

WGST 239: MEDICINE, RACE, & GENDER

Summer Session 1:

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Course Description

The Hippocratic oath begins, “first, do no harm.” And yet, the history and practices of the medical field have a very long history of impacting the lives and experiences of those whose bodies are deemed to deviate from an ideal norm in ways that *are* harmful. Those affected have historically included women, people of color, LGBTQ folks, and people with disabilities. At the same time, lack of access to medicine or medical care perpetuates stratifications of health and longevity along the lines of class/gender/ethnicity. In short, questions of public health and public good run up against questions of the relative value of lives in relation to power.

In this course, we will explore equity in relation to medicine and health: We ask, “whose health”? and “for the good of whom”? when encountering a diagnosis or a treatment in our readings and in the world around us. Grounded in an exploration of US history and practices – with some transnational and geopolitical relations and contagions – this course examines how relations of power and identity politics are deeply enmeshed with the way medicine and medical care has been conceptualized, practiced, and experienced. We read a range of texts and genres, from historical and theoretical to memoir and documentary film. With what we learn together, we will brainstorm how we can make a better system, and we will contribute to equitable public knowledge online with our final projects.

Your Professor: I have a PhD in English and am a scholar of 20th Century American literature and cultural production, specializing in representations and/or productions of sickness and disability specifically as they relate to African American, gender/sexuality, and critical media studies. I am excited to engage in meaningful conversations with you on topics I feel strongly about, as we collectively extend the depth and breadth of our knowledge base, our critical literacy skills, and our communication skills.

The best way to contact me is through email. If you don't hear from me within 12 hours, and it's time sensitive, please send a follow up email, or text/WhatsApp me at +1-718-541-9187. If a question requires more than a few sentences in response, then it is probably best to just meet in office hours, or to use that email or text to schedule a time to meet with me.

Technical Support

All students have 24/7 access to Canvas technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including live chat and a support hotline at 855-338-2770. Use the 'Help' icon in the lower left of your Canvas window to view all available support and feedback options. If you're looking for help on a specific feature, check out the [Canvas Student Guide](#).

Learning Goals/Rules of Engagement

1. Thinking through Inequity, towards Social Justice. As a Women's and Gender Studies (WGST) and a Disability Studies (DS) course, an overarching learning goal of ours, together, is to advance your awareness and critical understanding of relations of power and inequities specific to our topic/s (in this case, bias and inequity in medicine). I lay out a rough sequence below, while recognizing that, based on your experiences and your prior study, many of you are already thinking through inequity and working towards creating a more socially just world:
 - a. Learn that inequities (and privileges) exist, both in daily life experiences and in concrete and measurable outcomes.
 - b. Learn and understand the history of these inequities.
 - c. Connect what we are learning to current events and/or cultural productions (i.e. exhibits, shows, or events)
 - d. Arrive at critical insight into how inequities operate, and how they are perpetuated.
 - e. Engage in praxis, which means joining theory and action in order to have an impact or make a change.

We will share in and accomplish the various aspects of this goal (especially a.-d.) via our readings, reflections, and discussions, including associated assignments. The praxis component is fulfilled by our final project, which involves collaboratively contributing to wikipedia articles related to your interests and our course focus. Praxis can also be something that happens in your daily life, beyond class, as you learn how to communicate effectively about what we are learning together to others.

2. Skillful Interdisciplinary Communication. Connected to the element of praxis and also as a function of being an upper-level WGST and DS elective course, skillful interdisciplinary communication is another important learning goal for us. By necessity, in a class like this one, the student body is interdisciplinary. This means that students come from different majors, and sometimes widely differing fields of study -- ranging from Biology to English. This can pose a unique challenge and opportunity to communicate skillfully across disciplines. What this entails is:
 - a. Active listening, and asking questions when you don't understand, and need clarification. We have varying levels of knowledge and expertise in different settings/areas, so asking questions should never be seen as a sign of inadequacy in any way. Often, others have the same question, so asking helps everyone out.
 - b. Assume good intentions in the event of miscommunication; ask clarifying questions when in doubt. This one is a big one, as there can be unnecessary animosity or hurt feelings sometimes, when there is simply a miscommunication based on different social or scholarly contexts.
 - c. Restate things in different ways (paraphrase) if someone doesn't understand what you meant. Try to avoid specialized language and jargon.
 - d. Present information in accessible language for the general public, and be persuasive in communicating a given inequity *not by rhetoric* but through adequate and verifiable sources as support. This part is especially important for the wikipedia project.

