3361 Narrative and Medicine Spring 2013
Campbell Hall 335 T Th 11:10--12:30

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Objectives: In this course we will examine the intersection between the domains of
narrative and medicine through the study of diverse representations of medical issues.
Among the questions we will ask are: How does narrative give us greater insight into
illness, medical treatment, doctor-patient relationships, and other aspects of health and
medicine? How do illness and other experiences within the realm of medicine influence
ways of telling stories? How do doctors’ perspectives and patients’ perspectives differ,
and what, if anything, should be done to close those differences? Since the course is
team-taught by a practicing doctor and a narrative theorist and since it is populated by
some students majoring in the sciences and others majoring in the humanities, we will
also consider how our different disciplinary perspectives relate to each other: to what
extent do they overlap, complement, or occasionally conflict with each other?

Texts:

Rita Charon, *Narrative Medicine*
Margaret Edson, *Wit*
Pauline Chen, *Final Exam*
Susanna Kaysen, *Girl, Interrupted*
Abraham Verghese, *The Tennis Partner*
Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*
Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner, *Our Cancer Year*
David Small, *Stitches*
James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, “Principles of Narrative Analysis” (available on
Carmen)

Week 1
Tuesday, January 8 Introduction

Thursday, January 10 Principles of Narrative Analysis Introduction; Selzer, “Brute”

Unit I: Patients and Doctors: Divides and Bridges
Week 2
Tuesday, January 15 *Wit*, Charon, Chapter 1 and 2, sign up for dramatic readings of
*Wit*
Thursday, January 17  *Wit*, Principles of Narrative Analysis II (Authors, Narrators, Narration) & III (Time, Plot, and Progression)

Week 3
Tuesday, January 22 *Wit*, Dramatic Readings

Thursday, January 24  Gawande, “Letting Go,” Charon, Chapter 3

Week 4
Tuesday, January 29 *Final Exam*, Charon, Chapter 4, first paper assigned

Thursday, January 31 *Final Exam*

Week 5
Tuesday, February 5  *The Tennis Partner*

Thursday, February 7  *The Tennis Partner*

Week 6
Tuesday, February 12  *The Tennis Partner*, first paper due

Thursday, February 14, Taking Stock Day

Unit II: Mental Illness from the Patient’s Perspective

Week 7
Tuesday, February 19  *Girl, Interrupted*

Thursday, February 21, *Girl, Interrupted*

Week 8
Tuesday, February 26  *Girl, Interrupted*

Unit III: Mourning

Thursday, February 28, *The Year of Magical Thinking*

Week 9  Tuesday

March 5 *The Year of Magical Thinking*

March 7 *The Year of Magical Thinking*
Spring Break, Week of March 11-15

Unit IV: Patient Experiences through Graphic Narrative

Week 10
Tuesday, March 19  *Our Cancer Year*, Principles of Reading Graphic Narrative, final paper assigned

Thursday, March 21, *Our Cancer Year*

Week 11
Tuesday, March 26 *Our Cancer Year*

Thursday, *Stitches*

Week 12
Tuesday, April 2  *Stitches*

Thursday, April 4 *Stitches*

N.B. Conference on Narrative Medicine in the 21st-Century runs from April 4-6: Attend David Small's presentation on Thursday, April 4 or another session of the conference in lieu of class on Thursday, April 11

Week 13
Tuesday, April 9: Follow-up on conference

Thursday, April 11  No class; attend conference session(s) instead.

Unit: IV Lyric Narrative

Week 14
Tuesday, April 16, Biss, “The Pain Scale”; Didion, “In Bed”

Thursday, April 18  Conclusion, final paper due

**Grading**

Attendance and Participation: 10%
Agenda Setting: English 3361 in Real Life/ Response to the Reading 20%
Dramatic Reading of *Wit, The Tennis Partner, Girl, Interrupted*, or *Stitches*: 10%
First Paper: 30%
Final paper: 30%

Attendance and Participation: The old adage has it that 90% of success is just showing up. That adage doesn’t wholly apply in this course, but showing up and participating can get you an easy 10% toward your final grade—and we trust that your critical
thinking skills are sharp enough for you to see that you should take advantage of this policy. The course will be run discussion-style, which means that your presence and your ideas will be crucial to its success. We expect you to attend every class and to be fully prepared: to have done the day’s reading (including the agenda settings), and to bring them with you; to be ready to share your thoughts about those readings. Some days we will begin by going around the room asking for responses. If you have nothing to contribute, your participation grade will suffer. Other days we will begin with small group responses to the agenda settings. If you are absent, you will be unable to contribute to your group, and that, too, will negatively affect your participation grade.

