

Course Number and Section: ENGL 203A.001 **Course Topic:** Topics in Composition: Life and Death
Credits: 3 **Term:** Winter T1, 2020 (Sept.-Dec., 2020)
Instructor: Dr. Melissa Jacques

Course Description: This course will look at representations of life and death through the interdisciplinary perspective of the medical or health humanities. In terms of content, we will consider literary, scholarly, and visual representations of life, death, health, and illness. Our primary texts will range from philosophy, history, and medicine, to creative non-fiction, the graphic memoir, and visual art. Using a multimodal approach that attends to both visual and discursive rhetorical strategies, we explore the relationship between different modes of representation in order to see how such apparently distinct fields as medicine and the arts might be better understood as mutually enriching.

Method of Course Delivery: This course will run online with both real-time (synchronous) sessions and self-guided (asynchronous) materials. For a fuller description of synchronous and asynchronous, see below. The breakdown for this section of ENGL 203 is as follows: 1.5 hours of class time per week will be synchronous, and 1.5 hours will be asynchronous.

Tentative/Partial Reading List:

- Lisa Baraitser, Selections from *Enduring Time* (philosophy/theory)
- Rita Charon, et al. (eds.) Selections from *The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine* (essays)
- Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking* (memoir)
- Sander Gilman, Selections from *Picturing Health and Illness: Images of Identity and Difference* (scholarly history)
- Anders Nilsen, *Don't Go Where I Can't Follow* (graphic memoir)
- Oliver Sacks, "My Periodic Table" (personal essay)
- Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (cultural criticism)
- Fredrik Svenaeus, "Illness as Unhomelike Being-in-the-World: Heidegger and the Phenomenology of Medicine" (scholarly essay)

Tentative Viewing List:

A selection of short lectures including:

- Nadine Burke Harris' TEDtalk, "How Childhood Trauma Affects Health across a Lifetime"
- Gabor Maté's TEDtalk: "The Power of Addiction and the Addiction of Power"

Other: We will look at a range of images—and their historical/cultural contexts—from the eighteenth-century anatomical atlas & Victorian death portraits to contemporary imaging technologies (MRIs, digital autopsies) and contemporary art (such as paintings and sculptures by Saul Melman, an emergency medicine physician in New York).

Synchronous: Some or all of the scheduled class hours are spent in a real-time, online virtual classroom, with the instructor and registered students in attendance; these class hours may be devoted to lecture, discussion, group work, or other real-time virtual learning activities. Consult your instructor for specifics.

Asynchronous: Refers to course instruction delivered in the form of materials that can be accessed and worked through at the student's own pace; these materials might include recorded lectures or power point demonstrations, required readings, etc. Consult your instructor for specifics.