

Medical Humanities Seminar: Doctors' Dilemmas

Spring 2014
URMC 2-7525

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Literature provides rich contexts in which to think about moral issues that go far beyond the sketchy scenarios that we often use to think about ethical values and principles. In this course, then, we will use plays, short stories, and novels to look more deeply at some important ethical issues related to medicine.

Because some of the readings are long and others involve plays that we will be able to see performed, in movie versions, we will meet less often, but for longer periods. So we will meet six times for three hours each, 1:00-4:00.

Required books:

Albert Camus, *The Plague* (Vintage)
Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (Vintage)
George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion and Three Other Plays* (Barnes and Noble)

I also ordered Dalmon Galgut's *The Good Doctor*, which is a good book, but I decided its themes overlapped too much with other works we will be discussing. But I do recommend it.

Requirements

1. *Participation.* This is a seminar. I will not lecture. I expect each of you to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and the movies and to ask questions both of me and of the other participants in the seminar.

2. *Reaction papers.* Each week, you should write a 1-2 page reflection paper on some aspect of the work under consideration that week. You can write on anything you choose, big or small. I do not expect them to be profound; I just want you to think about the reading and to articulate some thoughts about them. You can also use them to raise questions you would like me or the seminar to address. For weeks in which we have readings, please email them to me by 7:00 a.m. on the day of class. For weeks in which we will watch movies, write one after class, about the movies or the issues raised in discussion, due by Thursday at noon.

Class schedule

Jan 6. Movie: "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind"

Reflection due Jan 8 at noon

Jan 13. ["The Birthmark" by Nathaniel Hawthorne](#)

["The Struldbruggs" by Jonathan Swift](#) (*Gulliver's Travels*, chapter 26)

["The Enemy" by Pearl Buck](#)

["The Use of Force" by William Carlos Williams](#)

Reflection due Jan 13 at 7:00 am

Jan 20. *The Doctor's Dilemma* by George Bernard Shaw

"Whither Thou Goest," by Richard Selzer

Reflection due Jan 20 at 7:00 am

Jan 27. No class.

Feb 3. *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

Reflection due Feb 3 at 7:00 am

Feb 10. Movie: "A Day in the Death of Joe Egg" by Peter Nichols

Reflection due Feb 12 at noon

Feb. 17. No class.

Feb. 24. *The Plague* by Albert Camus

Reflection due Feb 24 at 7:00 am