

Power, Identity, and Inequality in Medicine

Instructor: Prof. CHEUNG Shoan Yin (she/her/hers)

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Course Hours:

Monday	Lecture	2:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.	LSK 302
	Tutorial	4:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.	LSK 302 / LSK 203

This course is an introduction to the medical humanities, an interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to understand the social context of health and illness beyond the hospital, clinic, and laboratory. In particular, this course will emphasize how issues of power contribute to unequal patterns of risk and disease in our modern society. To do this, students will learn major theories and methods in the health humanities to understand how culture, power, and identity—including race, gender, capitalism, and colonialism—shapes the management of disease and individual illness experience in both Asian and global contexts. A critical concern in this course is whether or not the organization of medical care confronts questions of social justice in medical treatment and public health. Students will also grapple with the question of whether our institutions of medicine and public health function as a form of social control using examples from both past and present.

As an introductory course in the medical humanities, this course assumes no prior knowledge. Students from all academic backgrounds and interests are welcome.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, you will be able to:

- Gain exposure to foundational concepts and theories in the medical humanities
- Explain how media shapes public understandings of health and disease
- Situate individual illness experience in the social, political, and cultural contexts of disease
- Analyze how social inequality shapes disease outcomes

Course Assessment

Participation	20%
Short Paper	20%
Presentation	20%
Final Project	40%

Tutorials

Tutorials for this course will begin after the ADD/DROP period on the third week of class, on 22 January 2024. Your tutorial session will be assigned then.

1. **8 Jan.** **Introduction: Power, Identity, and Inequality in Medicine**

2. **15 Jan.** **Medicine and Power**
 - Warwick Anderson, “Excremental Colonialism,” *American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (2006)
 - Franz Fanon, “Medicine and Colonialism,” *A Dying Colonialism* (1959)

3. **22 Jan.** **Plague in Hong Kong**
 - Cecilia Chu, “Combating Nuisance: Sanitation, Regulation, and the Politics of Property in Colonial Hong Kong,” in *Imperial Contagions: Medicine, Hygiene and Cultures of Planning in Asia* (2013)
 - Mary Sutphen, “Not What but Where: Bubonic Plague and the Reception of Germ Theory in Hong Kong and Calcutta, 1894-1897,” *Journal for the History of Medicine and Allied Science* (1997)

4. **29 Jan.** **Disease, Stigma, and Representations**
 - Supeepa Abeysinghe, “Ebola at the Borders: Newspaper Representations and the Politics of Border Control,” *Third World Quarterly* (2016)
 - Evelyn Hammonds, “Race, Sex, AIDS: The Construction of ‘Other,’” *Radical America* (1987)

Recommended:

 - Amy Fairchild and Eileen Tynan, “Policies of Containment: Immigration in the Era of AIDS,” *American Journal of Public Health* (1994)
 - Charles Rosenberg, “What is an Epidemic: AIDS in Historical Perspective,” *Daedalus* (1989)

5. **5 Feb.** **Medicine and Authority**

- Peter Conrad, “Medicalization and Social Control,” *Annual Review of Sociology* (1992)
- Dan Blumhagen, “The Doctor’s White Coat: The Image of the Physician in Modern America,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* (1979)
- Byron Good and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, “‘Learning Medicine:’ The Constructing of Medical Knowledge at Harvard Medical School,” *The Anthropology of Medicine and Everyday Life* (1993)

6. 12 Feb. Lunar New Year

7. 19 Feb. Gender and Medicine

- Lisa Bowleg, “The Problem with the Phrase *Women and Minorities: Intersectionality*—an Important Theoretical Framework for Public Health,” *American Journal of Public Health* (2012)
- Robbie Davis-Floyd and Elizabeth Davis, “Intuition as Authoritative Knowledge in Midwifery and Homebirth,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (1996)

8. 26 Feb. Mystery Conditions

- In-class screening: *Unrest* (2018)

9. 4 Mar. Reading Week

10. 11 Mar. Structural Violence

- Paul Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below,” *Daedalus* (1996)
- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Nervoso,” *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life* (2007 [1992])

Recommended:

- Seth Holmes, “How the Poor Suffer: Embodying the Violence Continuum,” *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in*

the United States (2013)

- Nicholas Bartlett, “Idling in Mao’s Shadow: Heroin Addiction and the Contested Therapeutic Value of Socialist Traditions of Laboring,” *Culture, Medicine, & Psychiatry* (2018)

11. 18 Mar. Refugee Medicine

- Aihwa Ong, “Making the Biopolitical Subject: Cambodian Immigrants, Refugee Medicine, and Cultural Citizenship in California,” *Social Science and Medicine* (1995)
- Janelle Taylor, “The Story Catches You and You Fall Down: Tragedy, Ethnography, and ‘Cultural Competence,’” *Medical Anthropology Theory* 2003

12. 25 Mar. Global Drug Trials and the Neoliberal Logics of Health

- Adriana Petryna, “Ethical Variability: Drug Development and Globalizing Clinical Trials,” *American Ethnologist* (2008)
- Kaushik Sunder-Rajan, “Experimental Values: Indian Clinical Trials and Surplus Health,” *New Left Review* 45 (2010)

13. 1 Apr. Easter Holiday

14. 8 Apr. Final Presentation Workshop

15. 15 Apr. Final Presentations