

# **The Design of Disease: Cultural Practice & Medical Knowledge**

Humanities & Social Sciences Seminar (Medicine)  
& Anthropology 328-072 (Graduate)

Spring 2006  
Tuesdays, 2:30-5:20 p.m.  
188 Wing D, School of Medicine

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## ***Seminar Description***

This seminar will explore how facts and notions about disease are made and remade – “constructed,” under influence of social and cultural forces and philosophical assumptions. Many of these forces and assumptions are specific to our historical moment and our places in the world.

This course will be anthropological and philosophical – though our readings will come from a range of disciplines. We will read history, of diseases changing over time. We will read comparisons of sickness across cultural contexts. We will read sociology of laboratory science and hospital work. We will read about controversial diseases and overturned dogmas. We will consider practices through which scientific “evidence” is made, and “normal” defined. In the last segment of the course, each student will present independent research on cultural dimensions of a particular disease of his/her choice.

## ***Objectives***

The seminar will develop an understanding of medical culture/s as powerfully determining of both illness experiences and their explanations. Students will be challenged to think comparatively and correlatively. By the end of the seminar, students should be able to discuss:

- Various concepts of disease and health;
- Organizing structures of biomedical notions of disease (e.g., the case; the lesion; the normal; nosologies; epidemiology);
- Relations of diseases with: vocation, power, wealth;
- How concepts of disease change over time and differ across cultural settings;
- Forms of iatrogenic disease – and influences of disease concepts on medical roles;
- How biomedical institutions shape belief and practice, and make facts;
- How extramedical disciplines contribute to reflections on medical practice and knowledge.

## ***Structure***

This seminar brings together medical students (in their second year of study) with graduate students from various disciplinary corners of the University (anthropology, literature, education, social work, law). In addition to shared seminar time (2:30-4:20), graduate students will also be involved in supplemental discussions, from 4:30-5:20 each week and in several additional sessions – another 20 hours total over the semester. These discussions will address additional reading each week. Medical students are welcome (but not expected) to attend any graduate seminar discussions for which they do the additional reading.

## ***Requirements***

The first seminar requirement is participation, based on engagement with readings. Success of discussion depends on verbal contribution. Students should be alert to differences of disciplinary background. (At times these differences will themselves be worth discussing.)

Weekly med student reading assignments will average 20-30 pages. Certain readings will be “must-read” items for all seminar participants, grads included. Some weeks there will be a choice of readings for med students – such that everyone will do one and come to class prepared to unpack it for the rest. Graduate students need not do these. Grad students will be doing considerable additional reading each week, and reporting on that as well. Some shorter readings are linked online and others will be shared in advance.

We will often undertake in seminar to re-read particular passages, alone or together. Toward that possibility, students should bring printed readings to class. Laptops should be opened infrequently if at all: they do not serve well as props for discussion.

Each student is required to submit, by February 28, one 3-4 page paper that responds thoughtfully and critically to one of the readings of the course, or to some cluster of 2-3 readings.

Each student is also required to submit, by April 18, a research essay synthesizing literary, philosophical, historical, sociological, or anthropological (etc.) perspectives on a particular disease. The topic for this paper should be discussed with me by February 7. Collaborative research is welcomed (with a more substantial paper). Each student will make a ten-minute presentation of insights from these researches during one of the last three class sessions (March 28 and after). Discussion and feedback from peers and instructor can be incorporated into the final paper. Presentations will be scheduled by choice or lottery.

Graduate students may be asked to serve as consultants for med students developing research topics and literatures in unfamiliar archives.

Written work should be thoughtful, carefully-edited, and well-organized. Essays will be evaluated for vigor and care of their handling of ideas, and quality of writing – as well as for research effort, particularly in humanities and social science literatures, and associations (including frictions) developed with topics discussed in seminar.

