs to hear.

**PARTICIPATION:**

In this class, I want us to think of learning as a collaborative enterprise. The time we spend together is our opportunity to exchange ideas and create a community. At the end of the semester when I reflect on your participation (and the grade I will give you for “participation”), I will consider not only how often you contributed to class discussions, but the quality of those comments. You should feel encouraged to ask questions and test out ideas. No question is stupid. New thoughts and insights would never come if people were always afraid to be wrong. That being said, difference of opinion should be recognized as intellectual debate, and paying attention to the ideas of others and engaging with them honestly and productively is paramount. Therefore, **I expect a high level of commitment in class, so checking your notifications, surfing, sleeping, etc., will greatly reduce your facility to participate productively in this class.**

Because I am convinced, based on clear research evidence and my own experience, that screen technologies distract not only the users themselves, but also other students, resulting in poorer learning outcomes, I do not allow the use of laptops in this classroom unless we need them to access electronic texts. More generally, I want to communicate to you that instructors at EIU will have various policies, but you have the right to make the best decision that will help you succeed at university, and that decision is this: you should consider leaving your phone in your room. If you can’t do that, you should promise yourself that for every class, you will put your phone in a place where it will be inaccessible to you and inaudible for the entire class.

**ABOUT OFFICE HOURS:**

I like meeting with you in office hours, and at other times if you are unable to meet during my scheduled times. I will insist on meeting you at least once, and likely more, but please do not hesitate to let me know that you would like to meet.

**RESTROOMS (OR, AS WE SAY BACK HOME, “WASHROOMS”)**

There are a few first-year students in this class, so I should mention that you do not need to ask me to be excused for the washroom, or for any other reason. If you leave the room during class, there is no doubt a good reason, and I don’t need to know what it is. I think it’s also fair to add that if you disappear for more than a few minutes, everyone will be wondering what happened to you.

Also, and because this is important, I want you to know that the closest all-gender restroom to our class is on the 2nd floor of Coleman Hall, directly under the main English Dept. office. This restroom is relatively newly designated as gender inclusive and has a lockable door and two stalls. Gendered restrooms are located on every floor in Coleman Hall. There is an all-gender facility in Booth Library on the 3rd floor.

There is a map of gender-inclusive restrooms at EIU at <https://www.eiu.edu/lgbtqa/all-gender-restrooms.php>; please note that this map is not up-to-date, and the Coleman Hall restroom is not listed. It is, nonetheless, clearly labeled “gender inclusive.”

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance, punctuality, and meeting deadlines** are all part of academic life. Coming to class is part of your obligation to your academic career and to your community, just as it is when you have an “official job.” In other words, please do come to class. Students who miss class usually have great difficulty passing this or any other university course, or, for some of you, maintaining “honors” status. For this reason, missing more than five classes—which constitutes more than 20% of class time for this course—will result in your receiving an “F” for the class. You should not interpret this policy as “allowing for”—or “encouraging”—five missed classes! Every class you miss reduces the amount of time you spend learning together with others. If you find yourself in a situation that is causing you to miss classes, please discuss the situation with me as soon as possible, and we will work on finding ways for you to remain in the course, if we can.

**All major writing assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.**

## PRONOUNS

To address the issues of preferred-gender pronouns (PGPs), I cite (with appropriate changes) an [editorial by undergraduate student Christiana M. Ziao](#): “I personally take any pronouns. But people by and large are uncomfortable with that idea, even though ‘any’ literally means you can’t get it wrong, so I often need to qualify my PGPs as ‘any pronouns — people generally use [he/his],’ since I have a [man’s] body and a [man’s] face and I know people are most comfortable using [he/his] to refer to me. As you might imagine, that’s a little long to fit on the end of my display name in Zoom.”

## COLLEGE CONDUCT

EIU’s composition director Timothy Taylor wrote following guidelines. I think they offer solid advice, but I have edited his suggestions slightly, in order to reflect my own voice and enhance a few points.

