

GLOBAL NARRATIVES OF ILLNESS AND DISABILITY

FREN 375MGW

SPRING 2020

TUES/THURS, 2–3:20PM



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 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 interrogate 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 theoretical works 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, cultural politics, and belonging. Readings include Jean-Dominique Bauby’s *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, Marie Cardinal’s *The Words to Say It*, Edwidge Danticat’s *The Dew Breaker*, Fatou Diome’s *The Belly of the Atlantic*, and Hervé Guibert’s *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life*. Films include Djibril Diop Mambety’s *The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun*, Julian Schnabel’s *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, and Khady Sylla’s *An Open Window*.

Taught in English, this course satisfies GE-B, GE-G, the Diversity Requirement, and counts towards French and Narrative Studies major/minor. Dr. Julie Van Dam, Department of French and Italian (julie.vandam@usc.edu)