- e. Be a critical consumer/discern facts. This part applies to the wikipedia project, as well, as you will need to look for gaps in the articles you choose to edit, as well as assess your peer's contributions in peer review.

Accessibility and Inclusion

One of the central tenets of Georgetown's educational mission is *cura personalis*, a Latin phrase meaning "care of the whole person." Georgetown is committed to showing care and concern for each student by creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment that follows universal design principles to meet the needs of its diverse student body.

I am committed to creating a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.).

If you have documented *or undocumented* access needs, please let me know in our preliminary office hours meeting, and I will work to ensure that your needs are met. If any new needs/limitations arise over the course of our session, let me know.

If your name or pronoun needs to be corrected, please let me know, so that I can make the appropriate changes to my records.

Students with Disabilities

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, individuals with disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students are responsible for communicating their needs to the [Academic Resource Center](#), the office that oversees disability support services, (202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <https://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/disability/>) as soon as possible to allow for time to process requests. For the most current and up-to-date University policy information, please refer to the [Georgetown University Academic Resource Center website](#).

Course Requirements

Note on TIMELY READING AND PARTICIPATION for hybrid, online Summer Session:

This is a hybrid online summer course, meeting four times a week. What this means is that most days we will meet synchronously, on Zoom; and other days, we will hold multi-media asynchronous discussions. You should budget your time so stay on track with readings and responses. If you fall behind in our compressed summer session, it will be considerably more challenging to catch up than in a usual semester, so try to avoid falling behind.

You will be expected to read a fair amount for each meeting, as we are condensing three credit hours into five weeks of course time. I will do my best to balance rigor with manageability, and welcome your feedback on these points, as we go. My goal is to foster learning that you will carry with you into your future endeavors, not to exhaust you with excessive work.

We have a discussion board posting requirement ahead of each meeting, by 11am each class day. Try to stick to this routine as much as possible. I read all of these prior to our meetings, and they help me to structure our discussion based on what resonated with you, what connections you are making to current events, as well as where I may need to foreground or clarify certain aspects of a given reading. If our meeting is asynchronous, the initial post will be due at the usual time, for consistency, and to give time for subsequent posts.

ATTENDANCE (10%): Just as with readings and discussion posts, attendance is also harder to catch up on in the compressed summer schedule, so try to avoid missing class. I take attendance for my records, but not for grading purposes. Your “attendance” will be counted if you post to the discussion board on time. If you have to miss a zoom class meeting, the zoom recording will be up as soon as I get it after class (this will vary, but usually within a few hours). If you have follow up comments or questions after watching the recording, or if you missed the 11 AM post, you may post these to our discussion thread for the day, *and send me an email with the content of your post*, and this can be considered towards “attendance”. *If you know that you will not be able to make it to class, or be able to post by 11am, for a given day, please notify me as soon as possible.*

PARTICIPATION (25%):

1. **Preliminary Office Hours (5%):** In the first week of class, everyone will meet with me for a short 15-minute meeting. Since we are entirely online, this is an important step so that communication channels open and you know how to find me in office hours when you need to.
2. **Discussion Board Posts (15%):** Before/by 11am the day of each class meeting, you will post to Canvas several questions or connections to your own life, or to current events. This is not an exhaustive post and can be quite brief on occasion, but these are vital to our class as they give me a sense of what aspects of each text require further explanation, among other things. *If we have a keyword search (see below) for that day, include a very brief assessment/response to your findings in your comments, but not instead of responding to the reading.* Canvas allows you to post in writing, audio, and video.
3. **Active class participation (5%):** Listen actively and participate orally, via Zoom chat (synchronous days), or via discussion board (asynchronous days). We will also have a sequence of reflection activities for this component. These are centered around personal experience and help to keep track of your learning process as you acquire new information and come to understand different genres and disciplines of scholarship.

NOTE TAKER (5%): For accessibility purposes, each day, one person will be assigned as the designated note-taker. These notes can be hand-written or typed, and once you send them to me, I post them to our page on Canvas for that day, along with our zoom recording, if there is one for that day. This is a resource for yourself and your classmates to reference. When it is your turn to be note-taker, you will do your best to document class discussion, especially any key terms that we defined together, or questions that were asked and/or answered (we may not always be able to answer certain questions, but these are equally important as they open up avenues for further research and conversation). If you miss class on your note taking day, you may create a notes document after watching our Zoom recording, but preferably someone would switch with you. ****If you do this twice, it can be extra credit. ****If we are asynchronous, this looks more like summarizing key points and questions from the discussion board.