### **Guidelines for Any College Course:**

1. Come to class on time and stay the entire period.
2. Bring texts, paper, and writing utensils.
3. When we discuss a reading or writing assignment, have the materials in front of you.
4. When we are engaged in course discussions, be prepared to contribute, revise your opinions, and compose your ideas articulately. You don’t always have to talk, but listening is a must.
5. Respect others’ opinions and be open to them, even if you disagree. And it is okay to disagree, with your peers and with me.
6. Even though it is sometimes very tempting, do not carry on side conversations with other students when the instructor or a student has the floor during class.
7. General rudeness and disrespect, to each other or to me, will not and *should* not be tolerated by any of us.
8. No profanity (with obvious exceptions). We will speak more about this in class.
9. If you are sleeping, you are giving everyone else in the class an impression that you probably don’t want them to have.
11. Phones. Screens of any kind. Different instructors will have various policies, but you have the right to make **the best decision that will help you succeed at university**, and that decision is this: **you should leave your phone in your room**. If you can’t do that, you should promise yourself that for every class, you will put your phone in a place where it will be inaccessible to you and inaudible for the entire class. We will speak more about this in class.
12. Listen to the little voice in your head that tells you that it’s important to get enough sleep, to avoid addictive behaviors and actions of all kinds, to eat healthy foods even when more tempting options are available, and to take the time to ask questions of the people around you about their lives.

### **Email Policy:**

I welcome emails if you have questions or concerns about your work in this class. Emailing provides you with an opportunity to show yourself off in the best light, and I want to help you do just that. Developing a professional manner in your emails will help you with other professors and also give you practice in effective communication.

Here are some ideas for writing effective messages through email:

- Use the subject line. Leaving it blank is almost unpardonable!
- The subject should be clear, such “Absent This Friday” or “Question about Revision” or “Availability for a Meeting?” If your subject is “Hello,” your professor might think that your email is spam.
- Use an address, such as “Dr. Wharram,” or “Dear Dr. Wharram”. At the university level, it’s safest to use “Dr.” or “Prof.” Instructors who do not have doctorates and want you to write “Mr.” or “Ms.” will let you know. Better to err on the “up side.”
- Be concise yet clear in your question or request, use paragraph breaks for reading ease and strong organization, and avoid using abbreviations or “txtng-prose.”
- Proofread.
- Close with a short statement followed by a comma and your name, such as “Thanks for your time,” or “Sincerely,” or “Have a good weekend”.

Following these guidelines should help you make good impressions on your current and future professors.

### **ESSAY FORMAT**

Your paper should include a title—even if it’s simple “Response #1”—and page numbers. Format: 12-point Garamond font (or similar, such as Times New Roman), double-spaced, with one-inch margins. Always submit your papers using a consistent documentation format.

### **PLAGIARISM**

**Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade on the assignment, if not for the course. I follow the departmental policy 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 the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, 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.”

### **AND NEW FOR 2023... AI & YOU & ME**

We have entered into the new era of LLMs—that is, Large Language Models. Perhaps it is an inaccurate overstatement, but we have come to call these tools Artificial Intelligence (or “AI”), and sometimes use the metonymy of “ChatGPT” to refer to the entire medium (such as we often use “Kleenex” to refer to all facial tissues).

This new era will place some interesting demands on the education system as a whole, and I look forward to discussing and exploring the possibilities and drawbacks with you in the course of the semester. We will, of course, discuss the issues in more detail, but for now let me offer you my basic thoughts on “AI” in its slimmest form: you can use “it,” but you need to be explicit in letting me know when and how you have used it. In this way, we can be honest with each other, and we can learn how and when these tools may be useful. To repeat: much more to come, in the course of the semester.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

### **UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES**

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#### **Academic integrity**

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as de-fined in EIU’s Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations are reported to the Office of Student Standards.

#### **Students with disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (SDS). All accommodations must be approved through SDS. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1210, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

#### **The Student Success Center**

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center ([www.eiu.edu/~success](http://www.eiu.edu/~success)) for assistance with time management, text taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

#### **Using the Writing Center**

I encourage you to use our wonderful Writing Center located at 3110 Coleman Hall. This free resource provides one-to-one conferences with writing consultants who can help you with brainstorming, organizing, developing support, documenting, and revising your papers.

To schedule an appointment, you can drop by the center (3110 Coleman Hall) or you can call 581-5929.