

UW – Madison History of Science/Medical History 212
Bodies, Diseases and Healers: An Introduction to the History of Medicine
Spring 2026

Instructors:

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5265 Mosse Humanities	4272 Mosse Humanities	4260 Mosse Humanities
Office hours: MW 1-2p	W 1-3p	W 5:30p-7:30p

Lecture:

180 Science Hall
MW 12:05p-12:55p

Course Description:

As stated in the course guide, this course is “a survey of different conceptions of how the body as a site of sickness has been understood from Antiquity to contemporary medicine. Includes consideration of the origins and evolution of public health, the changing social role of healers, and the emergence of the modern ‘standardized’ body in health and illness.” We aim to give you an overview of the development of the modern American medical system while encouraging you to think about medicine in historical context. Given this framing, some forms of healing that fall outside professional European medicine are left out or underrepresented in our course content. This is a reflection of the particular story 212 is telling and not an indication of what ways of thinking about health are valid, true, and relevant to the history of medicine. Beginning with the ancient Mediterranean world, we will examine how technologies, diagnoses, and ways of thinking about the body have changed over time through four broad trends in healing: humoralism, pathological anatomy, infection, and risk. We will address questions such as who has done healing over time? How have patients chosen healers? What constitutes health and disease? What are the causes and treatments of disease? Examining these questions requires us to engage with humanities methods. In this course we will be reading and analyzing primary and secondary historical sources in light of materials presented in lecture, as well as crafting our own historical arguments using historical evidence. We will be thinking about how to use evidence and structure arguments to make compelling claims about medicine in historical context. In so doing we will see that while medicine has undoubtedly helped relieve suffering and extend lives, the evolution of medical systems is not a story of linear progress or a benign accrual of facts. Rather medical systems are embedded in the socio-cultural context of their given historical moment.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify important people, events, institutions, and ideas in the history of medicine.

- Describe changing ways of understanding bodies and health from antiquity to the present day.
- Consider how patient and practitioner experiences change over time.
- Analyze, discuss, and compare historical sources.
- Communicate your ideas about the history of medicine using clarity, logical consistency, and evidentiary support.
- Evaluate historical claims.
- Collaborate with peers around thinking critically about sources and refining analyses of the past.

Course Requisites and Designation:

Requisites – None

Breadth – Humanities

Level – Elementary

Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S

Credit Hours:

This is a three-credit course. This class meets for three, 50-minute class periods each week over the fall/spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc) for about 2 hours out of the classroom for every class period. The syllabus includes additional information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

Grade Scheme

Letter Grade	Grade Percent
A	93-100
AB	88-92
B	83-87
BC	78-82
C	70-77
D	60-69

Course Requirements and Grading:

Evidence Evaluation 10% – Evaluate how successfully a secondary source from weeks 3-6 supported its argument with historical evidence.

Essay Proposal 5% - Plan the topic, audience, and sources for your final essay.

Final Paper Draft and Peer Review 15% – Submit a draft of your essay and provide feedback on a peer's draft.

Final Paper Revised 20% - Your final paper will be a popular history project, and you have some options how you present it. All options ask you to use at least 3 required course readings to support your claim.

- 6-8 double-spaced page (1500-2000 word) popular essay
- 10-15 minute podcast (with annotated bibliography)
- 8-12 minute YouTube video (with annotated bibliography)

Exams 15% each – 2 exams held on March 9th and May 8th.

Discussion Section Participation 20% - Come to discussion section meeting prepared and contribute to group activities and discussion.

Extra Credit Opportunity – Respond to at least 80% of TopHat questions in lecture to earn a 1% bump at the end of the semester.

Accommodation of Student Needs:

The 212 teaching team is invested in your success in this course. As such we aim to ensure that the course is accessible and that students have the support they need. Please discuss any accommodations or accessibility needs with your TA and/or myself as soon as possible. The sooner we can address issues, the more options we have to solve and head off problems. If unforeseen circumstances arise over the semester, please talk with me or your TA about how we can help support your success.

Resources:

McBurney Center for Disability Services: If you are interested in receiving university services and accommodations for your disability, please contact McBurney by phone at 608-263-2741 or email at FrontDesk@mcb.wisc.edu. If you have accommodations for this course, please contact your TA by the end of Week 2 so we can ensure your needs get met.

History Lab and Writing Center: Both the History Lab and Writing Center offer a variety of useful resources, including tutoring sessions, handouts and writing classes. If you find that you need extra writing help for any of our assignments, I highly recommend you make appointments early to make sure you have enough time to integrate the feedback you receive. For information, visit <https://history.wisc.edu/undergraduate-program/the-history-lab/> or <http://www.writing.wisc.edu>.

