

Doctors' Notes

COML 0103

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Course Description

Internist. Surgeon. Essayist. Poet. When we go to the doctor, we hope to meet someone whose medical expertise will allow them to remain objective as they assess our symptoms, and, like a good detective, get to the bottom of things quickly and efficiently. What we may not expect is that the person wearing the white coat is also a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. In this first-year seminar students will explore critical and creative writing by physicians deeply interested in reflecting on the medical encounter alongside intersectional and multi-ethnic narratives of illness and disability. Together, we will ask: what role does the “literary” play in medicine? How do representations of health and healing differ or change as we consider genres such as fiction writing, film, graphic novels, and autobiography from U.S., Caribbean, and Latin American perspectives? Reading these unconventional “doctors’ notes” alongside patients’ writing about their lived experiences of health and healing, we will reflect on how the turn to narrative reveals new facets of the doctor-patient relationship not contained by the traditional genres of medicine.

Requirements (subject to change)

- 3 “attending to a detail” response papers (1-2 pages each): 15%
- 2 essays (5 and 7 pages): 60%
- 1 final creative assignment (e.g., podcast or photo essay with critical reflection): 15%
- Course engagement (including attendance and participation): 10%

Readings

Readings will be available via Canvas, approximately 20-25 pages in preparation for each class session. Films will be on reserve and, when possible, available to stream via Canvas.

Sample Texts

Readings will draw from: Michel Foucault, Frantz Fanon, Gloria Anzaldúa, William Carlos Williams, Atul Gawande, Rafael Campo, Audre Lorde, Rita Charon, and Roberto Bolaño, among other theorists, physician-authors, and patient-writers. Selected films and graphic narratives.