If you have to miss class (e.g. for a serious illness), please let us know in advance. Missing more than two or more classes will negatively affect your attendance/participation grade. Missing five classes means you cannot receive more than 5 points in your attendance/participation grade. If you miss six or more classes you will be in serious danger of failing the course.

Apart from these necessary evils related to grades, we’ve established this policy because we assume that the success of the course will depend on our developing a productive intellectual community, one in which we can rely on and support each other even as we challenge ourselves to think harder and deeper. We are committed to making the classroom be a place you want to come twice a week, but long experience has taught us that we can’t do that all by ourselves.

Agenda Setting: Beginning with class on Tuesday, January 15, one or two of you will help to set our agenda for discussion in a two-part assignment. Part One is to put before the class some connection between the concerns of the course and narrative medicine outside the course. We will give some examples in our class on Thursday, January 10. Part Two itself has three short components: (a) to write a short response to the reading for the day; (b) to formulate two questions about that reading that you think the class should explore; and (3) select a passage (a paragraph; a key scene of dialogue) from that reading that you find relevant to your response and that you would like to spend time on in class. The response should be not more than 500 words, and the questions should be pithy. You should type out the passage that you want to focus on (this passage will not count against your 500 word response). You have a certain amount of freedom with your responses, but you should follow a general two-step structure of displaying understanding and then moving to overstanding. The overstanding represents your effort to take a position on what you’ve understood. For example, “I find that for reasons A, B, and C, the author’s stance on issue X is Y [understanding], but I strongly disagree for reasons D, E, and F.” or “I find that for reasons A, B, and C, the author wants her audience to take a sympathetic perspective on character Q, but I am not able to do that for reasons R, S, and T.” N.B. Your overstanding can be either positive or negative and you can use informal evaluative language (“Charon is on target” or “Edson gets it all wrong”), but you should always go on to provide reasons for your position. In a sense, this assignment asks you to share some of the responsibility for the success of our daily sessions. The two-part agenda setting should be posted on our Carmen site by 5 PM the day before class.
Dramatic Reading: In order to make our readings come alive, you will do dramatic readings of scenes from them, beginning with Wit and ending with Stitches. The idea here is for you to read with sufficient depth and sympathy that you can imagine yourself in the position of the characters and thus give voice to their thoughts and feelings.

We will give you more details about the other papers when we assign them, but here are a few general Requirements:

1. You must prepare your papers on a word processor so that they can be uploaded to our Carmen site. You must also double-space them and stay within the word limits announced in the prompts.
2. Assignments are due on the day listed on the prompt. Late assignments will be penalized one-half grade for each day late.
3. We expect your writing to be up to the standard for an upper-division college course: clear at the sentence level, coherent at the level of overall argument, and grammatically correct. If you need help with your writing, we encourage you to come see us and/or go to the University Writing Center http://cstw.osu.edu/writingcenter

Attendance Policy: We expect you to attend every class, and we will take attendance. If you miss two or three classes, your attendance/participation grade will be negatively affected. If you miss four classes, you cannot receive more than 5 points in your attendance/participation grade. If you miss six or more classes, you are in serious danger of failing the course.

Class cancellation policy: we expect to be here for every class listed on the syllabus. In the extremely unlikely event that we have to cancel class, we will notify you as soon as possible via e-mail, and request that a note be placed on the door. In addition, we will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

This course is part of the General Education Curriculum in Category 2.C. Arts and Humanities, subarea Literature

General Goals: Students evaluate significant writing and works of art. Such studies develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening, reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience.

We will achieve those goals through both the conduct of our class sessions and the assignments you do in connection with them. Thus, by the end of the course, you should have enhanced your abilities as readers, writers, and thinkers about the art of narrative, the theory and practice of medicine, and the interrelations between them.
More generally, the course should help you to analyze information and apply it to new contexts, to reflect on what you know, identify what you still need to learn, and sort through competing arguments.

**Plagiarism** is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

**Disability issues:** Anyone who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact one of us privately to discuss your specific needs. Anyone with such needs should also be aware of the Office for Disability Services in room 150 Pomerene Hall (614-292-3307) which provides services for students with documented disabilities.

Thoughts for the course:
The desire to take medicine is perhaps the greatest feature that distinguishes man from animals. –Sir William Osler

The desire to tell and listen to stories is perhaps the greatest feature that distinguishes humans from animals. --Anonymous