## ***Sessions, Topics, and Readings***

- \* reading required for all students
- Δ reading/s to be chosen/divided among med students
- ♣ reading for grad students

Session 1 (January 10)

### **Introduction**

*lay and professional ideas about disease*

- \* Aronowitz, "Introduction" to *Making Sense of Illness*.
- ♣ Weber, "Science as a Vocation"  
<http://www2.pfeiffer.edu/~lridener/DSS/Weber/scivoc.html>.

Session 2 (January 17)

### **Diagnosis and Cases**

*case history & presentation, conjectural thinking, decryption & intrigue*

- \* Poe, "The Gold-Bug"  
<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoeGold.html>.
- \* Ginzberg, excerpt from "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm," 102-06.
- \* Hunter, excerpts from "The Representation of the Patient," 51-57 and 65-68.
- ♣ Epstein, chapters 1-3 of *Altered Conditions*.
- ♣ Harrowitz, "The Body of the Detective Model."

Session 3 (January 24)

### **Constructing Facts**

*materialist studies of scientific work, authority, credibility, evidence, thought collectives*

- \* Epstein, 1<sup>st</sup> part (1-25) of "Introduction" to *Impure Science*  
<http://content.cdlib.org/xtf/view?docId=ft1s20045x&doc.view=content&chunk.id=d0e61&toc.depth=1&anchor.id=0&brand=ucpress>.
- Δ Goldenberg, "On Evidence and Evidence-Based Medicine: Lessons from the Philosophy of Science"  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.11.031>
- Δ Latour and Woolgar, "The Cycle of Credibility."
- ♣ Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*.

Session 4 (January 31)

### **Symptoms and Experience**

*suffering, deviance & medicalization, disease vs. illness, stigma*

- \* Montaigne, excerpt from “Of Experience,” 831ff.
- Δ Sontag, excerpt from “AIDS and Its Metaphors,” 92-112.
- Δ Dumit, “Illnesses You have to Fight to Get.”  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.06.018>.
- ♣ Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*.

Session 5 (February 7)

### **Diseases Situated – Historically and Culturally**

- Δ Lock and Kaufert, “Menopause, Local Biologies, and Cultures of Aging” <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/82003866/PDFSTART>.
- Δ Wailoo, “The Corporate Conquest of Pernicious Anemia.”
- ♣ Mol, *The Body Multiple*.
  
- \* Discuss research topic with instructor by this week.

Session 6 (February 14)

### **Causality and Explanation**

*Koch’s postulates, clinical-pathological correlation, “scientific method”*

- \* Laqueur, “The White Visibility of the Dead” [review of *The Birth of the Clinic*].
- \* Traweek, excerpt from “Unity, Dyads, Triads, Quads, and Complexity: Cultural Choreographies of Science,” 140-45.
- \* Sutter, “Assigning Causation in Disease: Beyond Koch’s Postulates.”
- ♣ Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*.

Session 7 (February 21)

### **Classification**

*nosology, archives, comparative morphology, normal & normativity*

- Δ Law and Lynch, “Lists, Field Guides, and the Descriptive Organization of Seeing.”
- Δ Timmermans et al., “The Architecture of Difference.”
- ♣ Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*.

Session 8 (February 28) **Civilization and Morbid Hygiene**  
*colonialism & the Other, maldistributions of wealth & health*

- \* Comaroff, “The Diseased Heart of Africa.”
- \* Farmer, “Introduction” to *Infections and Inequalities*.
- ♣ Farmer, *Infections and Inequalities*.
  
- \* Last date to submit 3-page response paper.

*Grad Session I, March 7* **Disease Portraits**

- ♣ Gilman, *Picturing Health and Illness*.

Session 9, March 21 **Student Presentations**  
*case studies in cultural dimensions of disease...*

*Grad Session II, March 28* **Architectures of Knowledge**

- ♣ Keating and Cambrosio, *Biomedical Platforms*.

