

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 180 hours of experiential learning including clinical/job shadowing and service learning.

Faculty

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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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Course Descriptions

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 20000: DISABIL/ILLNESS US FILMS:IM:ES: 4 Hour(s)

REPRESENTATIONS OF DISABILITY AND ILLNESS IN US FILMS:IM:ES ~ For many people, film and television are considered to reflect reality. For disability, specifically, media representations fill a gap in knowledge about the disability experience, as the very organization of society makes disability unknowable to many non-disabled people. This interdisciplinary course critically examines the complex ways that film simultaneously reflects and influences how society views and treats disabled and ill people. Students will examine how films and other forms of media represent disability, and learn how to critically evaluate the meaning and values embedded in these representations using disability studies, feminist, and critical theories. Students will also explore how representations of disability intersect with cultural ideologies of race, gender, class, sexuality, and age. Furthermore, students will scrutinize the ethics of dominant representations of disability in film and how these representations have influenced contemporary societal challenges issues such as healthcare, state violence, and public policy. In addition to interpreting films in popular culture, students will consider how disability scholars, activists, and artists have responded to dominant representations of disability and created alternative representations. Core: Meaning/Ethics/Soc Responsibil; Interpretive Methods

BIMD 20100: INTRO TO MEDICAL HUMANITIES:IM: 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.

Core: Interpretive Methods

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 23100: MENTAL HEALTH & SELF LOVE/CARE: 3 Hour(s)

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO MENTAL HEALTH, SELF-LOVE, AND SELF-CARE Self-care, self-love, and mental health are increasingly identified as important, particularly given the current global COVID-19 pandemic and growing social concerns about racial justice, climate change, war, and economic security. Despite this, discourses criticizing practices of self-care continuously circulate, contending that concerns about mental health are signs of "weakness," "laziness," or "lack of resilience or grit." This course seeks to counter this individualistic rhetoric by situating self-care, self-love, as social, rather than individual, issues. Drawing on critical disability studies and feminist of color approaches, students will critically explore self-care, self-love, and mental health. How do we medically construct mental health, and how does this construction often fail to acknowledge the many social and cultural influences on well-being? How is our value connected to our ability to produce and perform under capitalism, and how does this impact mental health? What does it mean to truly care for oneself, and how is self-care a political act? How can we love ourselves in a culture that constantly reinforces that everyone must achieve the "ideal" body mind? How are discourses connecting practices of self-care to weakness reinforcing ableist, sexist, racist, and classist standards? How can we build on self-care to also establish collective or community care? Students will consider these questions through discussing, writing, and analyzing critical scholarship, feminist and activist blogs, news articles and other media, and personal narratives. Students will also construct their own self-care and collective care plan to support themselves and others during their time at Hiram and beyond.

BIMD 23200: DISABILITY ETHICS:CA,ES: 4 Hour(s)

DISABILITY, ETHICS AND JUSTICE:CA,ES In the United States, disability is constructed as medically, culturally, and socially deviant. Dominant understandings of a "normal" or "ideal" body mind are reflective of ableism and rooted in white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. Consequently, disability has been cast as tragic, a "problem" that must be rehabilitated, fixed, or cured, and an outcome worse than death. These cultural views have shaped ethical thinking, leading to the advent of disability ethics as a discipline. Disability ethics is an interdisciplinary approach to examining ethical dilemmas about life with disability. It seeks to counter dominant views of disability by considering how the experiences and values of living with a disability can inform ethical issues. Disability ethics is connected to bioethics but expands beyond the realm of medicine to consider legal, policy, and social justice issues that affect the lived experiences of disabled people. Students will learn to examine and analyze major bioethical controversies through bioethics and disability ethics lenses, including assisted suicide, deinstitutionalization, prenatal testing, genetic discrimination, and assistive technology. This course employs an intersectional, interdisciplinary approach and centers the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of multiply marginalized disabled people. Students will deepen their understanding of disability ethics by analyzing a variety of sources, including scholarly work, life writing, media, and activism.

