AS.145 (MEDICINE, SCIENCE AND THE HUMANITIES)

AS.145.101. Death and Dying in Art, Literature, and Philosophy: Introduction to Medical Humanities. 3 Credits.
In this course, four essential aspects of the theme of death and dying will be examined: Death and Medicine; Emotional Responses to Death; Burying and Commemorating the Dead; and Conceptions of Death. Specific topics relating to each of these aspects will be covered, including illness and causes of death; prevention of death; suicide; death and grief; burial practices; mourning the dead; public commemoration of the dead; life after death; death and rebirth. Students will explore these topics from a historical-anthropological perspective with Paul Delnero, a specialist in the history and culture of the ancient Near East (Near Eastern Studies); from a literary perspective, by reading and writing poetry relating to these subjects with the acclaimed poet James Arthur (Writing Seminars); and from a musical perspective, through direct encounters with the music and creative process of the award-winning composer, Michael Hersch (Peabody).
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.145.103. Men, Women, and Melancholy: Premodern Physiologies of Madness. 3 Credits.
Definitions of madness change over time. From Antiquity through the Early Modern period, Melancholia was the predominant form of mental illness, thought to be caused by an imbalance in the bodily humors, resulting in an excess of black bile. The disturbed physiology adversely affected the imagination, which, with memory and intellect, was one of the three functions of the soul. Only gradually did imagination come to be identified with deliberate creativity: from about 1400 to 1800, there were two stereotypical victims of melancholia: male intellectuals and female witches. The disruption of society by witch-hunting was even more radical than the rise of the "man of genius." At stake were definitions of psychology ("science of the soul") and reality (whether witches and demons interacted "in the body" or only "in the imagination"). Readings from Plato to Freud.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.145.104. Science, Medicine, Media. 3 Credits.
Much of our understanding of science and medicine is filtered through what we casually refer to as "the media": newspapers, magazines, television shows, films, and electronic social media. But the scientific world relies on its own media to produce and circulate knowledge: from scientific journals and conferences, to agar plates and petri dishes, cloud chambers and electrophoresis gels. Medical technologies from the stethoscope to the echocardiogram likewise mediate the perception of the body in health and disease, and increasingly our own understanding and perception of our bodies and our health is mediated via screens, scans, and images — without which we can hardly imagine ourselves anymore. Students will learn theoretical tools to critically assess the technologies that mediate our knowledge of our own bodies and the broader world, as well as practical tools in media production and visual storytelling (video, podcast, website etc.) to bring these analytics to bear on our broader understandings of science and medicine.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences
Writing Intensive

AS.145.105. Freshman Seminar. 3 Credits.
Freshman Seminar Course. Topics will vary semestery. See class search for information for the current term.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.145.201. Clues: Unreasoning the Medical Mystery. 3 Credits.
Pioneering authors of detective fiction, including Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Pauline Hopkins, often used medical doctors and themes in their mystery plots. It's no coincidence that medicine and crime fiction share a vocabulary of clues, evidence, and diagnosis. The mystery genre was integrally tied to the rise of scientific medicine as a respected profession. Indeed, classic detective stories are practically propaganda for the scientific method, showing readers how the powerful tools of observation and inference can solve any problem. Over the course of the 20th century, not only doctors, but also psychologists, social scientists and historians adopted the authoritative stance of the detective in constructing or reconstructing facts. However, as we study Sherlock Holmes and his modern proteges, such as TV doctor Gregory House, we will analyze how "medical mystery" narratives can limit our thinking about problems and solutions in medicine. We will consider post-modern detective stories that offer alternatives to the "Holmsian" model for understanding the complex clinical realities of today.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences
Writing Intensive
AS.145.202. Health Care Activism in Baltimore and Beyond. 3 Credits.
National struggles over the right to health care, and over the health needs of marginalized groups, have taken distinctive forms in Baltimore City during the past century. The renowned Johns Hopkins University came to symbolize, for many residents, the power of medicine both to heal and to harm – and the need for community action. This course delves into the archives of local institutions to understand the work of activists and advocates who connected health, medicine, and social justice. We focus on specific sites, from the segregated wards of Johns Hopkins to the People's Free Medical Clinic on Greenmount Avenue, where demands for equity changed the city's health care landscape. Through interdisciplinary readings and conversations with local organizers, we consider how historical memory can serve as a creative resource for the art and politics of the present.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.145.203. Constructing memories: between art and science. 3 Credits.
What is a personal memory? Is it a story or a scene, as if in a film? Is there such a thing as body memory? How tight is the connection between remembering and story-telling? Scientific articles and book chapters in cognitive psychology and the neurosciences can provide some answers to such questions. Two films, “Memento” and “Inside Out” can also help us grasp the impact of major scientific discoveries of how memory works. But our discussions will depend above all on literary and biographical accounts based on the experiences of “rememberers” such as St Augustine, Proust, Woolf, Freud, as well as on cases on amnesia documented by Oliver Sacks, Antonio Damasio, and David Shenk. The latter will help us understand why our ability to engage in mental time-travel is essential to our personal and social existence. Coming out of this course, you will not only have a better comprehension of how autobiographical memory works, you’ll have learned also how some of the sharpest scientific and philosophical minds of our times have tried to make sense of this mysterious human capacity.
Area: Humanities

