

BIOMEDICAL HUMANITIES

Program Website: Biomedical Humanities – Hiram College (<https://www.hiram.edu/academics/undergraduate-studies/undergraduate-programs/biomedical-humanities/>)

Introduction

The biomedical humanities major at Hiram College is an innovative and interdisciplinary area of study geared toward preparing students for successful careers in a range of healthcare fields. Our graduates have gone on to be physicians, physician assistants, veterinarians, physical therapists, genetic counselors, and to work in areas like bioethics, public health and the law.

The biomedical humanities major couples an intensive science core with equally rigorous study in the humanities for the purpose of exploring the intersections of medicine, science, literature and culture. The major's relational core prepares students for the interpersonal and group level interactions that are quintessential to health and healthcare delivery. Collectively, our coursework provides students with a broad perspective on twenty-first century healthcare.

With built-in flexibility in major requirements, biomedical humanities majors are able to tailor their course of study—in consultation with their departmental advisor—to meet their particular interests and career goals. All biomedical humanities majors are required to participate in three hundred hours of experiential learning spanning biomedical research, clinical/job shadowing and service learning.

Faculty

Bradley Goodner, (2001) Professor of Biology and Biomedical Humanities; Chair; Edward J. Smerek Chair of Mathematics, the Sciences, and Technology

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Michelle Nario-Redmond, (2007) Professor of Psychology and Biomedical Humanities; Chair

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Emily Waples, (2016) Associate Professor of Biomedical Humanities; Chair; Director of the Center for Literature and Medicine; Carol C. Donley Ph.D. '60 Endowed Chair

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Hailee Yoshizaki-Gibbons, (2020) Assistant Professor of Biomedical Humanities

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Course Descriptions

BIMD 18000: WKSP. 1 Hour(s)

WORKSHOP~ Workshops may be taken Pass/No Credit only. Students may take no more than nine workshops for credit toward graduation. Workshops can be used as elective credit only.

BIMD 18100: GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUES: 1 Hour(s)

GLOBAL HEALTH ISSUES ~ This overview course is designed to expose students who are interested in health to a global perspective of select, relevant issues in international health. A wide range of perspectives, including historical, ethical, environmental, cultural, social, economic, political, and policy will be explored. Current trends and future implications will also be examined. Prerequisite: Sophomore standing or instructor permission required.

BIMD 18510: SPC TPC:: 1 Hour(s)

SPECIAL TOPICS: ~ These one hour courses allow students to explore contemporary issues within healthcare from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

BIMD 20100: INTRO TO MEDICAL HUMANITIES: 4 Hour(s)

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL HUMANITIES: ~ Coined in 1947 by historian of science George Sarton, the term “medical humanities” describes an interdisciplinary field of study that brings the materials and methods of humanities disciplines—including literary studies, cultural studies, religious studies, history, philosophy, visual arts, and theater—into conversation with the science and practice of medicine. Over the past seven decades, the scope of the field has expanded beyond the domain of ethics in medical education to encompass broader inquiry into the social and cultural meanings of health and illness, disability and aging, and death and dying. In this course, we will consider some of the theoretical, methodological, and interpretive issues at stake as we survey the landscape of the medical humanities today. Exploring subfields such as the history of medicine, narrative medicine, and graphic medicine, we will consider how humanistic modes of analysis and interpretation can address questions surrounding embodiment, health, and health care. In addition to engaging with a set of common readings, students will have the opportunity to tailor the course toward their own interests as they investigate the relationships of reciprocal exchange that might be forged across and beyond disciplinary boundaries.

BIMD 21000: WOMEN, MEDICINE, MEDIA:CA: 4 Hour(s)

WOMEN, MEDICINE, MEDIA:CA ~ From hysteria to autoimmunity, the gendering of illness has worked to pathologize women's bodies and normalize the suspicion and dismissal of women's stories. At the same time, women have written back against the sexist ideologies and stigmatizing practices of Western biomedicine, offering a counterdiscourse to medical paternalism and re-imagining an ethics of care. This course examines autobiographical, imaginative, and theoretical writing by women from the nineteenth century to the present, exploring how ideas about gender have shaped the stories we tell about physical illness, mental illness, and disability. Through the analysis of essays, memoirs, manifestos, fiction, and visual and digital media, we will address topics such as the nineteenth-century culture of “invalidism”; the politics of breast cancer; the representation and treatment of women's pain; and the experiences of mental and “invisible” illnesses. Considering intersections of race, sexuality, and gender identity, we will also probe the category of “women's health” itself, asking how this distinction has been historically constructed and understood, and how it might be productively reconstituted.

