**Introduction to Biomedicine and Culture**Professor Anne Pollock, apollock@gatech.edu  
LMC 2300 Spring 2013, MWF 1-2, Skiles 308  
Office hours: Wednesdays 2-5, Skiles 360

**Prerequisite:** ENGL1102

**Course Attribute:** Humanities

**Course Description**

This course provides an introduction to central cultural, including ethical, topics in biomedicine such as health care, medical practice, medical research, and the systems of cultural meaning within which ideas of health and disease circulate.

**Course Objectives**

* Acquire a broad knowledge of significant concepts, developments, and events in the history of medicine and medical ethics
* Explore how medical knowledge is created; how “illness” and “health” have been defined by doctors, patients, and publics; and the relationships between medical sciences, practices, and the social boundaries of healthcare
* Develop abilities to think critically and describe effectively the relationships among medicine, science, and ethics, especially in relation to their representations in literature
* Understand that scientific and technological innovation occurs in a social context, and recognize how the social influences scientific and technical discourses
* Read, analyze, and interpret not only cultural projects such as film, literature, art and new media, but also scientific and technical documents.
* Recognize a variety of social, political, and philosophical theories and apply those theories to creative and scientific texts, as well as to their own cultural observations.
* Study literary and cultural texts within an historical framework to become familiar with the various forces that shape artistic and commercial production; learn to interpret history actively, rather than passively accepting archival information.

**Required Books**

Warwick Anderson, *The Collectors of Lost Souls: Kuru, Moral Peril, and the Creation of Value in Science*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Margaret Edson, *W;t* [or Wit] Faber and Faber, 1993, 1999.

Roy Porter, *Blood and Guts: a Short History of Medicine* Norton, 2002.  
**Recommended Book** Robert Aronowitz, *Making Sense of Illness*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

All other readings will be available on T-Square.

**Assessment:**

**Attendance and participation:** **25 points**

*Active engagement during class is central to this course. Students are expected to come to class prepared, with readings and/or writing in hand, ready for discussion.*

**Unit 1 “Making Sense of Illness” Individual Project: 25 points**

*This project has two components: doing an interview about an illness experience and writing up the notes (5 points) and writing a paper using course texts to analyze the interview (20 points).*

**Unit 2 “Medical Thinking” Individual Project: 25 points**

*This project has two components: gathering and summarizing accounts of a particular piece of medical knowledge from a newspaper and a medical journal (5 points), and writing a paper analyzing the accounts in light of course texts (20 points).*

**Unit 3 “Medical Discovery in Cultural Context” Group Project: 25 points**

*This group project has three components: an individually-written annotated bibliography (5 points), a group poster (5 points), and a group poster presentation (15 points). Each group member must also submit a self-assessment of their group work.*

**Attendance Policy:** *If you miss six or more classes, you run the risk of failing the course as a whole.* If you have an illness or family emergency that prevents you from attending class, contact the instructor as soon as possible by email. If you are late for class, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are not recorded as absent. If you miss a class for any reason, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed *before* the next class.

**ADAPTS accommodation is available for students with disabilities:** http://www.adapts.gatech.edu/

**Honor Code:** In all assignments, be sure to reference and include full citations for any words or concepts that are not your own. To learn more about Georgia Tech’s Honor Code, please visit http:// [www.honor.gatech.edu](http://www.honor.gatech.edu). Students are encouraged to seek help from each other on all assignments, as well as from the Comm Lab and the professor. Late assignments will be penalized two points per day.

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| **Week** | **Monday** | **Wednesday** | **Friday** |
| **UNIT 1: MAKING SENSE OF ILLNESS** | | | |
| **1** | Jan 7  Introductions | Jan 9  Lorde, Audre. “Breast Cancer: Power Versus Prosthesis,” from *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980): 55-77. | Jan 11  Ehrenreich, Barbara. “Welcome to Cancer Land: A Mammogram Leads to a Cult of Pink Kitsch,” *Harpers* November 2001, pp. 43-53. |
| **2** | Jan 14  MLK Day – No Class | Jan 16  Interview Notes Due at Noon  In-Class discussion | Jan 18  Aronowitz, Robert. Preface and Introduction, *Making Sense of Illness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): pp. ix-xxi, 1-18. |
| **3** | Jan 21  Pollock, Anne. “The Internal Cardiac Defibrillator.” Ed. Sherry Turkle. *The Inner History of Devices: Technology and Self.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008: 98-111. | Jan 23  Frank, Arthur. “Illness as a Call for Stories,” in *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995): 53-74. | Jan 25  Charon, Rita. “Narrative Medicine: A Model for Empathy, Reflection, Profession, and Trust,” *JAMA* 286.15(2001): 1897-1902. |
| **4** | Jan 28  Wit | Jan 30  Wit | Feb 1  Paper 1 Due at Midnight |
| **UNIT 2: MEDICAL THINKING** | | | |
| **5** | Feb 4  Skim Articles in BiDil folder | Feb 6  Fleck, Ludwick, “Some Specific Features of the Medical Way of Thinking,” in *Cognition and Fact: Materials on Ludwick Fleck*, edited by Robert S. Cohen and Thomas Schnelle, D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1986 [1927], pp. 39-46. | Feb 8  Rose, Nikolas. “Introduction,” *Politics of Life Itself* (Princeton University Press 2006), pp. 1-7. |
| **6** | Feb 11  *Blood and Guts*  Preface and Chapters 1-2 “Disease” and “Doctors” pp. 1-52. | Feb 13  *Blood and Guts*  Chapters 3-4, “The Body” and “The Laboratory,” pp. 53-98. | Feb 15  Research day: bring laptops |
| **7** | Feb 18  *Blood and Guts*  Chapters 5-6 “Therapies” and “Surgery,” pp. 99-134. | Feb 20  *Blood and Guts*  Chapters 7-8 “The Hospital” and “Medicine in Modern Society” pp. 153-169. | Feb 22  Paper 2 prep assignment due at midnight |
| **8** | Feb 25  Gawande, Atul. “The Learning Curve: Like Everyone Else, Surgeons Need Practice. That’s where you come in,” The New Yorker January 28, 2002. | Feb 27  Gawande, Atul. “The Cost Conundrum: What a Texas town can teach us about health care,” The New Yorker, June 1, 2009. | Mar 1  Paper 2 Due at Midnight |
| **UNIT 3: MEDICAL DISCOVERIES IN CULTURAL CONTEXT** | | | |
| **9** | Mar 4  Intro to Unit 3 | Mar 6  *Collectors of Lost Souls*  Intro & Chapters 1-2. | Mar 8  *Collectors of Lost Souls*  Chapters 3-4. |
| **10** | Mar 11  *Collectors of Lost Souls*  Chapters 5-7.  Form groups for final projects | Mar 13  *Collectors of Lost Souls*  Chapter 8 and Conclusion, pp. 185-234. | Mar 15  Independent research for final projects |
| **11** | SPRING BREAK | | |
| **12** | Mar 25  In-class research for final projects | Mar 27  Group Work | March 29  Annotated Bibliographies Due at Midnight |
| **13** | April 1  Lecture and Discussion: Effective posters | April 3  Group work | April 5  Group work  Have initial plan of final project poster in class |
| **14** | April 8  Lecture and Discussion:  Effective presentations | April 10  Group work | April 12  Group work |
| **15** | April 15  Present Group Projects | April 17  Present Group Projects | April 19  Present Group Projects |
| **16** | April 22  Present Group Projects | April 24  Present Group Projects | April 26  Wrap-Up Class |