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# ENG 1009G-240: Stories Matter Dual Credit Elk Grove HS

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Course Title: “Because I Could Not Stop For Death”: The Body, Illness & The Stories They Tell

Instructor: Chuck Cavazos

### Course Description

As part of the Humanities segment of EIU’s General Education program, English 1009G (Stories Matter) 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. Titled “**Because I Could Not Stop for Death’: The Body, Illness, and the Stories They Tell,**” this course investigates the fundamental and vibrant 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 readings (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.

### 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 ideas 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 revision based on instructor feedback) throughout the semester in formal written assignments. □
4. Listen and respond articulately to the ideas and perspectives represented by the instructor and their peers. □
5. Reflect on the value of a text for themselves as individuals and for the world in which they live.
6. Examine the value of expression and creativity, especially in literature and literary analysis. □

### Requirements

2 Papers (@ 15%)	30%
Brief Writings & Quizzes	25%
Midterm Exam	10%
■ Final Exam	15% □
Presentation	10%
Participation	10%

### Grading Scale

90-100	A
<del>80-89.9</del>	B
70-79.9	C
60-69.9	D
Below 60	F

### Academic Honesty

Students are of course 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 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. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, ask your instructor to clarify. □

### **Course Etiquette & Respect for Others' Ideas**

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. □

### **Students with Disabilities**

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

### **Course Format**

This course primarily involves reading, discussion, and writing—a great deal of it. As such, you need to be prepared for activities by completing the reading carefully, taking notes, identifying important passages, and participating in all activities in a timely way.

Below is a description of each of the four units that comprise this course. For each unit, you will be asked to complete readings, participate in synchronous/asynchronous discussions, complete reading quizzes, write response papers, and other related activities. In brief, to do well in this course, you must work consistently over the 15 weeks.

### **Units of Study**

#### **Unit 1: “Narrative Medicine”: How & Why We Tell Stories (Wks 1-4)**

Overview: This unit focuses on why and how we tell stories as humans, identifying how the practices and discourses of the human body (medicine and health) closely align 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. Students will learn about the concept of “narrative medicine” and be introduced to the basic outlines of medical ethics. Most importantly, students will become acquainted with “how” a story is told (structure and form), not just what it says.

**Unit 2: “Death is Normal”: Technology, Death, & the Human Body (Wks 5-8)**

Overview: This unit focuses on the matrix of death, aging, and medical technology as it studies portrayals of human mortality in fiction, nonfiction, and film. Students will read excerpts from writers such as Atul Gawande, Caitlin Doughty, Hilary Mantel, and Paul Kalanithi.

**Unit 3: “I Contain Multitudes”: Contagion, Viruses, & Metaphors (Wks 9-12)**

Overview: 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, & Trauma (Wks 13-15)**

Overview: In this unit, students will read accounts of two different ways health is problematized in contemporary society, focusing in particular on mental health and related institutions. Such accounts will then be compared with cinematic portrayals of mental health.