

IDH2930 Section 22B4

Honors (un)Common Reads

Physician Writers in the Postmodern Era

Short title: Physician Postmodern

Fall 2018

Course Instructor:

Christopher R. Cogle, M.D.
Professor of Medicine
University of Florida

Office: Academic Research Building, fourth floor, room R4-216
Phone: 352-273-7493
Email: Christopher.Cogle@medicine.ufl.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Class Day and Time:

Thursdays, Period 9, 4:05 PM to 4:55 PM

Class Location:

Little Hall Room 117

Course Description:

This course introduces students to physician-writers in the Postmodern Era. Students will be exposed to short stories, poems, essays, movies and stand-up comedy sets written by physicians in the middle to late 20th Century and beginning 21st Century. We will discuss the physicians' unique points of view and choices of topic. We will examine how physicians express their ideas about technology, humanity, and self in the Postmodern and Pre-Digital Age. We will compare the use of non-fiction and fiction, and scrutinize various literary devices by physicians in their communications to the public.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Recite the themes, significance, and authors of principal works by physician-writers in the Postmodern Era.
2. Identify literary devices used by physicians and scientists in communicating to the public.
3. Analyze written work by using critical interpretative methods and appropriate terminology.
4. Perceive opportunities for departure and differences of writings in the upcoming Digital Era with writings from the preceding Postmodern Era.

Course Website:

<https://ufl.instructure.com/courses/355089>

Required Materials:

1. Course materials comprised of collected readings (PDF available on course website)
2. YouTube videos (publicly accessible)
3. \$5.98 to \$7.98 to rent two movies via streaming services

Course Requirements and Grades:

- In-Class Discussion 100%

In-Class Discussion: Students are expected to come to each class having completed the weekly reading or viewing assignment. Students will demonstrate their evidence for having read or viewed the assignment prior to class, by participating in the class discussion. Students are expected to participate in class discussions and are welcome to ask the instructors additional questions during office hours or in email.

Before attending each class, students are expected to think about the questions and statements posed for each class. Before attending each class, students are expected to write their thoughts. Writings can be in physical form or electronic. Typical writing length per class is approximately 200 words. Students are welcomed, but not required, to write additional thoughts about the readings. Proof of having written thoughts before class will be demonstrated by the students reading from their writings during class. The instructor may ask to read the students writings to verify task completion.

Each class attendance is 1 point. Each thinking & writing is 1 point. At the end of the course, course points will equal [total participation points * 0.7] + [total thinking & writing points * 0.3]. The following grading scale will be used to calculate course grade:

Grade	Grade Points	Course Points
A	4.0	13, 14
B	3.0	11, 12
C	2.0	10, 11
D	1.0	8, 9
E	0.0	1-7
WF	0.0	0
I	0.0	0
N / NG	0.0	0
W	0.0	0
H	0.0	0
U	0.0	0

E = Failure

H = Deferred grade assigned only in approved sequential courses or flexible learning

I = Incomplete

N / NG = No grade reported

S = Satisfactory

U = Unsatisfactory

W = Withdrew

WF = Withdrew failing

Further information about grades and grading policies are located here:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Attendance: Attendance in this course is mandatory. One absence will be allowed without a deduction of points, but special write-up will be required. One additional absence documented by a doctor's note can be made up through special write-up.

Academic Honesty: All students sign the following statement upon registration at the University of Florida: "I understand that the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University." Instructors for this course fully support the intent of the above statement and will not tolerate academic dishonesty.

Student Responsibility: Students are responsible for understanding all course policies and for accessing all course materials on the UF E-Learning Website through the URL listed above. All assignments should be submitted through the website and in hard copy when requested. Students are also responsible for checking their UF e-mail account for course notifications and for communicating with the instructors related to any situation that may hinder his or her progress or participation in the course.

Disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the instructor when students request accommodation. The instructors will make every attempt to accommodate physical facts.

Week 1 – Samuel Shem (pen name for Stephen Joseph Bergman)
Thursday, August 23, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. The House of God (1978), Chapter 2, <http://bit.ly/2nguxeD>
- B. Fiction as Resistance (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: When this novel was published, [this show](#) was popular in the U.S. and reflected the public's reverence for physicians and their infallible authoritative power. Contrast Shem's writing with this public sentiment in the 1960s and 1970s. How do you view your doctor in the early 21st century? How does your doctor compare to Dr. Marcus Welby and Dr. Roy Basch? What are the risks and benefits of the general public seeing doctors as humans?

