

English 4334-01  
Medical Humanities

# Literature of Illness and Trauma

## **Instructor**

Melissa Hudler

## **Office Hours**

M: 2:00-4:00

T: 10:30-12:00

Th: 2:00-4:00

F: 10:30-12:00

And by appointment

## **Contact**

Library 615

880-8525

melissa.hudler@

lamar.edu

Blackboard email

\*I check my email on

weekdays until 5 pm.

You can expect a timely

response to emails sent

before 5 pm.

## **Required Resources and Materials**

*Little, Brown Handbook,*  
12<sup>th</sup> edition

Socrative Access:  
Room #166703

Folder with pockets

Loose-leaf paper and  
pens

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## Welcome to the class!

Dear Students,

I am excited to have you in this class, and I am excited to be teaching it! It may seem strange to express excitement about a seemingly melancholy, possibly depressing, class. Rest assured, it is not my intention to heap such grief upon you. Rather, my goal is to explore the issues in the literature with you in a way that reveals their capacity and

potential for strength, beauty, and renewal, as well as their value to us as readers/witnesses and fellow human beings.

Literature of Illness and Trauma is a class inspired by my recent interest in the Medical Humanities, a discipline that puts art and literature into the service of medicine by using these fields to develop the skills of observation and empathy in medical students.

In a time when the usefulness and real-world value of studying literature is being called into question, a class such as this is not only timely but also necessary. My hope is that your engagement with the literature leaves you more observant and compassionate. Indeed, my primary goal for teaching literature and writing has always been one of personal relevance and value. Thus, I promise to do all I can to help you realize such an experience.

## Course Purpose and Value

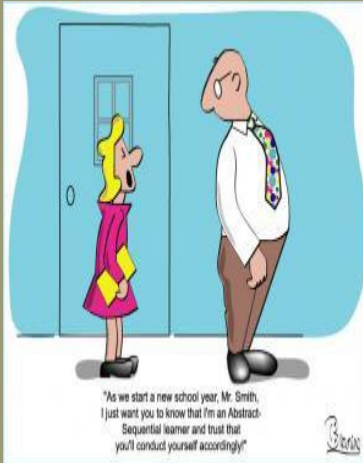
Why read and study literature? Because literature explores and comments on the human condition and society, and the more we engage with literature, the better we understand others and ourselves. The better we understand others, ourselves, and society, the better able we are to cultivate effective personal and professional relational skills and the better able we are to add value to our immediate communities and to society in general.

Why read and study literature of illness and trauma? Because such literature affords us the unique opportunity to explore the very human qualities of compassion and empathy and to discover the strength buried in and forged from pain and weakness.

Exploring and engaging in such nuanced reading and interpretation further contours our capacity for compassionate and empathetic observation and response to individual and social conditions.

Since essentially all academic and professional endeavors involve some aspect of humanity or society, the skills developed in this course will prove useful in some way outside the walls of the classroom and beyond the work of the course.

My hope is that you will recognize the larger value of the course and that you will engage in the readings, discussions, and activities with the goal of personal, academic, and professional growth.



[mnispi.org/cartoon/2001/index.htm](http://mnispi.org/cartoon/2001/index.htm)

The various activities you will encounter in this course are designed and will be implemented with diverse learning preferences in mind.



"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"

<http://psyc208.wordpress.com/learning-styles/>

The expectation that I articulate for you to be innovative and creative thinkers is **sincere** and will be evidenced in my **actions**, not just my words.

## Teaching Philosophy

I believe it is useful to share my teaching philosophy so that you understand the reasons behind my teaching strategies and methods, which are grounded in the research and pedagogy of active and collaborative learning.

I came to university teaching after a few years in the public school system. It didn't take long for me to trade my student-centered and active teaching techniques for the traditional lecture technique. Fortunately, it also didn't take long for me to become absolutely bored with this method of teaching and to recognize its limitations, especially for such skill- and discussion-centered courses as writing and literature.