Session 10, April 4 **Student Presentations (continued)**

Session 11, April 11 **Student Presentations and Wrapup**

*Final Grad Session, April 18* **Topic TBA**

- ♣ Reading TBA
  
- \* Final papers due – *all students*

## Full Citations for Course Readings

- Aronowitz, Robert A. *Making Sense of Illness: Science, Society, and Disease*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Canguilhem, Georges. *The Normal and the Pathological*, translated by Carolyn Fawcett. New York: Zone Books, 1991.
- Comaroff, Jean, et al. "Disease Paradigms in Public and Medical Education." Panel discussion, "The Design of Disease" Symposium, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore, March 1982.
- Comaroff, Jean. "The Diseased Heart of Africa." In *Knowledge, Power, and Practice: The Anthropology of Medicine and Everyday Life*, edited by Shirley Lindenbaum and Margaret Lock. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, 305-29.
- Dumit, Joseph. "Illnesses You have to Fight to Get: Facts as Forces in Uncertain, Emergent Illnesses." *Social Science and Medicine* 62 (2006), 577-90.
- Epstein, Julia. *Altered Conditions: Disease, Medicine, and Storytelling*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Epstein, Steven. *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism, and the Politics of Knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996.
- Farmer, Paul. *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Fleck, Ludwik. *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*. Translated by Fred Bradley and Thaddeus Trenn. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. New York: Vintage Books, 1975.
- Gilman, Sander. *Picturing Health and Illness: Images of Identity and Difference*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. "Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm." In *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, translated by John and Anne Tedeschi. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, 96-125.
- Goldenberg, Maya. "On Evidence and Evidence-Based Medicine: Lessons from the Philosophy of Science." *Social Science and Medicine*, 2006 (in press).
- Harrowitz, Nancy. "The Body of the Detective Model: Charles S. Pierce and Edgar Allan Poe." *The Sign of Three: Dupin, Holmes, Pierce*, edited by Umberto Eco and Thomas Sebeok. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988, 179-97.
- Hunter, Kathryn Montgomery. "The Representation of the Patient." *Doctors' Stories: The Narrative Structure of Medical Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, 51-68.
- Keating, Peter, and Alberto Cambrosio. *Biomedical Platforms: Realigning the Normal and the Pathological in Late-Twentieth-Century Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Laqueur, Thomas. "The White Visibility of the Dead." *University Publishing* 12 (1984), 3-4.
- Latour, Bruno, and Steve Woolgar. "The Cycle of Credibility." In *Science in Context: Readings in the Sociology of Science*, edited by Barry Barnes and David Edge. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982, 35-43.

- Law, John and Michael Lynch. "Lists, Field Guides, and the Descriptive Organization of Seeing." In *Representation in Scientific Practice*, edited by Michael Lynch and Steven Woolgar. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990, 267-99.
- Lock, Margaret, and Patricia Kaufert. "Menopause, Local Biologies, and Cultures of Aging." *American Journal of Human Biology* 13 (2001), 494-504.
- Mol, Annemarie. *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Montaigne, Michel. "Of Experience." In *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, translated by Donald Frame. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986, 815-57.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Gold-Bug."
- Sontag, Susan. "AIDS and Its Metaphors." In *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*. Doubleday, 1990, 92-112.
- Sutter, Morley. "Assigning Causation in Disease: Beyond Koch's Postulates." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 39:4 (summer 1996), 581-92.
- Timmermans, Stefan, Geoffrey C. Bowker, and Susan Leigh Star. "The Architecture of Difference: Visibility, Control, and Comparability in Building a Nursing Interventions Classification." In *Differences in Medicine: Unraveling Practices, Techniques, and Bodies*, edited by Marc Berg and Annemarie Mol. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.
- Traweek, Sharon. "Unity, Dyads, Triads, Quads, and Complexity: Cultural Choreographies of Science." In *Science Wars*, edited by Andrew Ross. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996, 139-150.
- Wailoo, Keith. "The Corporate Conquest of Pernicious Anemia." In *Drawing Blood: Technology and Disease Identity in Twentieth-Century America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, 99-133.
- Weber, Max. "Science as a Vocation." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, translated and edited by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946, 129-56.