

## Physician Writers in the Postmodern Era

*Short title: Physician Writers*

<b>Course Number:</b>	IDH2930
<b>Section:</b>	0178
<b>Class #:</b>	26250
<b>Credits:</b>	1
<b>Term:</b>	Fall 2020
<b>Course Prerequisites:</b>	None
<b>Course Director:</b>	Christopher R. Cogle, M.D. Professor of Medicine University of Florida <a href="http://www.cogle.com">http://www.cogle.com</a> Office: ARB, fourth floor, room R4-216 Phone: 352-273-7493 Email: <a href="mailto:christopher.cogle@medicine.ufl.edu">christopher.cogle@medicine.ufl.edu</a>
<b>Class Day and Time:</b>	Thursdays, Period 9, 4:05 PM to 4:55 PM
<b>Class Location:</b>	<a href="https://ufl.zoom.us/j/98798604588">https://ufl.zoom.us/j/98798604588</a>

### Course Description:

This course introduces students to physician-writers in the Postmodern Era. Students will read short stories, poems, essays, movies and stand-up comedy sets written by physicians in the middle to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century and beginning 21<sup>st</sup> 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/408804>

### Required Materials:

1. Course materials comprised of collected readings via 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 by participating in the class discussion. Thought-provoking questions will be provided to prepare students for the discussion. Students are expected to participate in class discussions by asking and answering questions.

Each class participation is 1 point. At the end of the course, course points will be summed. 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 for the absence. One additional absence documented by a doctor's note can be made up through special write-up of the missed class.

**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)

### Reading Assignment:

- A. The House of God (1978), Chapter 2  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=TShokNWOGy8C&lpg=PT1&dq=the%20house%20of%20god%20shem%20chapter%202&pg=PT29#v=onepage&q&f=false>
- B. Fiction as Resistance (course materials)

**Thinking 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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

### Watching 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 – Oliver Sacks

### Reading Assignment:

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

**Thinking 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 4 – Robin Cook

### Watching Assignment:

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

**Thinking 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 5 – Jerome Groopman**

#### **Reading Assignment:**

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

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

### **Week 6 – Abraham Verghese**

#### **Reading Assignment:**

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

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

### **Week 7 – Atul Gawande**

#### **Reading Assignment:**

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

**Thinking 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 8 – Tess Gerritsen**

#### **Reading Assignment:**

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

**Thinking Assignment:** How does the authors 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 9 – Siddhartha Mukherjee**

### **Reading Assignment:**

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

**Thinking 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 10 – Khaled Hosseini**

### **Reading Assignment:**

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

**Thinking 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 11 – Paul Kalanithi**

### **Reading Assignment:**

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

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

## **Week 12 – C. Dale Young**

### **Reading Assignment:**

- A. Corpus Medicum
- B. Annunciation

**Thinking Assignment:** What themes are presented by the author?

## **Week 13 – No class**

Thanksgiving break.

## **Week 14 – Ken Jeong**

### **Reading Assignment:**

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

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