Core: Social/Cultural Analysis Meth

BIMD 23000: LITERATURE AND MEDICINE:IM: 4 Hour(s)

LITERATURE AND MEDICINE: IM ~ This course explores narrative techniques and representational strategies in the literature of health and illness. Through readings in a range of genres, we will examine, on one hand, how medicalized experiences are structured and circulated in literature, and, on the other hand, how literature mediates the social experiences of health and illness. Students will learn basic techniques of narrative analysis, including close reading skills, in order to interpret texts within specific social contexts.

Core: Interpretive Methods

BIMD 28000: SEM:: 1-4 Hour(s)

SEMINAR ~

BIMD 28100: INDEPENDENT STUDY: 1-4 Hour(s)

INDEPENDENT STUDY ~

BIMD 29800: FIELD EXPERIENCE: 1-4 Hour(s)

FIELD EXPERIENCE ~

BIMD 30120: AGING, SEX & THE BODY: 4 Hour(s)

AGING, SEX AND THE BODY ~ Scholars in the humanities who study aging often argue we are “aged by culture,” in other words, that we “learn to be old” through social and cultural processes, through our own expectations and other’s perceptions of us. Moreover, they assert that these processes, expectations and perceptions are often gender-dependent, and that women face unique challenges as they age. This course will explore the question: “What is aging?” We will find that there are numerous possible answers to this question, depending on who is asking and in what context. To reveal some of the more contested notions of what aging is, we will pair different disciplinary perspectives on various aspects of aging with the way these same aspects are represented in popular culture. We will keep the aging body at the forefront of our inquiries, questioning the relationship between biological changes and cultural ascriptions, between sexual identities and popular representations of the body, between the perceptions of health care workers and the self-images of the aging patients with whom they work. As aging is a process we all experience, this course will also ask you to confront your expectations, hopes and fears for your own aging, and to recognize how those impact your interactions with “older” people. Counts toward gender studies minor. This course counts as one the 3 required medical humanities seminars for the BIMD major and minor.

BIMD 30170: GIMPY GEEZERS: ABLEISM/AGEISM: 3,4 Hour(s)

GIMPY GEEZERS: ABLEISM AND AGEISM ~ Disability and older age are social categories that anyone can join. Despite the stakes we all have as current or future “disabled” and “older” adults, people belonging to these categories frequently experience stigma and discrimination, with a double burden faced by those belonging to both. However, quality of life may or may not be compromised with disability and/or age. Personal accounts of pleasure, satisfaction, stigma and discrimination all depend on social policies, cultural perceptions, political power, access to resources and individual appraisals. This course examines both the socially informed and embodied experiences involved in the transitions to (and sometimes from) disability and age status. We will interrogate the assumptions and stereotypes about disability and age that circulate through mainstream culture and how these shape interpersonal and institutional practices. How might we begin to recognize, respond to, and change the place of disability and aging in our culture, and thus our own inevitable experiences?

BIMD 30210: NARRATIVE BIOETHICS:ES: 3 Hour(s)

NARRATIVE BIOETHICS:ES ~ In recent years, medical practitioners have turned to the study of narrative as a means of improving patient care. Although medicine has grown significantly in its ability to diagnose and treat biological disease, medical caregivers often lack the tools necessary to recognize the plights of their patients, to extend empathy toward those who suffer, and to join honestly and courageously with patients in their struggles toward recovery or in facing death. Proponents of the use of narrative in medicine argue that caregivers’ shortcomings lie at least in part in their failure to respond to their patients’ stories of illness. Narrative knowledge will, they contend, increase a caregiver’s capacity to honor these stories. The incorporation of narrative competence into the practice of medicine encourages, then, a reexamination of medicine’s methodologies and the ethics underwriting the relationship between medical practitioners and patients. Practitioners trained in narrative become better readers of their patients’ stories and histories and, as a result, better caretakers of their beleaguered bodies. This course offers a narrative approach to issues in bioethics. It focuses on story (case studies, fiction, biographies) as starting points for moral interpretation in bioethics, with special attention to issues in health care. The course will help students recognize and evaluate conflicting perspectives about how ethical dilemmas should be addressed.