NEWS PRESENTATION (5%): Give a short presentation on something in the news (or, something like a twitter thread is acceptable) that is related to our class (it doesn't have to be on the exact topic of the reading for that day). This is a way to practice research skills in preparation for the wiki project, and it also allows us as a class to apply what we learn to our immediate context. You'll share with the class what the story and source are, as well as how it relates to our course topic. There will be a short Q and A. This will take no more than 10-15 minutes. If we are asynchronous, this can be pre-recorded.

DISCUSSION LEADERS (20%): In pairs, or solo, everyone will have a selected day on which they lead discussion as a team. Your responsibilities on this are: Come up with a set of discussion questions, either for synchronous or asynchronous class discussion. I am available to offer feedback or guidance on this portion of the assignment ahead of time, if you wish. This assignment will look slightly different between synchronous and asynchronous sessions, and I'll provide instructions for each. If live in Zoom, each partner will take turns posing the questions and moderating the chat. If on an asynchronous chat board, this will look more like moderating discussion posts.

WEEKLY JOURNALING (10%): To synthesize what we discuss each week, and reinforce your learning process, you will turn in a short weekly journal entry at the end of each week, via Canvas (each week is worth 2%). If we decide collectively that we'd like these to be a running course blog that everyone else in class can see, we'll do that instead/in addition.

COLLABORATIVE WIKI EDU PROJECT (25%): In small groups, you will choose a wikipedia article to contribute to, based on your interests and our class topics. I and the librarian, as well as a designated Wiki Edu associate, will be there to support you through this process. We have a separate dashboard for this project, which includes training modules that are meant to be completed on a timeline, to best equip you for ease in completing this. The idea is that this is a praxis project that allows us to disseminate to the public important information relating to health equity and access, as well as information about the impacts of bias, etc.

READINGS: You are responsible for reading the assigned and provided readings for each class session. Additional Resources/Recommended Readings are optional.

KEYWORD ONLINE RESEARCH NOTES: Almost every week, we will have one or two self-guided internet research dives on keywords related to our readings for the day. This is an exercise that draws on a daily activity (google searching) in order to engage with common conceptions or histories around certain topics. This goes towards our learning goal of critical literacy (2c) and making connections about what we are learning (1c). This is informal, but take the time to write a few sentences or a bullet point list about your findings and your analysis of your findings (this can be about emotional response or critical assessment) as we will share about these in class, and you may want to include them in your weekly journal entries.

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change and UPDATE; Canvas modules/pages will always be up to date.

WEEK 1: Introductions, Unspeakable Histories

Introduction: (In)Equity and Power:

6/1 Introductions, Foucault, Michel. "The Birth of Social Medicine" (pp. 134-156, PDF) (1972)
-- (22 pages)

*go through syllabus and dashboard

*email me research interests after class

Unspeakable Histories: Gynecology, Scientific Racism, and Historical Silences

6/2 Briggs, Laura. "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in Late Nineteenth Century Obstetrics and Gynecology" (2000)

*pick news days and discussion leader days

6/3 *ASYNCHRONOUS*

Washington, Harriet. "The American Janus of Medicine and Race" (Intro), *Medical Apartheid* (2007)
and Owens, Deirdre Cooper "Intro: American Gynecology and Black Lives" *Medical Bondage* (2017)
SUPPLEMENTAL:

"Southern Discomfort" (Ch 1), *Med Apartheid*

Snorton, C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides* (ch. 1) (2017)

6/4 Rusert, Britt. *Fugitive Science: Empiricism and Freedom in Early African American Culture*. (2017)
(Ch. 5)

*SCIENTIFIC RACISM Keyword Research

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Intro and Conclusion in Rusert book.