Core: Social/Cultural Analysis Meth; Meaning/Ethics/Soc Responsibil

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

SEMINAR ~

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

INDEPENDENT STUDY ~

BIMD 30150: GLOBAL DISABILITY & AGING:EW: 4 Hour(s)

DISABILITY AND AGING IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS:EW ~ Disability and aging are significant global phenomena, with billions of disabled and old people living around the world. Using ethnography, novels, poetry, and films, this course will explore how disability and old age are viewed, understood, and experienced differently depending on location, culture, and nation. Students will consider the ways disability and aging are distinct, yet interrelated, constructs and subject to diverse cultural, social, political, economic, and structural systems around the world. Additionally, using a critical, intersectional approach, students will examine the ways in which disability and old age are constructed in diverse cultures and nations, and how disability and old age interconnect with race, Indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, and immigration status. Students will also analyze how white supremacy, cis-hetero-patriarchy, global capitalism, colonization, and imperialism debilitate and disable people at various points in their life courses throughout the world, but particularly in the Global South. Moreover, students will uncover how disabled and old people across the world resist oppression and imagine, create, and work towards social justice.

Core: Experiencing the World

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 31000: CARE & CONFINEMENT:ES: 4 Hour(s)

COMPLEXITIES OF CARE AND CONFINEMENT:ES ~ Institutionalization is often understood as a relic of the past, but many disabled and aging people with complex medical needs still receive care in institutional settings. These institutions of care are varied and include group homes for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, psychiatric wards of hospitals and prisons, and nursing homes. This course critically explores the complexities of care and confinement in institutional spaces throughout the life course. What are the diverse lived experiences of disabled and aging people receiving care in different institutional spaces? What does it mean to receive care in a place that can also be a site of confinement, isolation, exploitation, and violence? How does having multiple marginalized identities mediate people's experiences with institutionalization? How have disability rights movements and elder rights movements responded differently to institutionalization? Can institutions of care be improved or reformed? How are disabled people resisting institutionalization or imagining community-based alternatives for care? This course takes an intersectional and transnational approach to institutional care. It locates institutionalization within social, economic, political, and cultural contexts and in relation to disability, age, gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality. Students will analyze a variety of sources examining the complex phenomenon of institutionalization, including novels by disabled writers, interviews with parents who have had to place disabled children in residential care settings, blogs by disability justice and prison abolition activists, research articles by social scientists and health care experts, and reports by policy analysts.

Core: Meaning/Ethics/Soc Responsibil

BIMD 33500: FEM OF COLOR PERSPECTIVES:UD: 4 Hour(s)

FEMINIST OF COLOR PERSPECTIVES ON DISABILITY, ILLNESS, AND HEALTH:UD~ Dominant understandings of disability, illness, and health have historically been centered on white, masculine, individualized, and medicalized perspectives, despite this knowledge often being derived from Black, Indigenous, brown, and othered bodies. However, feminist of color scholars and activists have challenged these approaches by uncovering the ways that disability, illness, and health are inherently connected to race, gender, class, Indigeneity, sexuality, age, and immigration status, in the United States and globally. This course critically examines issues of disability, illness, and health through Black, indigenous, and, feminist-of-color perspectives. Specific topics will include medical justice, reproductive justice, environmental justice, state violence and the criminalization of health and illness, mental health, self-love, decolonizing healthcare, healing, and women of color health activism. Students will analyze a variety of sources that explore disability, illness, and health through feminist of color lenses, including essays, memoirs, poetry, films, academic manuscripts, and policy briefs. Core: Understanding Diversity Home

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 38910: GOING VIRAL: 4 Hour(s)

GOING VIRAL: EPIDEMICS IN AMERICAN HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND CULTURE:CA ~ 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.

Core: Social/Cultural Analysis Meth

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 required formal public presentation reflects a student's portfolio of educational experiences in and out of the classroom by integrating academic and experiential learning in the medical humanities.

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/>)