Core: Meaning/Ethics/Soc Responsibil

BIMD 34000: HEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:ES: 4 Hour(s)

HEALTH AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:ES ~ “Of all the forms of inequality,” Dr. Martin Luther King once proclaimed, “injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.” While Universal Declaration of Human Rights identifies health and health care as fundamental human rights, in the United States and elsewhere, health disparities continue to exist on basis of socioeconomic class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and ability. This course applies the principles of social justice to an examination of American health disparities. Addressing issues such as economic justice, racial justice, environmental justice, reproductive justice, disability justice, and LGBTQ justice, this course promotes an intersectional approach to social justice issues as it seeks to explore the complex relationships among discourse, power, and health. Considering the competing positions of various stakeholders, we will explore population-specific differences in categories such as mortality and morbidity, access to and quality of care, resource allocation, and data collection. Through reading among multiple genres—including memoir, poetry, fiction, journalism, critical theory, and social scientific scholarship—we will also analyze the social determinants of health from a discourse analysis perspective, asking how representation affects policy, practice, advocacy, and activism. Ultimately, we will assess strategies for organized collective action as we work toward an informed response to Thomas Couser’s question in *Signifying Bodies* (2010): “How can we guarantee, or at least try to ensure, that representation serves the best interests of vulnerable subjects?”

Core: Meaning/Ethics/Soc Responsibil

BIMD 35000: AUTOBIO,ILLNESS,EMBODIMENT:IM: 4 Hour(s)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY, ILLNESS AND EMBODIMENT:IM ~ Where do stories of illness begin—and end? How do experiences of disease or disability shape one's sense of self? How do patient narratives engage with, respond to, and/or critique medical discourses? In this course, we will examine autobiographical illness narratives in a variety of media—print, graphic, and digital—in order to analyze how patient-writers narrate their experiences of illness and construct themselves as subjects within their wider social and cultural contexts. Engaging with modes of autobiographical expression from nineteenth-century journals to twenty-first century blogs, we will think about how personal narratives use the subjective experience of embodiment as a way to communicate, educate, and connect. We will also read scholarly articles that address the stakes of this kind of self-representation, and use critical theory to consider how the experience of illness intersects with race, gender, and sexuality. Ultimately, this course suggests that the study of narrative both allows us to imagine more empathic care, and helps us to understand how patients participate in the creation of medical knowledge.

Core: Interpretive Methods

BIMD 35600: HOW WE DIE:ES: 4 Hour(s)

HOW WE DIE:ES ~ Despite death's inevitability, we consciously and unconsciously disguise or resist its reality in dreams, fairy tales, allegories, and even jokes. In his book, *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter*, from which this course borrows its name and a good deal of its inspiration, Sherwin Nuland describes how we have turned increasingly to modern medicine as one more means of denying the reality of death. As a surgeon with more than forty years of experience in a major metropolitan hospital, Nuland admits to actively participating in this denial. Modern medicine, he argues, influences how we as individuals and as a culture not only view but also experience death. "Modern dying," he contends, "takes place in the modern hospital, where it can be hidden, cleansed of its organic blight, and finally packaged for modern burial." This course uses literature, film, and history related to death as points of reference for examining the role modern medicine has come to play in how we die. Some sections of this course may be considered service learning (SL). This course satisfies the requirement for a medical humanities course with an emphasis on bioethics.

Core: Meaning/Ethics/Soc Responsibil

BIMD 37500: ISSUES IN WOMEN'S HEALTH:ES: 4 Hour(s)

