

Media, Medicine, and Justice

Instructor: Prof. CHEUNG Shoan Yin (she/ her/ hers)

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Course Hours:

Friday 2:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.

LDS 214

Cultural meanings of health and disease are shaped not only by scientific and medical discourses but also by media technologies, from films to smart phones to medical imaging. Through topics like mental health, vaccine politics, and surveillance, we will learn how media facilitates ideas about fitness and citizenship, normal vs. abnormal, and public support for health interventions in times of profound global inequality and geopolitical tension. We will also explore how individuals and collectives understand and contest biomedical knowledge, and why race, class, gender, sexuality, and other categories of social difference matter in health and medicine.

This course introduces fundamental concepts in the medical humanities. It assumes no prior knowledge and welcomes students from any academic background and experience.

Course Objectives

By taking this course, you will develop the ability to:

- Understand the role of media and culture in framing health and disease
- Explain key theories about the relationship between health, medicine, and society
- Analyze the relationship between individual identity, social organization, and health policy
- Conduct an original, in-depth analysis on a topic of your choosing

Assessment

Your grade will be assessed according to the assignment breakdown and criteria listed below. Generally, performance that exceeds or falls short of expectations within a grade category will receive a modification of + / - to the overall letter grade.

Lecture Attendance	10%
Response Posts (2)	10%
Weekly Presentation	20%
Mid-term Paper	30%
Final Project	30%

Course Requirements:

Response Posts (300 words x 2)

Twice a semester, students will submit one written response to the week's assigned reading materials. Each post should be approximately 300 words (one page), and students may choose which weeks they would like to do the assignment. The post should provide a brief review of the assigned materials along with your own critical thoughts and reflections. You may choose one or two key points that make an impression on you and discuss them in relation to broader course themes. These can be submitted in hard copy at any time during the semester starting in Week 5.

Presentation

Students will sign up for a short, 20-minute presentation in groups of three to four once this semester. Your group will identify a theme of your choosing based on the week's reading and then select one local case or example that illustrates that theme. Critical to this task is your analysis of two to three primary sources. In analyzing the primary sources, you may consider some of the following questions: What is the purpose of the source? How does it try to achieve this purpose? Who is the intended audience? Is it representative? What does the source's choice of words tell you? How about its metaphors and symbols? Does it reflect or describe ideology or behavior? Is it descriptive or prescriptive? What questions can you answer / not answer using this source? Does the source challenge or support "common sense?" After the presentation, you are responsible for facilitating and responding to 10-15 minutes of questions and comments from your classmates. You will also submit your slide deck and one page of notes summarizing your presentation.

Mid-Term Paper (1000 words)

The mid-term paper will analyze an "illness narrative" based on EITHER an interview you conduct with a family member who has experienced some health condition and/or treatment, biomedical or otherwise, OR your own illness narrative of a health experience you have had.

Final Project

The final project is a research project that will culminate in a group presentation. Your group, which will be the same as the weekly presentation groups, will analyze how a particular disease or illness condition becomes framed at a particular place and time in response to intellectual, cultural, economic, and political forces and develop an original argument. You could look at the ideas of a specific doctor or expert, the experience of a particular patient or patient group, or how specific contexts and events shape disease framing. Your group will make a formal, 20-minute presentation to the entire class at the end of the semester. You are also responsible for fielding 10-minutes of questions and feedback after the presentation. Further instructions will be distributed at a later point in the semester.

Note on Consultations:

You may schedule a consultation with anyone from the teaching team. We are unable to look at full drafts assignments, but you may submit an outline of up to two pages for feedback via email. For email feedback, please allow up to 48 hours for a full response and plan accordingly.

Health

Please do not come to class if you are feeling ill. The first absence due to sickness will be automatically excused, with no questions asked. Subsequent absences will need to be accompanied by a doctor's note.

Grading

Your grade will be assessed according to your engagement with the class materials, as evidenced in both your written work and class participation. You will be evaluated on your ability to express your ideas in a cogent and well-structured manner, and your ability to creatively explore the theories and methodologies introduced in this course.