University Health Services: If you could use some FREE help managing your time, dealing with stress, managing money, or pretty much anything else, UHS has got you covered: <https://www.uhs.wisc.edu/mental-health/lets-talk>.

Policies:

Late Work: I do not accept late work without prior authorization. I understand that we're all susceptible to unforeseen difficulties; if you run into any questions or issues around assignment due dates, please contact me or your TA. The earlier you contact us if you're

concerned about an upcoming deadline, or any course related challenges, the more time we have to problem solve.

Lecture Recording: Video or audio recording of lecture or discussion section requires advance approval from me or your TA respectively.

Academic Integrity: As stated on the University of Wisconsin-Madison's page on academic integrity (<https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/>):

“Academic misconduct is governed by state law, UWS Chapter 14 ([PDF](#)). Misconduct includes the following, but is not limited to this list:

- Seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation (plagiarism)
- Uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise (using notes for a closed-book online exam)
- Forges or falsifies academic documents or records (having a friend sign you in for attendance when you're absent)
- Intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others (tampering with another student's experiment)
- Engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance (altering test answers and submitting the test for regrading)
- Assists other students in any of these acts

The University of Wisconsin-Madison takes academic misconduct allegations very seriously. If an instructor suspects a student has engaged in academic misconduct, then the instructor will contact the student and ask him/her to explain their work. If the instructor still believes academic misconduct occurred after meeting with the student, he/she will determine the consequences, known as sanctions. One or multiple sanctions may be imposed.

[Types of sanctions](#) include an oral reprimand up to expulsion. If the sanction affects any grade, the student will then be notified in writing, typically by email, of the instructor's decision. The Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards (OSCCS) is also informed and will contact the student about his/her rights and any additional sanctions. Repeated acts of academic misconduct or extreme circumstances may result in more serious actions such as probation, suspension, or expulsion.”

A note about generative AI: You may not submit AI generated work for this course unless otherwise explicitly stated. Moreover, in my experience, the assignments in this course don't lend themselves to working with AI. Most of our assignments ask you to work closely with the course resources and reflect on your own ideas and impressions of them. AI simply can't do that because it doesn't know what you think. This [page](#) from the UW website gives some more information about generative AI and academic integrity. AI generated work will receive a zero for the first incidence and any subsequent incidences will be considered academic misconduct.

Examples of acceptable AI use include: using an AI chatbot as a study partner, checking your understanding of a reading against an AI summary of the main points, using AI to format citations and checking those citations for accuracy.

Examples of unacceptable AI use include: using AI to generate an essay and submitting it as your own, reproducing an AI summary of a source in your writing without engaging with the source yourself.

If you have concerns or confusion around academic integrity, please discuss them with me or your TA. The Writing Center can also help you with general citation rules.

Reading and Lecture Schedule

- * We'll have two lecture meetings a week, on Monday and Wednesday, and discussion sections will meet on Wednesday or Thursday. Be sure you know which section you registered for and when it meets. You're expected to have completed the week's required reading before lecture on Wednesday. You'll find all readings and additional materials on the course [Canvas](#) page.

WEEK 1

Jan. 21 – Course Introduction

Reading: No assigned readings this week

No Section Meetings This Week

Unit 1: Humoral Bodies and Healing

WEEK 2

Jan. 26 – Hippocratic Medicine I

Jan. 28 – Hippocratic Medicine II

Required Readings:

- King, Helen. "Chapters 1 and 2." In *Hippocrates Now: The "Father of Medicine" in the Internet Age*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.
- Jones, W. H. S.. "Airs Waters Places" and "Prognostic." In *Hippocrates Vol. 1*. London: William Heinemann, 1923.

WEEK 3

Feb. 2 – Ancient Anatomy and Surgery

Feb. 4 – Galenic Medicine

Required Readings:

- Nutton, Vivian. "Alexandria, Anatomy and Experimentation." In *Ancient Medicine*. London & New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Brock, Arthur John. Selection from *Galen: On The Natural Faculties*. London: William Heinemann, 1916.
- Siegel, Rudolph E.. Selection from *Galen On The Affected Parts: Translation from the Greek Text with Explanatory Notes*. New York: S. Karger, 1976.

