

# Talking Back to Medicine: Writers & the Politics of Health

## Course Syllabus

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## Course Information

### Course Description

It is no secret that health care in the United States is in crisis. President Obama has pledged to work with the nation to rehabilitate our health care system. In this course, we will examine how fiction and non-fiction writers challenge such systems to rethink the notion of health as well as the politics of sickness. The writers we will study take on issues like access to health care, models of illness and healing, medicine and social justice, and others. In this online course, readings, podcasts, wikis, and discussion board posts will help us explore the responsibilities of medicine as well as those of the community in which medicine is practiced, for a socially just and comprehensive understanding of illness, health and healing in the United States.

### Course Learning Goals

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- Analyze fictional and non-fictional texts
- Understand and use the fundamental skills of close reading & online discussion
- Understand and articulate the connection between social illness and personal illness
- Understand, identify and describe explanatory frameworks
- Understand the connections among politics, society, culture and medicine
- Identify and describe collaborative models of health care in one's own community
- Discuss the idea of the "American Dream" and its relationship to illness and health
- Identify and analyze social factors in fictional and non-fictional representations of illness
- Identify ethical issues in medical experimentation

### Course Resources

- Castillo, Ana, So Far From God
- Fadiman, Ann, The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures
- Feldshuh, David, Miss Evers' Boys

- Moore, Michael, "Sicko"
- Articles on e-Reserve

## Course Competences

In this course, you will develop one or two of the following competences:

Competence	Competence Statement and Facets
A1X	Understands and can analyze the connection between a fictional representation and the historical, social and political context upon which the representation draws.
H4	Can analyze power relations among racial, social, cultural, or economic groups in the United States.
A1D	Can analyze writers' or artists' representations of human experience
H3F	Can understand the interrelationships among intellectual, psychological, spiritual, and physical health in one's own life.

## How the Competences will be Demonstrated in this Course

There are several assignments, but the main one is a competence-specific structured learning journal that you will work on throughout the quarter. Other assignments are short essays, a community-based research project, some group projects, a quiz, and weekly discussion posts (usually 2 per week).

## Course Structure

This course consists of 10 modules. The estimated time to complete each module is 1 week.

**To view the course schedule, click on the Schedule link on the left-hand navigation bar. This page contains the most recently updated listing of the topics and assignments due for each week of the course.**

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## Assessment

### Course Grading Scale

A = 95 to 100	A- = 91 to 94	B+ = 88 to 90
B = 85 to 87	B- = 81 to 84	C+ = 77 to 80
C = 73 to 76	C- = 69 to 72	D+ = 65 to 68
D = 61 to 64	F = 60 or below	INC

For SNL courses taken for Pass/Fail, a "Pass" represents a grade of "A" for purposes

of financial aid and employer reimbursement.

Students wishing to declare a Pass/Fail option must do so before the end of the 2nd week of the quarter.

### **Assessment of Learning**

In assessing the work described above, I will look for:

1. Clear writing with appropriate grammar and punctuation (see "General Assessment Criteria for All Writing Assignments," below)
2. Knowledge and comprehension of pertinent concepts, issues and texts;
3. A scope of discussion that goes beyond what is covered in the texts (in other words—your own thinking and the connections you make);
4. Thoughtful engagement with the material (raise questions, look at conflicts raised or implied in the readings)

Evidence of #1 plus one other of these elements equates to a C

Evidence of #1 plus two other of these elements equates to a B

Evidence of #1 plus the rest of these elements equates to an A

### **General Assessment Criteria for All Writing Assignments**

Keep in mind that writing assignments are expected to conform to basic college-level standards of mechanics and presentation. This is the rubric I will use to assess your writing assignments:

An excellent (A) essay will:

- Offer a unique or particularly insightful response to the assignment or competence
- Contain a clear purpose, a compelling introduction, a nuanced thesis or main idea and a thoughtful conclusion
- Recognize and thoughtfully address complexities
- Contain strongly supportive details, a judicious sense of evidence
- Be logically developed and quite well organized
- Use a style and tone appropriate to the purpose and audience
- Smoothly integrate correct citations for any words, facts or ideas from a source using either MLA or APA parenthetical citation
- Show sophisticated sentence variety and paragraph development
- Be virtually free of grammar and usage errors.