My philosophy of teaching privileges a student-centered classroom, and, as such, is grounded in student ownership of learning. I believe that *students should act upon their education*, rather than allowing their education to act upon them. I believe that students should know what they want from their education and should understand how their education can enhance their academic, personal, and future professional lives. *In practice*, I believe that my role is that of [facilitator](#) rather than [professor](#). Thus, I seek to *guide* you toward learning and to the awareness mentioned above.

I believe that learning is a social act, requiring dialogue and collaboration among peers. This belief is firmly grounded in research that is well synthesized in the following chart:



It is through active and collaborative activities that I will strive to guide you to be more precise and creative thinkers, more mature and articulate writers, and, overall, more observant and thoughtful learners and citizens.

Finally, I believe teaching is a mode of learning. Therefore, I will ask for your feedback during the course of the semester, and, as long as it is sincerely given and is in the interest of our learning goals, I will sincerely value your feedback and use it to help us move in a productive direction. I always consider myself a student in the classes I teach and find great pleasure in learning and improving each semester.

***I truly look forward to learning and improving as a result of my interaction with you this semester.***

## Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

- ✓ Demonstrate verbally and in writing the ability to analyze theme, character, plot, setting, and figurative language in various forms of literature.
- ✓ Demonstrate in your writing the accurate use of research and documentation from a variety of sources, including electronic sources.
- ✓ Compose analytical essays with a clear thesis and introduction and organized and well-developed supporting paragraphs.
- ✓ Demonstrate knowledge of the standard conventions of English grammar and punctuation through clear and efficient sentences.
- ✓ Recognize and clearly articulate the value of the literature of illness and trauma to disciplines and endeavors outside of literary studies.

## How We Will Accomplish These Outcomes

This course will not, indeed *cannot*, be taught as a lecture course. That is as ridiculous as one teaching scuba diving by just talking about it and then tossing the students overboard after a series of lectures. Like scuba diving, literary analysis requires hands-on practice, for we are using literary analysis to develop specific strengths of mind.

Research has proven that students achieve deep learning *only* through active engagement with course content and assignments and through meaningful interaction with their peers. As such, you will experience a variety of active and collaborative learning methods.

A 2012 survey conducted by the National Assoc. of Colleges and Employers reports that employers want employees who have good communication skills, can think critically, and can work productively with coworkers. The active and collaborative activities that you will engage in in this course will equip you with these skills.

To accomplish the above learning outcomes, you will respond to the literature we read in a class blog and in short response activities completed in class. You will also have the opportunity to collaborate with your classmates on interpretation and analysis activities and on specific

aspects of your final project.

*Generally speaking, you can be assured that my interpretations will not be the central focus of our discussions.*

This pedagogy originates from my public school teaching experience and has been reinforced over the years through my participation in Lamar's ACES\* project, for which I now serve as Director.

\*Active and Collaborative Engagement for Students



[www.soic.indiana.edu](http://www.soic.indiana.edu)

***Research has proven that students achieve deep learning only through active engagement with course content and assignments and through meaningful interaction with their peers.***

**Illness essays**short stories **trauma***poetry* **ART** observationactive learning **health**narrative WITNESS *empathy*collaboration **respect**interpret **attend** analysis*healing value*

"The stories that ill people tell come out of their bodies. The body sets in motion the need for new stories when its disease disrupts the old stories." *The Wounded Storyteller*  
~ Arthur Frank

**Themes, Issues, Concepts**

sick role, story, listening  
personal, social  
social & historical contexts  
embodiment  
narrative imperative  
illness as author  
illness as character  
authority, voice  
narrative surrender  
reader as witness

You should consider these themes, issues, and concepts as you read and write about the literature.

**Course Work Schedule:**

Our course work will be divided into units for which you will receive a schedule with due dates prior to beginning the unit

## Our Learning Landscape

Through traditional acts of literary analysis, you will perform traditionally as critical readers, thinkers, and writers. Through non-traditional acts of literary analysis, you will broaden your role to *attend* to the literature. What this means is that you will act as witnesses to and interpreters of human suffering so that the act of literary analysis becomes a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

And what is this end? It is

the tangible, flesh-and-bone value of literature and literary study to human health and healing.



To be sure, you will discover meaning and purpose in illness/trauma through the reading and study of fiction and non-fiction prose and poetry. Works of art and video will enhance our exploration

of these works. With regard to works of art, we will "read" these using the techniques of literary analysis.