WEEK 4

Feb. 9 – The Black Death

Feb. 11 – Medieval Medicine: Universities and Guilds

Required Readings:

- Boccaccio. "Introduction." In *The Decameron*.
- Archambeau, Nicole. "Healing Options during the Plague: Survivor Stories from a Fourteenth-Century Canonization Inquest." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 85, no. 4 (Winter 2011): 531-559

Unit 2: Anatomized Bodies

WEEK 5

Feb. 16 – Medieval Medicine: Translation

Feb. 18 – Medieval Medicine: Anatomy

Required Readings:

- O'Boyle, Cornelius. "Surgical Texts and Social Contexts: Physicians and Surgeons in Paris, c. 1270-1430." In *Practical Medicine from Salerno to the Black Death*. London: Cambridge, 1994.
- Sweet, Victoria. "Hildegard of Bingen and the Greening of Medieval Medicine." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73, no. 3 (Fall 1999): 381-403

WEEK 6

Evidence Evaluation Due on Canvas Feb. 27th @ 11:59pm

Feb. 23 – Vesalius and Renaissance Anatomy

Feb. 25 – Medicine in the Early Modern Atlantic World

Required Readings:

- Farrington, B. "The Preface of Andreas Vesalius to *De Fabrica Humani Corporis* 1543." *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine* 25, no. 9 (Jul 1932): 1358-1359
- Park, Katherine. "Introduction." In *Secrets of Women: Gender, Generation, and the Origins of Human Dissection*. New York: Zone, 2010.
- Gómez, Pablo. "Social Pharmacopeias." In *The Experiential Caribbean: Creating Knowledge and Healing in the Early Modern Atlantic*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017.

WEEK 7

Mar. 2 – Pathological Anatomy

Mar. 4 – The Paris Clinical School

Required Readings:

- Morgagni, John Baptist. "Letters." In *The Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy* Translated by Benjamin Alexander. New York: Hafner Publishing, 1960.
- Weiner, Dora B. and Michael J. Sauter. "The City of Paris and the Rise of Clinical Medicine." *Osiris, 2nd Series* 18, Science and the City (2003): 23-42

Unit 3: Infected Bodies

WEEK 8

Mar. 9 – Exam

Mar. 11 – Urbanization, Inoculation, and The Germ Theory of Disease

Required Readings:

- A. J. and R.A. *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793: and a Refutation of Some Censures, Thrown upon them in Some late Publications*. Franklin Head: Woodward, 1794.
- Koch, Robert. "The Aetiology of Tuberculosis." In *Medicine and Western Civilization*. New Jersey: Rutgers, 1995.
- Bynum, W. F.. "Medical Science Goes Public." In *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

WEEK 9

Mar. 16 – 19th Century Medical Marketplace

Mar. 18 – Professionalization of Nursing

Required Readings:

- Sappol, Michael. "A Traffic in Dead Bodies': The Contested Bioethics of Anatomy in Antebellum America." In *A Traffic in Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America*. Princeton and New York: Princeton University Press, 2002.
- Sandelowski, Margarete. "The Physician's Eyes: American Nursing and the Diagnostic Revolution in Medicine." *Nursing History Review* 8, (2000): 3-38

WEEK 10

Mar. 23 – Public Health

Mar. 25 – Hospital and Medical School Reform

Required Readings:

- Anderson, Warwick. "Immunization and Hygiene in the Colonial Philippines." *Journal of the History of Medicine* 62, (January 2007): 1-20.
- Howell, Joel D.. "Physicians, Patients, and Medical Technology." In *Technology in the Hospital: Transforming Patient Care in the Early Twentieth Century*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.

Spring Break

Unit 4: Modern Bodies at Risk

WEEK 11

Apr. 6 – Penicillin and the Hunt for Magic Bullet Cures

Apr. 8 – Medical Research and Exploitation

Required Readings:

- Greene, Jeremy. "Shrinking the Symptom, Growing the Disease: Hypertension after Diuril." In *Prescribing by the Numbers: Drugs and the Definition of Disease*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Cooper Owens, Deidre. "The Birth of American Gynecology." In *Medical Bondage*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017.

WEEK 12

Essay Proposal due on Canvas 11:59pm April 13th

Apr. 13 –Mental Health and Mental Hygiene

Apr. 15 – Eugenics

Required Readings:

- Jelliffe, smith Ely. Introduction to *The Principles of Mental Hygiene*, ix-xiv. by William A. White. New York: MacMillan, 1924.
- Schoen, Johanna. "Between Choice and Coercion: Women and the Politics of Sterilization in North Carolina, 1929-1975," *Journal of Women's History* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 132-156

WEEK 13

Draft due on Canvas 11:59pm April 22nd

Peer Review due on Canvas 11:59pm April 26th

Apr. 20 – Quantifying Risk

Apr. 22 – Paying for Health Care

Required Readings:

- Quadango, Jill. "Cost Containment Versus National Health Insurance." In *One Nation, Uninsured: Why the U. S. Has No National Health Insurance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

WEEK 14

Apr. 27 – The War on Cancer

Apr. 29 – Concluding Thoughts

Required Readings:

- Aronowitz, Robert. "Do Not Delay: Breast Cancer and Time, 1900-1970," *The Milbank Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2001): 355-386

Final Exam – Friday May 8th 7:45-9:45AM

Final paper due on Canvas Friday, May 1st by midnight