A strong (B) essay will:

- Respond to the assignment or competence in depth
- Contain a clear purpose, a strong introduction, a thoughtful thesis or main idea and an effective conclusion
- Recognize and address complexities
- Contain supportive details, a good sense of evidence
- Be logically developed and well-organized
- Use a style and tone appropriate to the purpose and audience
  - Include correct citations for any words, facts or ideas from a source using either MLA or APA parenthetical citation
  - Offer adequate sentence variety and paragraph development
- Be virtually free of grammar and usage errors
- Lack the verbal skills, organizational strength and insight of an "excellent" essay.

A satisfactory (C) essay will:

- Respond to the assignment or competence, demonstrating solid conceptual understanding
- Contain a clear purpose, thesis or main idea, introduction and conclusion that all work together
- Recognize complexities
- Contain sufficient details and other evidence to support claims
- Display competence in logical development and organization, although essay may exhibit occasional organizational or argumentative weaknesses
- Use a style and tone appropriate to the purpose and audience, although there may be minor lapses in either
- Include generally correct citations for any words, facts or ideas from a source using either MLA or APA parenthetical citation, although there may be minor mistakes in formatting
- Display general control of sentence variety and paragraph development
- May have a few grammar, word usage and mechanical errors, but they do not obscure the reader's understanding of the essay

A weak (D–failing) essay will do one or more of the following:

- Fail to respond to or adequately grasp significant elements of the assignment or competence
- Omit a clear purpose, introduction, thesis or main idea, or conclusion
- Be too general or too specific
- Lack sufficient support for claims
- Contain trivial or frivolous points (or supporting material)
- Have flaws in logic or organization
- Fail to develop an appropriate tone
- Fail to cite sources or have incorrect citations that do not clearly indicate borrowed material
- Contain several flaws in style, grammar, or usage that may lead to confusion in meaning

A poor (F–failing) essay will do any one of the following:

- Fail to respond to the assignment or competence
- Be far too general or far too specific
- Contain a vacuous or trivial argument or analysis
- Have little controlling logic or organization
- Fail to cite sources used in the essay
- Have so many flaws in style, grammar, or usage that reading and comprehension are difficult

(This rubric for writing was taken from the SNL Writing Guide, <http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html>).

Consider visiting the Writing Center to discuss your assignments for this course or any others. You may schedule appointments (30 or 50 minutes) on an as-needed or weekly basis, scheduling up to 3 hours worth of appointments per week. Online services include Feedback-by-Email and IM conferencing (with or without a webcam). All writing center services are *free*.

Writing Center tutors are specially selected and trained graduate and undergraduate students who can help you at almost any stage of your writing. They will not do your work for you, but they can help you focus and develop your ideas, review your drafts,

and polish your writing. They can answer questions about grammar, mechanics, different kinds of writing styles, and documentation formats. They also can answer questions and provide feedback online, through IM/webcam chats and email. Obviously, the tutors won't necessarily be familiar with every class or subject, but they are able to provide valuable help from the perspective of an interested and careful reader as well as a serious and experienced student-writer.

Schedule your appointments with enough time to think about and use the feedback you'll receive.

Quick Links:

- To schedule Real-time conversations with IM and/or webcam:  
<http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/im.htm>
- To request Feedback by Email:  
<http://condor.depaul.edu/~writing/html/sched/email.html>
- For more information, visit:  
<http://www.depaul.edu/writing/>

### Percentage distribution of Assessments

Discussions & Group Work	20%
CSSLJ	40%
Short Essay #1	10%
News Research	5%
Collaborative Health Research	10%
NIH Certification & Assessment	10%
Self-Assessment	5%

### Grading Policies and Practices

I expect your work to come in on time and I will attempt to return it to you in a timely manner. I will lower your grade by a percentage each week that it is late. For example, if you have turned in work that is B level and it is 1 week late, the grade will be a B-; if it is 2 weeks late the grade will be a C+, and so on. Pace yourself in this class. There is much to do and I expect that you will be able to stay current with the assignments.

If you submit work and are not pleased with the grade, you may revise and resubmit your work for another grade. This must be done **within 2 weeks of the original assignment due date, and you must tell me you are doing this at the time you have the paper returned to you by me**. No other process will be acceptable for revision of a graded paper.

### Assessment Criteria for your Final Paper or Project by Competence

I will be applying the above writing criteria to your Competence Specific Learning Journal, as well as all other assignments.

### Online Discussion

Discussion Boards are a forum for discussion and sharing information among students. Your instructor will create one or more discussion boards related to the topics you are studying each week.

### Online Discussion

At the beginning of the quarter, your instructor will set up three discussion boards. These three discussions will help you and your classmates get off to an immediate start on the course, by providing conversational spaces for necessary, ongoing social and administrative activities. These discussions are:

- Introductions
- Course Q&A
- Chat – a social meeting space for discussion that is not directly related to course content.

The Q&A discussion is where the management and administrative tasks of the course are conducted, and where you can ask 'process' questions and receive answers. You will also find the schedule of specific dates for your course in this discussion.

The Chat discussion can be used freely for your own conversation (like setting up groups or teams, if these are used in the course).

I will add additional discussion boards as we move through the modules.

## Assessment Criteria for Online Discussion Participation

In the online discussions your responses will be assessed on whether one or more of the following are present:

1. Offering ideas or resources and inviting a critique of them
2. Asking challenging questions
3. Articulating, explaining and supporting positions on ideas
4. Exploring and supporting issues by adding explanations and examples
5. Reflecting on and re-evaluating personal opinions
6. Offering a critique, challenging, discussing and expanding ideas of others
7. Negotiating interpretations, definitions and meanings
8. Summarizing previous contributions and asking the next question
9. Proposing actions based on ideas that have been developed

When you respond to a classmate's post, refrain from simple phrases like, "Great ideas!" or "I like that." Refer to the 9 points above and use words like, "But," "Additionally," "I agree and," "However," "What about," etc.

Discussion Participation

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## Policies

### Academic Integrity

DePaul University is a learning community that fosters the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas within a context that emphasizes a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for society at large. Violations of academic integrity, in any of their forms, are, therefore, detrimental to the values of DePaul, to the students' own development as responsible members of society, and to the pursuit of knowledge and

the transmission of ideas. Violations include but are not limited to the following categories: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification or sabotage of research data; destruction or misuse of the university's academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct. Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by other university officials and possible civil or criminal prosecution. Please refer to your Student Handbook or visit <http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/homehandbook.html> for further details.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a major form of academic dishonesty involving the presentation of the work of another as one's own. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the following:

- The direct copying of any source, such as written and verbal material, computer files, audio disks, video programs or musical scores, whether published or unpublished, in whole or part, without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's.
- Copying of any source in whole or part with only minor changes in wording or syntax, even with acknowledgement.
- Submitting as one's own work a report, examination paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment that has been prepared by someone else. This includes research papers purchased from any other person or agency.
- The paraphrasing of another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement.

Plagiarism, like other forms of academic dishonesty, is always a serious matter. If a instructor finds that a student has plagiarized, the appropriate penalty is at the instructor's discretion.

## **Disability Accommodations**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities on an individualized and flexible basis. The Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) determines appropriate accommodations through consultation with the student. For certain learning disabilities and/or attention deficit disorders, the Productive Learning Strategies Program (PLuS) determines the appropriate accommodations. See the instructor for more information or call OSD at 773-325-7290 (phone) or 773-325-7296 (TTY); or call PLuS at 773-325-1677.

## **Incomplete Grades**

The intent of the Incomplete grade is to allow students extra time to complete their final assignments. This need arises because, in the closing weeks of the course, they have an event of significant magnitude that adversely affects their ability to complete the course, e.g. serious illness, death in the family, overseas deployment, or natural disaster.

You must request an incomplete grade in writing **two weeks** before the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades will be considered only after you have satisfactorily completed at least **75 percent of the coursework**, and you have such an unexpected, uncontrollable event that prevents you from completing your course. Do not assume that you will qualify for an incomplete. Students who are failing the course at the point where they request an incomplete will not receive one, nor will they be granted after the end of the quarter. Incomplete grades are given at the discretion of the instructor. You **MUST** fill out the Incomplete Contract form to be considered for an incomplete grade: <http://www.sn1.depaul.edu/StudentResources/Forms>

[/Undergraduate\\_Forms.asp](#).

If you do receive permission from the instructor to take an incomplete in the course, you will be required to complete a contract with the instructor, specifying how you will finish the missing work within the next two quarters (excluding summer). Incompletes not finished by the end of the second quarter (excluding summer) will automatically become an F grade on your transcript.

Instructors may not change incomplete grades after the end of the grace period without the permission of a college-based Exceptions Committee.

NOTE: In the case of a student who has applied for graduation and who has been approved for an Incomplete in his or her final term, the incomplete must be resolved within the four week grace period before final degree certification.

## Protection of Human Subjects

For more information see: <http://research.depaul.edu/>.

Demonstrating the acquisition of competences in this course can involve "interactions" – interviewing and or observing other people – discussing those interviews or observations with other class members and writing them up in one or more final report(s). As such, these activities qualify as "research" with "human subjects" and are subject to University and Federal guidelines. Because it takes place in the context of this course, your research is exempt from approval by the School for New Learning's Local Review Board only under the following conditions:

1. The information you collect is EXCLUSIVELY for the purpose of classroom discussion and will NOT be used after the term is over. If there is any possibility that you will EVER use it in further research or for publication, you must obtain approval from the Local Review Board before you begin.
2. You assess and ensure that no "harm" – physical, mental, or social – does or could result from either your interviews and/or observations or your discussion and/or reports.
3. The privacy and confidentiality of those that you interview or observe must be protected. Unless you receive specific permission, in writing, from the person(s) you interview or observe, please change their names, and make sure that their identity cannot be readily ascertained from the information you provide.
  - a. If you want to use real names and relationships, they must sign an "informed consent" document. For information on creating an "informed consent document" see, for example, <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent>.

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## Course Expectations

### Time Management and Attendance

SNL's online courses are not self-paced and require a regular time commitment EACH week throughout the quarter.

 Clock

You are required to log in to your course at least four times a week so that you can participate in the ongoing course discussions.

Online courses are no less time consuming than "face to face" courses. You will have to dedicate some time every day or at least every second day to your studies. A typical four credit hour "face to face" course at SNL involves three hours of classroom meeting per week, plus at least three to six hours of study and homework per week.

This course will require at least the same time commitment, but your learning activities will be spread out through the week. If you have any problems with your technology, or if you need to improve your reading or writing skills, it may take even longer.

The instructor should be notified if your life events do not allow you to participate in the course and the online discussions for more than one week. This is particularly important when there are group discussions or you are working as part of a team.

If you find yourself getting behind, please contact the instructor immediately.

### **Your Instructor's Role**

Your instructor's role in this course is that of a discussion facilitator and learning advisor. It is not their responsibility to make sure you log in regularly and submit your assignments. As instructor, s/he will read all postings to the general discussion forums on a daily basis but may not choose to respond to each posting. You will receive feedback to assignments.

The instructor may choose to designate "office hours" when s/he will be online and available and will immediately respond to questions. Depending on the instructor, this response may be by e-mail, instant messenger or telephone. Otherwise, you will generally receive a response to emailed or posted queries within 48 hours.

### **Your Role as a Student**

As an online student, you will be taking a proactive approach to your learning. As the course instructor's role is that of a learning guide, your role is that of the leader in your own learning.

You will be managing your own time so that you can complete the readings, activities and assignments for the course, and you will also be expected to take a more active role in peer learning.

### **Credits**

This course was designed and produced by Ann Folwell Stanford, Ph.D. and staff of SNL Online at DePaul University.

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