*in class time for Wiki: Pick articles and complete google form for Jade on 6/4

Journal entry 1 due 5pm 6/5

WEEK 2: Diagnosing/Containing Otherness I

Gender, Sexuality, and Diagnosis

6/8 Ben-Moshe et al., *Disability Incarcerated*, Foreword (by Angela Davis) and Preface (pp. vii-xiv),
Ch 1 (Ben-Moshe et al., "Reconsidering Confinement") (pp. 1-24)

6/9 Perkins Gilman, Charlotte. "The Yellow Wall-Paper," "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper"

*drawing activity 1h + Wangechi Mutu "[Histology of the Different Classes of Uterine Tumors](#)"

*HYSTERIA/REST CURE Keyword Research

*queer/sexuality overview

reflection activity 1

6/10 *ASYNCHRONOUS*

Clare, Eli. *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling With Cure* Ch.1 "Ideology of Cure"(pp.5-17)+ Ch. 3 "In Tandem With Cure"(pp. 37-48)

and Johnson, Merri Lisa. *Girl In Need of A Tourniquet: Memoir of a Borderline Personality*. (ch. 6: "Rocket Girl" and ch. 8: "Becoming Borderline: Notes on a Flawed Diagnostic Label")

*GENDER BIAS IN BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER Keyword Search
SUPPLEMENTAL:

Johnson, "[Label C/Rip](#)" *Social Text DSM Crip*

6/11 *Jade Madrid, Librarian visit for 1st half of class*

Spurgas, Alyson. "(Un)queering Identity: The Biosocial Production of Intersex/DSD"

*INTERSEX or ASEXUAL/ITY Keyword Search

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Kim, Eunjung. "How Much Sex is Healthy?: The Pleasures of Asexuality" (*Against Health* 157-167)

Plemons, Eric and Chris Straayer. "Introduction: Reframing the Surgical." *TSQ*. vol. 5, no. 2, 2018, pp. 164-173.

Journal entry 2 due 5pm 6/12

WEEK 3: Diagnosing/Containing Otherness II

Racism, Diagnosis and Degradation

6/15 *MAYBE ASYNCHRONOUS*

Kanani, Nadia. "Race and Madness: Locating the Experiences of Racialized People with Psychiatric Histories in the US and Canada" and Yerxa, Jana-Rae "[The Unraveling of a Colonized Mind](#)"

6/16 Metzl, Jonathan. *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*. (excerpts)

6/17 *MAYBE ASYNCHRONOUS*

Mollow, Anna. "Unvictimized: Towards a Fat Black Disability Studies"

Mingus, Mia. "*Medical Industrial Complex Visual*"

*MEDICAL INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX Keyword Research

6/18 Geary, Adam. *State Intimacies: Antiracist Racism and the AIDS Epidemic*.

and Taylor, Keagha Yamahatta "The Black Plague" (About COVID-19)

SUPPLEMENTAL, but recommended (7 mins):

Mutual Aid Video by Dean Spade and Ciro Carillo:

[We're All We've Got, We're All We Need: A Mutual Aid Explainer](#)

[Mutual Aid 101](#)

reflection activity 2

Journal entry 3 due 5pm 6/19

WEEK 4: Pain and Equity

Opioids, Pain, and Bias

6/22 Opioid Crisis, Racial Questions (audio): [A](#) (npr, 2017), [B](#) (npr, 2019)

and New Yorker [2017 article on Purdue Pharma](#)

*PAIN BIAS (gender, race) keyword search or HARM REDUCTION

6/23 *MAYBE ASYNCHRONOUS*

Patsavas, Alyson. "Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain: Leaky Bodies, Connective Tissue, and Feeling Discourse." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*. vol. 8, no. 2, 2014, pp. 203-218.

Listening to Experience

6/24 *MAYBE ASYNCHRONOUS*

Lorde, Audre. *The Cancer Journals*.

*MASTECTOMY TATTOO and BIKINI MEDICINE search

*Revisit: Wangechi Mutu "[Histology of the Different Classes of Uterine Tumors](#)"

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Labuski, Christine. *It Hurts Down There*

6/25 Biehl, João. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* (excerpts)

[Mapping exercise][poetry exercise]

Journal entry 4 due 5pm 6/26

WEEK 5: Reproductive Rights, Envisioning Better Practices

Eugenics and Reproductive Rights

6/29 *MAYBE ASYNCHRONOUS*

Washington, "The Black Stork"

*BLACK MATERNAL HEALTH Keyword Search

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Roberts, Dorothy. "Reproduction in Bondage" *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*

6/30 *MAYBE ASYNCHRONOUS*

Tajima-Peña. *No Mas Bebés*

and

Smith, A. "Better Dead than Pregnant"

SISTER SONG/REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE Keyword Search

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Washington, "Limning the Semantic Frontier of Informed Consent"