Week 2 – Michael Crichton
Thursday, August 30, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. *The Andromeda Strain*, 1971 (rent for \$2.99-\$3.99 via several streaming services)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: What does the author think about human judgement and decision-making? What does the author think about technology? What do you think the author would say about fate? What are the virtues of the heroes? How do the heroes of this story compare to heroes of other stories?

Week 3 – Robin Cook
Thursday, September 6, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. *Coma*, 1978 (rent for \$2.99-\$3.99 via several streaming services)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: All doctors take an oath to *no nocere*, which translates to first, do no harm. How does this story confront this dictate? What are the authors thoughts about aging and medical intervention? One of the producers wanted a man to play the lead role. The director, Robin Cook (physician and author of *Andromeda Strain*), insisted that a woman should play the lead role? How would the story have changed if a man was in the lead role?

Week 4 – Oliver Sacks 1
Thursday, September 13, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. *To See and Not See*, 1993 (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: What does the author think about technology? How does the character have difficulty constructing his external world? What is the author saying about the relationship between our external world and our inner self/selves? How do your external worlds (e.g., school, family, work, hobbies) shape your many selves (e.g., student,

son/daughter, brother/sister, employee, friend)? How do your many selves coalesce broadly into your personality/character/soul? This genre is non-fiction – case study to be exact. His writing style is more clinical than the average novel, but not to the degree of a technical paper in the medical literature. How does the author make his story accessible, interesting, and engaging to the public?

Week 5 – Oliver Sacks 2

Thursday, September 20, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. An Anthropologist on Mars, 1993 (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: What does the author think about the relationship between disease and humans? What is the parable in this tale? What is a paradox in this tale? In what ways is the main character like the author or you? We could look upon a character with a chronic mental illness with horror or pity. But we don't. What literary devices does the author use for us to view this character as a person and not a suffering patient?

Week 6 – Jerome Groopman

Thursday, September 27, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. What's the Trouble? How Doctors Think, 2007 (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: Compare and contrast the author's writing style and devices to earlier non-fiction by Sacks.

Week 7 – Abraham Verghese

Thursday, October 4, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. The Cowpath to America, 1997 (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: What are the authors statements about foreignness and responses to foreignness?

Week 8 – Atul Gawande

Thursday, October 11, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. The Cost Conundrum, 2009 (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: The healthcare community has long known about differences in costs throughout the country. Those data are abundant in the technical medical literature. This article caught the attention of policy makers in the public, including the US President, which further shaped the Affordable Care Act. What literary devices are used by the author to engage and interest the public in this topic?

Week 9 – Tess Gerritsen
Thursday, October 18, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. excerpt from Last to Die, 2012 (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: How does the author's writing style make you feel? Where can you tell she was trained in medicine? How does the author use thriller devices? This author's series of thrillers inspired a formulaic buddy-cop TV series "Rizzoli & Isles" worthy of a short watch: <https://www.hulu.com/watch/922149>

Week 10 – Siddhartha Mukherjee
Thursday, October 25, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. Same But Different (2016) followed by criticism (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: What are the story arcs and what is the science? Compare and contrast this piece to earlier works by Sacks and Groopman. Comment on how well the author informs the public.

Week 11 – Khaled Hosseini
Thursday, November 1, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- B. Excerpt from "The Kite Runner" Chapter 6, 2013 (course materials)

Thinking & Writing Assignment: What does the author express about friendship? How does the author paint the father-son relationship? What tensions does the author touch on? What do kites symbolize? How are relationships similar or different in the U.S. compared to Afghanistan?

Week 12 – Paul Kalanithi
Thursday, November 8, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. How Long Have I Got Left?, 2014

Thinking & Writing Assignment: How does this memoir piece compare to others? How does the physician perspective change its accessibility, interest, or engagement with the public?

Week 13 – Rafael Campo
Thursday, November 15, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. Lost in the Hospital, 1996
- B. Madonna and Child, 1999
- C. The Abdominal Exam, 1999
- D. *from* The Changing Face of AIDS: V. Elegy for the AIDS Virus, 1999

Thinking & Writing Assignment: What themes are presented by the author?

Week 14 – No class
Thursday, November 22, 2018

No class. Thanksgiving break.

Week 15 – Ken Jeong
Thursday, November 29, 2018

Reading Assignment:

- A. Stand-up set, 1998: <https://youtu.be/LgQ1JnhV9pl>
- B. Stand-up set, 2016: <https://youtu.be/UTDs8hZRSCo>

Thinking & Writing Assignment: Compare and contrast his early stand-up to his later stand-up. How does medical humor compare to other forms of comedy?