



GLOBAL NARRATIVES OF ILLNESS AND DISABILITY

FRENCH 375G

SPRING 2017 – MON & WEDS, 2:00-3:20 PM

Are you okay? is a question that invites a story. But how we ask that question and how we listen are as much a part of the “narrative” as the response itself. After all, often when we inquire about another’s health or wellbeing, we already have a story in mind; what we anticipate or want to hear. In this course, we will encounter diverse narratives of illness and disability—some familiar, some foreign—that will hopefully challenge not only our assumptions about the meanings and experiences of illness and disability, but the way we ask questions: of an-other and of a text as well.

In this course, we will explore various types of narratives that, separately and together, help shed light onto the socio-cultural meanings of and narratives about illness and disability (and the ill and disabled). We will explore the ways in which subjects of illness and disability engage in storytelling to relate and, often, to re-imagine their worlds.

Course materials will include novels, films, oral testimonies, and critical essays from the U.S., the Caribbean, France, Senegal, and South Africa. In our readings and viewings, we

will consider questions of self-representation, stigma, racial and gender biases, politics, and belonging.

Required texts: Marie Cardinal, *The Words to Say It*; Rhea Côté Robbins, *Wednesday's Child*; Edwidge Danticat, *The Dew Breaker*; Fatou Diome, *The Belly of the Atlantic*; Hervé Guibert, *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life*.

Non-conventional primary materials will include USC Shoah Foundation oral testimonies and a book of photography and written testimonies of survivors of the Rwandan genocide, *The Wounds of Silence*.

Taught in English, this course fulfills the GE core literacy requirement in Humanistic Inquiry, as well as a French major/minor elective.

DR. JULIE VAN DAM
JULIE.VANDAM@USC.EDU