CONCLUDING CLASSES

7/1 Metzl and Hansen, "Structural Competency"

Mobley and Bailey, "Work in the Intersections"

Keyword Search STRUCTURAL COMPETENCY WORKING GROUP, DISABILITY JUSTICE

7/2 Ben-Moshe, "Abolition as Knowledge and Ways of Undoing", *Decarcerating Disability:*

Deinstitutionalization and Prison Abolition

SUPPLEMENTAL:

Piepzana-Samarasinha, Leah Lakshmi, "Care Webs," *Care Work*

Final Projects/**reflection activity 3**
Journal entry 5 due 5pm 7/3
Wiki Reflection

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ben-Moshe, Liat, et al., editors. *Disability Incarcerated: Imprisonment and Disability in the United States and Canada*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.
- Biehl, João. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. 2008. University of California Press, 2014.
- Briggs, Laura. "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization' and the 'Savage' Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology." *American Quarterly*. vol. 52, no. 2, 2000, pp. 246-273.
- Clare, Eli. *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling With Cure*. Duke, 2017.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. Edited by James D. Faubion. Translated by Robert Hurley, Vol. 3: Power. The New Press, 2001.
- Geary, Adam. *Antiblack Racism and the AIDS Epidemic: State Intimacies*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.
- Johnson, Merri Lisa. *Girl in Need of a Tourniquet: Memoir of a Borderline Personality*. Seal Press, 2010.
- Kirkland, Anna and Jonathan Metzl, Eds. *Against Health: How Health Became the New Morality*. NYU, 2010.
- Lorde, Audre. *The Cancer Journals*. Aunt Lute, 1980.
- Metzl, Jonathan. *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*. Beacon, 2009.
- Mingus, Mia. "Disability Justice' is Simply Another Term for Love. *Leaving Evidence*. Web. 3 Nov. 2018.**
- . "Medical-Industrial Complex Visual." *Leaving Evidence*. 6 Feb. 2016.
- Mollow, Anna. "Unvictimized: Towards a Fat Black Disability Studies." *African American Review*, 50.2, 2017.
- Patsavas, Alyson. "Recovering a Cripistemology of Pain: Leaky Bodies, Connective Tissue, and Feeling Discourse." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*. vol. 8, no. 2, 2014.
- Perkins-Gilman, Charlotte. "The Yellow Wallpaper." Tbd.**
- . "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper." Tbd.
- Piepzna Samarasinha, Lakshmi. Tbd.**
- Plemons, Eric and Chris Straayer. "Introduction: Reframing the Surgical." *TSQ*. vol. 5, no. 2, 2018, pp. 164-173.
- Puenzo, Lucía. *XXY*. Cinéfondation, 2007.
- Roberts, Dorothy. *Killing the Black Body*.
- Rusert, Britt. *Fugitive Science: Empiricism and Freedom in Early African American Culture*. NYU, 2017.
- Serano, Julia "[Trans People Still Disordered in DSM?](#)" *Social Text DSM Crip*
- Smith, Andrea. Tbd.**
- Tajima-Peña, Renée, director. *No Más Bebés*. PBS, 2015.
- Washington, Harriet. *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present*. Doubleday, 2006.

Additional Recommended Sources

Bailey, "Toward a Black Feminist Health Science Studies,"

Erevelles, Nirmala and Michael Gill. "The Absent Presence of Elsie Lacks: Hauntings at the Intersections of Race, Class, Gender, and Disability.." *African American Review*, 50.2, 2017.

Hedva, Johanna. "Sick Woman Theory." *Mask Magazine*. Web. 19 Jan. 2016.

Helen. "To Be Queer, Black, and 'Sick.'" *Autostraddle*. Web. 19 Feb. 2014.

Labuski, Christine. *It Hurts Down There: The Bodily Imaginaries of Female Genital Pain*. SUNY, 2015

Metzl, Jonathan. "Structural Competency." *American Quarterly*. 64.2, 2012, pp. 213-218.

Mollow, Anna. "Cripystemologies." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies*. 8.2, 2014.

--. "Bellyaching"

Patton, Cindy. "From Nation to Family: Containing African AIDS"

Schalk, Sami. *Bodyminds Reimagined: (Dis)Ability, Race, and Gender in Black Women's Speculative Fiction*. Duke, 2018.

Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Crown, 2010.

Snorton, C. Riley. *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. Minnesota, 2017.

Ball, Alan, director. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. HBO, 2017.