ISSUES IN WOMEN'S HEALTH:ES ~ Women have a complicated and sometimes contentious relationship with the biomedical model of health care. Historically, women have been underrepresented in scientific and medical research, although over-represented as objects on which these disciplines are brought to bear. Much as advertising has long been accused of objectifying and fragmenting women's bodies (displaying just a torso, just legs, etc.), so too has medicine frequently been accused of treating specific body parts, specific diseases, without regard for the whole person. This fragmentation may be even more problematic for women as new screening technologies help to construct the fetus as an entity entirely separate from the woman carrying it. This course focuses on bioethical issues particular to women's health and healthcare experiences across the lifespan. We begin by exploring some of the distinctive contributions of feminist theory to traditional bioethics, focusing in particular on the feminist critique of abstract principals and the call to contextualize, as well as a larger commitment to social justice. We then examine particular women's health issues through the lens of feminist theory. Specific course topics may shift with each course offering, but will likely include some of the following: reproduction (pregnancy and childbirth, prenatal testing, abortion, assisted reproduction, contract gestation), sexuality (sexual autonomy, contraception), disease (breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, clinical research), life course development (menstruation and menopause, aging, physician-assisted suicide), mental health (hysteria, bullying, body image), and configuring the female body (eating disorders, cosmetic surgery). Course texts consist primarily of critical essays with some literature and film.

Core: Meaning/Ethics/Soc Responsibil

BIMD 38000: SEM:: 4 Hour(s)

SEMINAR ~

BIMD 38100: SPC TPC:: 1-4 Hour(s)

SPECIAL TOPICS~

BIMD 38910: GOING VIRAL: 4 Hour(s)

GOING VIRAL: EPIDEMICS IN AMERICAN HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND CULTURE ~ Epidemics are not only biological events, but cultural phenomena that produce wide-ranging effects on populations and nations. This course explores how American history, literature, and culture have been shaped by epidemics, from small pox outbreaks in the American colonies to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. Through a study of historical scholarship, literary texts, and cultural artifacts, we will consider issues such as how epidemiological theory has informed federal policy; how disease has been employed as a metaphor in political rhetoric; how ideas about immunity and susceptibility have produced understandings of race, citizenship, and national belonging; how epidemic events have mobilized initiatives in public health and health activism; and how tropes of communicable disease have manifested in American popular culture. Entering U.S. history at crucial moments of biological crisis, this course aims to analyze the many ways medical theory, practice, and policy have inflected—or infected—the American experience.

BIMD 41000: SERVICE IN HEALTH CARE SETTING: 1 Hour(s)

SERVICE IN A HEALTH CARE SETTING ~ By the end of this course, you will have completed participation in the off-campus volunteer experience(s) of your choice. Your only limitation is that your service must in some way expose you to health settings or work environments that involve close interaction with a population or demographic that is out of your norm. You must demonstrate completion of at least 60 hours, at no more than two service sites, by the end of the semester. We will be drawing on your experiences at your off-campus site during class discussions, for your personal journal, and in brief reflection essays. The service learning is intended to instill in students an appreciation for the community's strengths, resources, perceived needs and expectations through service-oriented experiences. Our discussions in class will focus on the American healthcare system; students will connect their personal experiences within the system to what is known about access to care, its costs and its outcomes. Pass/No Credit Only.

BIMD 47000: VOCATIONAL REFLECTION: 1 Hour(s)

VOCATIONAL REFLECTION ~ This course is intended to help upper-level biomedical humanities majors reflect upon and integrate their coursework and experiential learning, with an eye towards their intended career path. Students enrolled in this course will reflect upon their Hiram Connect experience (typically directed research or an internship), discuss issues of power inequality in volunteer situations and in health care more broadly, write their Hiram Connect Capstone reflection (in the form of a personal statement or essay), and prepare for the completion of Senior Seminar the following semester. Pass/No Credit Only.

BIMD 48000: SENIOR SEMINAR: 1 Hour(s)

SENIOR SEMINAR ~ This course serves as a capstone experience for the biomedical humanities major, and the two required formal public presentations reflect a student's portfolio of educational experiences in and out of the classroom. The first presentation is a demonstration of the student's command of her or his research project, and the second reflects the student's integration of academic and experiential learning in the medical humanities. Students completing the minor are only responsible for composing and presenting the medical humanities presentation.

BIMD 48100: INDEPENDENT RESEARCH: 1-4 Hour(s)

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH ~

BIMD 49800: INTERNSHIP: 4 Hour(s)

INTERNSHIP ~

Academic Offerings

- Biomedical Humanities Major (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-programs/biomedical-humanities/biomedical-humanities-major/>)
- Biomedical Humanities Minor (<https://catalog.hiram.edu/undergraduate/academic-programs/biomedical-humanities/biomedical-humanities-minor/>)