Our learning will take place in an environment of active and collaborative engagement with course content and of meaningful and respectful class participation.

This is a new course that I hope continues to evolve. Therefore, I am keen to your suggestions and very much welcome your ideas for our learning landscape.

## Assessment of Learning

Methods of assessment should contribute to learning—not just measure it. To that end and to ensure that you have multiple opportunities to showcase your learning, you will complete a variety of assignments:

➤ **Reading Quizzes**

We will primarily use Socrative to complete the reading quizzes, and all of them will be graded. The questions will check for more than just memorization of details; they will also check for your ability to read critically. Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped. This includes zeros for missed quizzes.

**25%**

➤ **Blog Postings**

You will have the opportunity to respond to and reflect on your reading and other aspects of the course in Blackboard using the blog feature. Not only will you compose your own responses, but you will also contribute to your classmates' learning by responding to two classmates' posts. *Only insightful, helpful, and audience-aware posts and comments will garner passing credit.*

**25%**

➤ **Formal Essay and Rewrite**

This essay will be a 2-page literary analysis to be completed at the midterm. Specific topics and guidelines and the grading rubric will be negotiated as a class 2 weeks before the essay is due. The rewrite will be due 1 week after you receive your graded essay.

**15%, 10%**

➤ **Research Project with Presentation**

You can complete an anthology project or an approved project of your choice. Approval for alternate assignments may be contingent upon the inclusion of assigned elements and/or processes.

**25%**



## Responsibilities and Policies

### Creating a productive and fair learning environment

In my effort to create a student-centered class, I have worked to create a *learning-centered*, rather than a policy-centered, syllabus. However, to ensure a productive and organized learning environment, responsibilities must be articulated and policies must be put in place and enforced.

#### My Responsibilities

- facilitating learning via instruction, materials, and assignments conducive to the goals of the course and in the best interest of your learning experience
- providing penalty-free opportunities to take risks and opportunities to benefit from failures.
- providing individual assistance to students *in good standing (attendance, participation, assignments)*.
- providing clear and helpful feedback on written assignments.
- maintaining a respectful, organized, and participatory classroom environment.
- being consistent and fair but practicing flexibility when necessary without undermining the efforts and responsible behavior of other students.

#### Your Responsibilities

- attending class regularly
- arriving on time and remaining until the scheduled end of class.
- remaining on task *at all times* (no texting, doing other course work, etc.).
- completing and submitting *in a timely manner* all assignments according to given requirements.
- maintaining academic honesty in all work completed and submitted.
- making meaningful contributions to class discussions.
- displaying common courtesy to your peers and to me.

Failure to fulfill the above requirements (excluding the 5th) will result in grade and/or administrative penalties, such as grade penalty, failure of the assignment or course and/or being dropped from the course. The 6th item will not carry penalties but will instead be taken into account when figuring borderline grades.

#### Attendance

The degree and quality of your and your classmates' learning depends upon your *punctual, complete, and regular* attendance. I will take attendance at the beginning of each class meeting. You will be **marked absent** if you arrive late or "leave" the class by occupying yourself with anything unrelated to this course. If you arrive late, *you must inform me after class* so that I can change your attendance status. If you need to leave class early, please practice common courtesy and inform me at the beginning of class. An early departure of 10 minutes or more will be documented. **After 3 late arrivals, early departures, or a combination, subsequent instances of either will be marked as absences.**

For **university-sanctioned events**, the relevant documentation must be submitted *prior to* the scheduled absence(s). Failure to do so will result in these absences counting against your absence allowance and no permission for make-up and/or late work submissions. Depending upon the situation, you may be required to submit assignments *before your scheduled absence*.

\*More than **6** absences, *no matter the reason*, will result in **failure** of the course, for I find it unfair to grant a student who has not participated fully in the activities of the class meetings the same level of credit as those who have. Indeed, the value of the course and the learning process are not gained and wholly benefited from in just the graded assignments.