Generally, performance that exceeds or falls short of expectations within a grade category will receive a modification of + / - (e.g., B+) to the overall letter grade.

- A** Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes
- B** Good performance on all learning outcomes
- C** Satisfactory performance on learning outcomes
- D** Non-satisfactory performance on learning outcomes
- F** Failure to complete assessment requirements, including plagiarism

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University. For a description of CUHK's policy on academic honesty, view the following website: [http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_\(2013-14\)/index_page2.htm](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/index_page2.htm)

The Chinese University of Hong Kong community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and non-visible categories. I welcome all students in this course and expect that all students contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment. If you have any concerns about classroom climate, please come to me to share your concern.

Course Schedule:

1. Jan. 10 Introduction: Media, Medicine and Justice

Recommended:

- Janelle Taylor, “Confronting ‘Culture’ in Medicine’s ‘Culture of No Culture,” *Academic Medicine* (2003)

2. Jan. 17 Medicine and Metaphor

- Susan Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor Part 3: Disease as Political Metaphor,” *New York Review of Books* (1978)
- Priscilla Wald, “Viral Cultures: Microbes and Politics in the Cold War,” in *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (2007)

Recommended:

- Donna Haraway. “The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Constitutions of Self in Immune System Discourse.” *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 203-230.
- Emily Martin, “Toward an Anthropology of Immunity: The Body as Nation State,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (1990)
- Katherine Mason, “H1N1 Is Not a Chinese Virus: the Racialization of People and Viruses in Post-SARS China,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* (2015)
- Christie Milliken, “Contingence of the Continent: The Ideology of Disease and Hygiene in World War II Training Films,” in Friedman, *Cultural Sutures* (2004)
- Kristen Ostherr, “Invisible Invader: The Global Body in Public Health Film,” in Friedman, *Cultural Sutures* (2004)

3. Jan. 24 Framing the AIDS Epidemic

- [Podcast] “Mourning in America: The Dawn of HIV and AIDS,” *Blindspoti* (35 minutes)
- Evelyn Hammond, “Race, Sex, and the Construction of ‘Other,’” *Radical America* (1987)

Recommended:

- Niels van Doorn, “Treatment is Prevention: HIV, Emergency, and the Biopolitics of Viral Containment,” *Cultural Studies* (2012)
- Paul Farmer, “Introduction,” “Invisible Women: Class, Gender and HIV,” and “Culture, Poverty, and HIV Transmission,” in *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues* (2001)
- Dorothy Nelkin, “AIDS and the News Media,” *The Milbank Quarterly* 69 (1991)
- Cindy Patton, *Sex and Germs: The Politics of AIDS* (1985)
- Charles Rosenberg, “What is an Epidemic? AIDS in Historical Perspective,” *Daedalus* (1989)

4. Jan. 31 Lunar New Year Holiday

5. Feb. 7 Politics of Birth Control

- Lisa Baker, “Control and the Dalkon Shield,” *Violence Against Women* (2001)
- Kelly O’Donnell, “Our Doctors, Ourselves: Barbara Seaman and Popular Health Feminism in the 1970s,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* (2019)

Recommended:

- Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives* (1991)
- Michelle Murphy, “Traveling Technology and a Device for Not Performing Abortions,” in *Seizing the Means of Reproduction: Entanglements of Feminism, Health, and Technoscience* (2012)
- Nancy Tuana, “The Speculum of Ignorance: The Women’s Health Movement and Epistemologies of Ignorance,” *Hypatia* (2020)

6. Feb. 14 Medicine and Social Control

- Amy Borovoy, “Japan’s Hidden Youths: Mainstreaming the Emotionally Distressed in Japan,” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* (2008)
- Ellen Rubinstein and Rae Sakakibara, “Diagnosing Hikikomori: Social Withdrawal in Contemporary Japan,” *Medical Anthropology Theory* (2020)

Recommended:

