

## Media, Medicine, and Justice

**Instructor: Prof. CHEUNG Shoan Yin (she/ her/ hers)**

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**Course Hours:**

**Thursday 6:45 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.**

**CKB UG03**

Cultural meanings of health and disease are shaped not only by scientific and medical discourses but also by media technologies, from films to smart phones to medical imaging devices. Through topics like mental health, vaccine politics, and surveillance, we will learn how media facilitates ideas about fitness and citizenship, normal vs. abnormal, and public support for health interventions in times of profound global inequality and geopolitical tension. We will also explore how individuals and collectives understand and contest biomedical knowledge, and why race, class, gender, sexuality, and other categories of social difference matter in health and medicine.

This course introduces fundamental concepts in the medical humanities. It assumes no prior knowledge and welcomes students from any academic background and experience.

### Learning Outcomes

- Understand the role of media and culture in framing health and disease
- Explain key theories about the relationship between health, medicine, and society
- Become familiar with shifting definitions of medicine and medical authority
- Analyze the relationship between individual identity, social organization, and health policy

### Assessment

Your grade will be assessed according to the assignment breakdown and criteria listed below. Generally, performance that exceeds or falls short of expectations within a grade category will receive a modification of + / - to the overall letter grade.

Lecture Attendance	10%
Response Posts (2)	10%
Presentation	20%
Illness Narrative	30%
Final Project	30%

### **Course Schedule:**

1.     **Sep. 4**           **Introduction: Media, Medicine and Justice**
  
2.     **Sep. 11**          **Disease and the Other**
  - Susan Sontag, “Illness as Metaphor Part 3: Disease as Political Metaphor,” *New York Review of Books* (1978)
  - Priscilla Wald, “Viral Cultures: Microbes and Politics in the Cold War,” in *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative* (2007)
  
3.     **Sep. 18**          **Framing Disease: AIDS**
  - Dorothy Nelkin, “AIDS and the News Media,” *The Milbank Quarterly* 69 (1991)
  - Evelyn Hammond, “Race, Sex, and the Construction of ‘Other,’” *Radical America* (1987)
  
4.     **Sep. 25**          **Politics of Reproduction**
  - Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives* (1991)
  - Angela Davis, “Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights,” *Women, Race, & Class* (1981)
  
5.     **Oct. 2**           **Medicalization and Social Control**
  - Margaret Lock, “Medicalization and the Naturalization of Social Control,” *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology* (2004)
  
6.     **Oct. 9**           **Incomplete Medicalization**
  - In-class screening: *Unrest* (2017)
  - Joseph Dumit, “Illnesses You Have to Fight: Facts as Forces in Uncertain, Emergent Illnesses,” *Social Sciences and Medicine* (2006)
  
7.     **Oct. 16**          **Structural Violence I**

- Paul Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below,” *Daedalus* (1996)

**8. Oct. 23 Structural Violence II**

- Xisai Song, “A Rich People’s Disease: Migrant Workers and Structural Disability in China,” *Medical Anthropology* (2023)
- Sherine Hamdy, “When the State and Your Kidneys Fail,” Political Etiologies in An Egyptian Dialysis Ward,” *American Ethnologist* (2008)

**9. Oct. 30 Mental Illness I**

- Ellen Rubinstein and Rae Sakakibara, “Diagnosing Hikikomori: Social Withdrawal in Contemporary Japan,” *Medical Anthropology Theory* (2020)
- Ethan Watters, “The Mega-marketing of Depression in Japan,” *Crazy Like US: The Globalization of the American Psyche* (2011)

**10. Nov. 6 Research Methods Workshop**

- *In-class Screening:* Troublemakers: Drugged, Framed, Detained

**11. Nov. 13 Mental Illness II**

- In-class Screening: *Selling Sickness: How the World’s Biggest Pharmaceutical Companies are Turning Us All into Patients* (2005)
- Jonathan Metzl, “‘Mother’s Little Helper:’ The Crisis of Psychoanalysis and the Miltown Revolution,” *Gender & History* (2003)

**12. Nov. 20 Pharmaceuticals**

- [PODCAST] “Professional Guinea Pigs,” Inside the World of Clinical Drug Trials,” *The Big Story* (2024)
- Petryna, Adriana. “Ethical Variability: Drug Development and Globalizing Clinical Trials,” *American Ethnologist* (2008)

**13. Nov. 27 Student Presentations**