***Policies continue on the following page.***

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## Academic Calendar

**Jan. 20:** MLK Holiday

**Jan. 29:** Last day for full refund on dropped (not withdrawn) classes

**Feb. 10:** Final non-payment purge after 5 pm

**Feb. 14:** Last day to drop or withdraw without academic penalty

**Mar. 10-14:** Spring Break!

**Mar. 27:** Last day to drop or withdraw *with* academic penalty

**Apr. 18:** Good Friday Holiday

**May 5:** Last MWF class day

***In order to maintain the integrity and success of this course and its goals, I reserve the right to alter at any time and in any way the policies and coursework described in this document.***

## Policies (cont.)

### **Late and Make-Up Work**

To ensure your preparedness following an absence, you should inquire about possible homework assignments and changes to the schedule *prior to your return to class*. Also, check Blackboard for announcements and handouts. *No lost document or forgotten USB excuses will be accepted*, so I strongly encourage you to subscribe to **Dropbox or another cloud service** so that your work is always available to you anywhere and on any computer.

**Quizzes** cannot be made up due to the immediacy of their purpose to specific class meetings and the quick grade turnaround. At least 2 quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester.

**Blog postings** can be made up for partial credit, as long as your response and 2 comments are posted within **2 days** (*not* class meetings) of the due date. Late postings will incur a **10%** penalty.

The **formal essay** can be submitted late and without penalty as long as it is submitted within **2 days** (*not* class meetings) of the original due date. This policy is motivated by the sometimes unpredictable nature of the writing process. Past the 2-day grace period, the essay will not be accepted. The **rewrite**, however, will not be accepted late without prior consultation with me or official documentation of absence.

The **research project** will not be accepted late, as the due date will be a generous one. **Presentations** cannot be made up or rescheduled without official documentation of absence or consultation with me prior to your scheduled presentation date.

### **Academic Honesty**

You are required to uphold academic integrity in all work completed for this course. To that end, I aim to provide a learning experience that does not tempt academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism** is the offense of passing off another's work and/or ideas as one's own—an offense that puts a student at risk of failing the course. *You should always consult me if you are unsure if or how content in your papers should be documented.* **Consequences** of plagiarism: (1) failure of the assignment or the course, depending upon the nature and/or extent of the plagiarism, (2) report filed with the Department of English and Modern Languages, and (3) notification sent to the chair of your major department and to the Provost of Academic Affairs, Dr. Kevin Smith. **Repeated reports** of academic dishonesty during the course of your enrollment at the university may result in **expulsion from the university**. The University's policy on academic dishonesty is detailed in the [Student Handbook](#). You are responsible for reading this information and for seeking clarification of any unclear content

from me or from your advisor.

### **Dropping the Course**

It is ***your responsibility*** to complete the required procedures for dropping or withdrawing from the course (see “Class Schedule and Registration Procedures” on Lamar’s website). ***I will not drop a student who stops attending class.*** In the event of an **extended absence** due to illness or personal hardship, your duty is to complete the drop or withdraw by contacting your major department or the Records Office to request that the drop be completed on your behalf. Drop dates are listed in the sidebar. Be aware of the drop dates and, if the need arises, begin the drop process in a timely manner.

### **Requesting an Incomplete**

The Incomplete is reserved for a student who has completed all course work up to the event (illness, family emergency, or debilitating accident) that prevents him/her from completing the course. The missed course work must be submitted by the deadline indicated on the Incomplete Request form; otherwise, the *I* will be changed to an *F*.

### **Students with Disabilities**

In coordination with the Office for Students with Disabilities, every effort will be made for this course to be a meaningful component of a student’s individualized educational plan. Any student registered with this office has the responsibility of keeping me informed of needs via **official documentation** from the Office. Such documentation must be presented *at the beginning* of the semester and *before* affected assignments are assigned.

**Contact: 880-8347, 880-2225, [dept.lamar.edu/sfswd/](http://dept.lamar.edu/sfswd/)**

### **Emergency Procedures**

Emergency procedures are detailed in the document titled “Emergency Procedures” distributed in class and posted in the Syllabus and Info section of our Blackboard course page. Refer to the link below for more detailed information:

<http://www.lamar.edu/about-lu/administration/risk-management/index.html>