AS.145.204. Graphic! Visualizing Medicine from Textbooks to Comics. 3 Credits.
Visuals play an important role in the history and practice of medicine, from medical textbooks to medical imaging, and from hospital signage and public health posters to comics and graphic novels. This course will examine the visual aspects of the history and practice of medicine by focusing on the rising genre of medical comics and graphic novels, known as “graphic medicine.” The course will embed this examination of “graphic medicine” in a wider examination of the various uses of visuals in medicine, the complicated history of class, race and gender in those uses, and how visuals have served different functions in the history and practice of medicine, from assisting medical diagnosis to enabling new forms of medical consumerism, and from facilitating doctor-patient communication to practicing art therapy, as well as presenting visual pathographies and documenting patients’ and caregivers’ experiences of disease. Through an assortment of primary sources that include medical comics and graphic novels, aided by a variety of secondary sources that embed these narratives in larger issues in the history of medicine, medical anthropology, and the medical humanities, the course will aim to introduce students to some of the most important themes in the field of “graphic medicine.”
Area: Humanities

AS.145.205. The Costs of Care: Writing about Illness in America. 3 Credits.
Health care can be expensive for those who receive it and those who provide it. In the United States, patients go into debt while doctors suffer from burnout and nurses rush through understaffed wards. The U.S. has the highest healthcare spending of any wealthy nation, yet suffers comparatively worse outcomes. This seminar brings together social science research with patient experiences that show the human face of the American health care debate. We read the work of scholars, poets, and medical practitioners who reflect on core questions: What should be the government’s role in healthcare provision? What alternative models have people in marginalized groups developed when the system fails them? Understanding both failures and successes gives us the tools to build new paths.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.145.215. Representations of Pain and Suffering in Contemporary Culture. 3 Credits.
What does it mean to experience pain or encounter the suffering of another person in our post-truth era? This course explores the changing representation of pain and suffering in contemporary film, fiction, creative non-fiction, science and technology. Through analyses and close-readings of a variety of primary and secondary sources, we will consider the different ways twentieth- and twenty-first-century historical, cultural, and media representations have mediated pain and suffering. Such investigations allow us to understand the workings of pain in the present.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.145.217. Neurofictions: History and Literature of the Mind Sciences. 3 Credits.
Neuroscience has a long way to go from mapping neural connections to a precise account of memory, emotion, and consciousness. But the limits of science have never stopped us from imagining its possible futures. Engaging two centuries of debate in the mind sciences and in western culture at large, this course looks at historical attempts to explain and control human consciousness. By placing each period’s scientific texts in dialog with contemporaneous science fiction – from Edgar Allan Poe to Ursula K. Le Guin – we discover how theories about the brain can shape society while at the same time responding to social contexts.
Area: Humanities

AS.145.219. Science Studies and Medical Humanities: Theory and Methods. 3 Credits.
The knowledge and practices of science and medicine are not as self-evident as they may appear. When we observe, what do we see? What counts as evidence? How does evidence become fact? How do facts circulate and what are their effects? Who is included in and excluded from our common-sense notions of science, medicine, and technology? This course will introduce students to central theoretical concerns in Science and Technology Studies and the Medical Humanities, focusing on enduring problems that animate scholars. In conjunction with examinations of theoretical bases, students will learn to evaluate the methodological tools used in different fields in the humanities to study the production and circulation of scientific knowledge and the structures of medical care and public health. This problem-centered approach will help students understand and apply key concepts and approaches in critical studies of science, technology, and medicine.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences
Writing Intensive
AS.145.301. Naturalizing the Human Body in Early Modern France: the Confrontation of Literature, Science and Politics. 3 Credits.
Literature in early modern Europe was essential to the naturalizing of the human body, a partner in the reshaping of the cultures and disciplines around it. This course looks at several shifts within major literary works of the 17th and 18th centuries, a moment when the interpenetration of the literary, scientific and political cultures was such that “art for art’s sake” would have been considered irresponsible. The primary goals of the course are to allow students to understand the intrinsic literary value of the texts, but equally to show how that literary activity, both of writing and of reading, was the vehicle for the elaboration of the modern mind set. We will focus on three cases: vision, the body’s “economy” and Body of the State, and the “scandal” of smallpox vaccination. Texts will include, for example, extracts from: Newton’s Opticks, Cyrano de Bergerac’s The States and Empires of the Sun, Montesquieu’s Persian Letters and Spirit of the Laws, Voltaire’s English Letters, Rousseau’s The New Eloise, Laclos’ Dangerous Liaisons, Guillotine’s text inventing the guillotine. For more information, please see the full course description at http://www.wilda.org/Courses/CourseVault/Undergrad/Naturalizing/Description.html. This course and texts will be in English, but readings will also be available in French.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences
Writing Intensive

AS.145.303. Research in the Medical Humanities: A Practical Introduction. 3 Credits.
This seminar is designed to prepare students for an extended interdisciplinary writing project, such as an honor’s thesis or an undergraduate research proposal. The first part will be devoted to establishing or consolidating skills in research, in methods, and in approaches specific to the medical humanities. Class meeting will involve different formats and types of preparation: studying examples of writing in different domains related to MSH, visits of specialists (e.g. librarians and authors), preparing a proposal to be presented in a workshop, and a well-documented capstone project outlining a proposal. You’ll be asked to submit at regular intervals written results of your work in progress and you must be prepared as well to present your results orally at different important points in our unfolding semester.
Area: Humanities
Writing Intensive

AS.145.401. In Search of the Human: Ways of Remembering. 3 Credits.
Studying narrative as a way of understanding the complex emotions associated with illness and the lifecycle has long been recognized as an important part of clinical training. This course focuses on autobiographical memory as a particularly important part of forming a personal narrative. These memories can offer foundations on which to build an approach to life and its challenges, and they can also be constraining. The course readings will illustrate how authors of fiction and scientists have grappled with the task of remembering and studied the configurations of autobiographical recollection.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences
Writing Intensive

AS.145.502. Medicine, Science & the Humanities Internship. 3 Credits.
An internship in Medicine, Science & the Humanities approved by the director of the program.
Prerequisite(s): You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration & Online Forms.
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences