

Time: T, Th 1:00-4:15

Room: William L. Harkness Hall, Rm. 013

Matthew Morrison, M.D.

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Course Description:

Sherwin Nuland often referred to medicine as “the Uncertain Art.” In this course, we will address the role of uncertainty in medicine, and the role that narrative plays in capturing that uncertainty. We will focus our efforts on major authors and texts that define the modern medical humanities, with primary readings by Mikhail Bulgakov, Henry Marsh, Atul Gawande, and Lisa Sanders. Other topics will include the philosophy of science (with a focus on Karl Popper), rationalism and romanticism (William James), and epistemology and scientism (Wittgenstein). Events permitting, trips will take us to the Yale Medical Historical Library, and the Yale Center for British Art.

Required Texts:

1. Henry Marsh – *Do No Harm*
 - a. ISBN: 9781250090133 ; \$5.39
2. Leo Tolstoy – *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (trans., Louise and Aylmer Maude)
 - a. ISBN: 9781798500620 ; \$6.99
3. Lisa Sanders – *Every Patient Tells A Story*
 - a. ISBN: 9780767922470 ; \$12.19
4. Jerome Groopman – *How Doctors Think*
 - a. ISBN: 9780547053646 ; \$10.99
5. Mikhail Bulgakov – *A Young Doctor’s Notebook* (trans., Michael Glenny)
 - a. ISBN: 9780099529569 ; \$13.85

Other assigned readings (to be made available online):

1. Karl Ove Knausgaard, “[The Terrible Beauty of Brain Surgery](#),” N.Y. Times Magazine, 1/3/16
2. Philippe Ariès – selection, *Death Denied*
3. Wordsworth, “Tables Turned.”
4. Aldous Huxley, “Wordsworth in the Tropics.”
5. L.J. Davis, “[The Encyclopedia of Insanity](#),” Harper’s Magazine, 8/26/17.
6. Jorge Luis Borges, “[On Exactitude In Science](#).”
7. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, selection, *The Black Swan*
8. Rivka Galchen, “[Every Disease on Earth](#),” The New Yorker, 5/13/13
9. Danielle Ofri, “[Getting The Diagnosis Wrong](#),” The New York Times, 10/8/2015
10. Aristotle, selections, *Nicomachean Ethics*
11. Stephen Toulmin, selections, “A Dissenter’s Story”; “How Medicine Saved The Life of Ethics.”
12. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, selection, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*
13. William James, selections, “The Moral Philosopher and The Moral Life.”
14. James C. Scott, “Thin Simplifications and Practical Knowledge: Metis.”
15. Carl Von Clausewitz, selection, *On War*
16. Keith Black, selection, *Brain Surgeon*
17. Chuang Tzu, selections, *Zhuangzi*
18. Lydia Dugdale, selections, *The Lost Art of Dying*
19. Oliver Sacks, “[Neurology And The Soul](#),” New York Review of Books, 11/22/90

20. Kate Murphy, "[Do You Believe in God, or Is That A Software Glitch?](#)" N.Y. Times, 8/27/16
21. Dostoevsky, selections, *Notes From Underground*
22. Kierkegaard, selection, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*
23. Pascal, selections, *Pensées*
24. Montaigne, selections, "Of Experience"; "Of Pedantry"; "Apology for Raymond Sebond"
25. Witold Gombrowicz, selections, *Diary*
26. Robert Pirsig, selections, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*
27. Blake, selection, *Milton – "On Reason and Imagination..."*
28. Harry White, "Blake's Resolution to the War Between Science and Philosophy." *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, Volume 39, Issue 3, Winter 2005/2006, pp. 108-125
29. Denise Grady, "[Restoring the Lost Art of the Physical Exam](#)," *The New York Times*, 10/11/2010
30. Atul Gawande,
 - "[The Learning Curve](#)," *The New Yorker*, 1/28/02
 - "[When Doctors Make Mistakes](#)," *The New Yorker*, 2/1/99
 - "[Letting Go](#)," *The New Yorker*, 8/2/10
31. Warburton, "Science" – *Philosophy: The Basics*
32. Warburton, selections, *Philosophy: Basic Readings* – Popper, Kuhn, Sokal, Monk
33. Wittgenstein, selections, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*
34. Stephen Jay Gould, "[Nonoverlapping Magisteria](#)," *Natural History*, 3/1997
35. Stephen Jay Gould, selection, "No Science Without Fancy, No Art Without Facts: The Lepidoptery of Vladimir Nabokov."
36. W.I.B. Beveridge, selections, *The Art of Scientific Investigation*
37. Stephen Hawking, selection, *A Brief History of Time*
38. Albert Einstein and Rabindranath Tagore, "Note on the Nature of Reality."
39. William James – Rationalism vs. Empiricism, *Some Problems of Philosophy*
40. George Eliot - selections - *Scenes of Clerical Life; Adam Bede; Felix Holt, the Radical; Middlemarch*
41. Tolstoy, selections, *War and Peace*

Recommended Reading (optional)

1. William Carlos Williams – *The Doctor Stories* ("The Practice"; "Afterword")
2. Sherwin Nuland – *How We Die*
3. Philip Roth – *The Anatomy Lesson*
4. Samuel Shem – *The House of God*
5. Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner – *Our Cancer Year*
6. Roz Chast – *Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?*
7. Sir Thomas Browne – *Religio Medici*

Course Requirements:

Regular attendance at lectures, as well as informed and active participation in class, is expected.

The grade breakdown will be as follows:

- Presentation: 15%
- Midterm Paper: 25%
- Final Paper: 40%
- Attendance and Participation: 20%

Presentation: You will give one brief oral presentation on cognitive bias in clinical medicine. This presentation should demonstrate some background research, encourage thinking about the subject, offer a clinical example of the bias at work, and close with a few questions — general or specific — which will engage the class in conversation.

Midterm and Final Papers: Your midterm essay should run between 4-5 pages, and final essay between 8-10 pages, double spaced. Papers may be research-oriented or more personal, considering a work we've read in light of a medical experience of your own, or a family member's.

Computer and Mobile Device Policy: I respectfully ask that notes be taken by pen / pencil and paper in class, rather than by computer, and that texting and phone calls be taken outside of the classroom.

Absence policy: Regular attendance is expected. Multiple absences may affect the attendance portion of one's grade. Make-up reading reflection may be assigned for missed sessions. Multiple absences may affect the attendance portion of one's grade, even provided make-up reflection.

Academic Integrity: Any work that you submit must be your own, and any work that is borrowed must be properly cited.

Weekly Schedule (some changes may occur)

Class 1: 5/28

- Introduction; Syllabus; Course Guidelines
- Henry Marsh – *Do No Harm* (Chapters 1-12)
- Simpkin, A.L., & Schwartzstein, R.M. (2016). "Tolerating uncertainty - The next medical revolution?" *New England Journal of Medicine*, 375(18), 1713-1715

Class 2: 5/30

- Henry Marsh – *Do No Harm* (Chapters 13-25)
- Karl Ove Knausgaard
 - ["The Terrible Beauty of Brain Surgery,"](#) N.Y. Times Magazine, 1/3/16
 - selections, *My Struggle, Book I*

Class 3: 6/4

- Leo Tolstoy – The Death of Ivan Ilyich
- Philippe Ariès – selection, *Death Denied*. In *The hour of our death: The classic history of Western attitudes toward death over the last one thousand years*. (1982).

Class 4: 6/6

- Aldous Huxley, "Wordsworth in the Tropics."
- Wordsworth, "Tables Turned."
- L.J. Davis, "[The Encyclopedia of Insanity](#)," Harper's Magazine, 8/26/97
- Jorge Luis Borges, "[On Exactitude In Science](#)."
- Nassim Nicholas Taleb, selection, *The Black Swan*
- Rivka Galchen, "[Every Disease on Earth](#)," The New Yorker, 5/13/13
- Samuel Shem, selections, "34 Years After 'The House of God'"; "Fiction as Resistance"
- Smith, G. C. S., & Pell, J. P. (2003). Parachute use to prevent death and major trauma related to gravitational challenge: Systematic review of randomised controlled trials. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 327(7429), 1459.
- Braithwaite, R. Scott. (2013). "EBM's Six Dangerous Words." *JAMA*. Nov 27; 310(20): 2149-50.

Class 5: Heuristics and Cognitive Errors, Diagnostic and Therapeutic – 6/11

- Presentations: Cognitive Biases
- Jerome Groopman, selections, *How Doctors Think* (2007)
 - Introduction
 - Chapters 1-3, "Flesh-and-Blood Decision-Making," "Lessons From The Heart," "Spinning Plates."
 - Chapter 6, "The Uncertainty of the Expert."
- Danielle Ofri, "[Getting The Diagnosis Wrong](#)," The New York Times, 10/8/2015
- Lisa Sanders – "Sick Thinking," *Every Patient Tells A Story* (2009), Chapter 9, pp. 193-215

Class 6: 6/13

- Mikhail Bulgakov – A Young Doctor's Notebook

Midterm Paper Due

Class 7: Medical Ethics, Phronesis, Metis – 6/18

- Aristotle, selections, *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Stephen Toulmin, selections, "A Dissenter's Story"; "How Medicine Saved The Life of Ethics."
- Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, selection, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics*
- William James, selections, "The Moral Philosopher and The Moral Life."
- James C. Scott, "Thin Simplifications and Practical Knowledge: Metis."
- Carl Von Clausewitz, selection, *On War*
- Keith Black, selection, *Brain Surgeon*
- Chuang Tzu, selections, *Zhuangzi*
- Pascal, selections, *Pensées*
- Montaigne, selections, *Essais* – "Of Experience"; "Of Pedantry"; "Apology for Raymond Sebond"

Class 8: 6/20

- Oliver Sacks, "[Neurology And The Soul](#)," New York Review of Books 11/22/90
- Kate Murphy, "[Do You Believe in God, or Is That A Software Glitch?](#)" N.Y. Times, 8/27/16
- Dostoevsky, selections, *Notes From Underground*
- Kierkegaard, selections, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*
- Witold Gombrowicz, selections, *Diary*
- Craig M. Bennett. *Neural correlates of interspecies perspective taking in the post-mortem Atlantic Salmon*. J. Serendipitous Unexpected Results 1, 1–5; 2010.
- Robert Pirsig, selection, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*
"Classicism vs. Romanticism."
- Blake, selection, *Milton – "On Reason and Imagination..."*
- Harry White, "Blake's Resolution to the War Between Science and Philosophy." *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, Volume 39, Issue 3, Winter 2005/2006, pp. 108-125

Class 9: 6/25

- Lisa Sanders – selections, *Every Patient Tells A Story* (2009)
Introduction; Chapter 1; Chapters 4-6
- Atul Gawande,
 - "[The Learning Curve](#)," The New Yorker, 1/28/02
 - "[When Doctors Make Mistakes](#)," The New Yorker, 2/1/99
 - "[Letting Go](#)," The New Yorker, 8/2/10
- Denise Grady, "[Restoring the Lost Art of the Physical Exam](#)," The New York Times, 10/11/2010
- Warburton, *Philosophy: The Basics* – "Science"
- Warburton, selections, *Philosophy: Basic Readings* – Popper, Kuhn, Sokal, Monk
- Wittgenstein, selections, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*

Optional:

- Atul Gawande,
 - "[Final Cut](#)," The New Yorker, 3/19/01
 - "The Case of The Red Leg," *Complications*

Class 10: The Philosophy of Science; Scientism – 6/27

- Robert Pirsig, selection, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*
"Mu States and Truth Traps."
- Stephen Hawking, selection, *A Brief History of Time*
- Stephen Jay Gould, "[Nonoverlapping Magisteria](#)," *Natural History*, 3/19
- Stephen Jay Gould, selection, "No Science Without Fancy, No Art Without Facts: The Lepidoptery of Vladimir Nabokov."
- W.I.B. Beveridge, selections, *The Art of Scientific Investigation*
- Albert Einstein and Rabindranath Tagore, "Note on the Nature of Reality."
- William James – Rationalism vs. Empiricism, *Some Problems of Philosophy*
- George Eliot, selections, *Scenes of Clerical Life; Adam Bede; Felix Holt, the Radical; Middlemarch*
- Tolstoy, selections, *War and Peace*

Final Paper Due