

Professor Trisha Tucker, Thematic Option Honors Program

Lecture T 4 – 5:50 pm 63573D

**In Sickness and in Health:
Doctors and Patients in Literature and Film**

In this Reading Salon, we're going to delve into the stories we tell about health and healing, sickness and death. These are powerful stories with universal appeal. They shed light on the vulnerability and resilience we share as humans. They remind us that the most fundamental things about us—our bodies and minds—are always in flux, not the stable markers of identity we might wish them to be. And they hold particular value for those considering careers in the health professions; by emphasizing the humanity of both patients and healthcare practitioners, these stories inspire the self-awareness and empathy that are so vital for the job.

We'll create our final reading and viewing list as a class, choosing from a variety of narrative formats and genres, including fiction, memoir, poetry, graphic novel, film, and documentary. Possible themes we'll explore include:

- Literary and filmic representations of healthcare professionals—medical students, doctors, nurses, paramedics, and psychiatrists;
- The trials and tribulations of medical training;
- Sticky problems in medical ethics, including medical testing, forced medical care, and disparities in healthcare access;
- The effects that race, class, and gender can have on patient treatment;
- Changing attitudes toward and treatment of physical and mental illness, across eras and cultures; and
- What science fiction can teach us about the future of medicine.

CORE 200 lasts for twelve weeks (instead of the usual fifteen) and meets once each week for two hours in a seminar setting. The Salon encourages the sharing of ideas and thoughts and highlights common themes and interdisciplinary connections as they emerge from discussion. Discussions that grow out of reading groups can become the starting point for future research. The two-unit Salon is an integral part of the Thematic Approaches to Humanities and Society minor. A special feature of the Reading Salon is that some of the books to be read by the participants will be selected by the students. The course is graded Credit/No Credit.

Proposed Texts (final list to be determined by class)

Laurie Kaye Abraham. *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America.*

Lori Alvord. *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear: The First Navajo Woman Surgeon Combines Western Medicine and Traditional Healing.*

Atul Gawande. *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End.*

Paul Kalanithi. *When Breath Becomes Air.*

Ian McEwan. *The Children Act.*

Mary Roach. *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers.*

Martin Scorsese, dir. *Bringing out the Dead.*

Rebecca Skloot. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.*

Jill Bolte Taylor. *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey.*

Selections from *House*, *Grey's Anatomy*.