- Ian Hacking, “Making Up People,” *London Review of Books* (2006)
- Margaret Lock, “Medicalization and the Naturalization of Social Control,” *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology* (2004)

7. Feb. 21 Incomplete Medicalization

In-class screening: *Unrest* (2017)

- Joseph Dumit, “Illnesses You Have to Fight: Facts as Forces in Uncertain, Emergent Illnesses,” *Social Science and Medicine* (2006)
- Nikos Karfakis, “The Biopolitics of CFS/ME,” *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science* (2018)

Recommended:

- Aronowitz, Robert. “When Do Symptoms Become a Disease?” *Annals of Internal Medicine* (2001)
- Arthur Kleinman, “The Meaning of Symptoms and Disorders,” *The Illness Narratives* (1988)

8. Feb. 28 Structural Violence I

- Paul Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below,” *Daedalus* (1996)

9. Mar. 7 Structural Violence II

- Sherine Hamdy, “When the State and Your Kidneys Fail: Political Etiologies in an Egyptian Dialysis Ward,” *American Ethnologist* (2008)
- Xisai Song, “Migrant Workers and Structural Disability in China,” *Medical Anthropology* (2023)

Recommended:

- Nicholas Bartlett, “Idling in Mao’s Shadow: Heroin Addiction and the Contested Therapeutic Value of Socialist Traditions of Laboring,” *Culture, Medicine, & Psychiatry* (2018)
- Seth Holmes, “The Clinical Gaze in the Practice of Migrant Health: Mexican Migrants in the United States,” *Social Science and Medicine*

(2012)

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Nervoso,” *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life* (2007 [1992])

10. Mar. 14 Healing Across Cultures

In-class Screening: *Drugs and Prayers: Indian Psychiatry in the Realm of Saints* (2001)

- George Foster, “Disease Etiology in non-Western Medical Systems,” *American Anthropologist* (1976)

Recommended:

- Aihwa Ong, “Making the Biopolitical Subject: Cambodian Immigrants, Refugee Medicine, and Cultural Citizenship in California,” *Social Science and Medicine* (1995)
- Janelle Taylor, “The Story Catches You and You Fall Down: Tragedy, Ethnography, and ‘Cultural Competence,’” *Medical Anthropology Theory* (2003)

11. Mar. 21 Patient Activism

- Alan Peterson, Allegra Schermuly, and Alison Anderson, “The Shifting Politics of Patient Activism: From Bio-Sociality to Bio-Digital Citizenship,” *Health* (2018)

Recommended:

- Paul Rabinow, “Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality,” *Anthropologies of Modernity* (2005)

***** Research Methods Workshop*****

12. Mar. 28 Mental Health

- Jonathan Metzl, “Selling Sanity through Gender: The Psychodynamics of Psychotropic Advertising,” *Journal of Medical Humanities* (2003)

Recommended:

- Sander Gilman, “Madness,” *Keywords for Disability Studies* (2015)
- Jonathan Metzl, ““Mother’s Little Helper: The Crisis of Psychoanalysis and the Miltown Resolution,” *Gender & History* (2003)
- Blum and Stracuzzi, “Gender in the Prozac Nation: Popular Discourse and Productive Femininity,” *Gender and Society* (2004)
- Andrea Tone, *Age of Anxiety: A History of America’s Turbulent Affair with Tranquilizers* (2008)

13. Apr. 4 Qing Ming Festival

14. Apr. 11 Empire of Drugs

In-class Screening: *Selling Sickness* (2006)

Recommended:

- Jennifer Fishman, “Manufacturing Desire: The Commodification of Female Sexual Desire,” *Social Studies of Science* (2004)
- David Healy, “Shaping the Intimate: Influences on the Experiences of Everyday Nerves,” *Social Studies of Science* (2004)
- Ethan Watters, “The Mega-Marketing of Depression in Japan,” *Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche* (2010)

***** Research Methods Workshop II *****

15. Apr. 18 Easter Holiday

16. Apr. 25 Final Presentations