Medicine in Literature & Film
Dr. Deirdre Neilen (464-8452)
Fall 2011 (W 4-7 P.M.)
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Required Texts: *A Blind Man Can See How Much I Love You*, Amy Bloom; *Without*, Donald Hall; *The Tennis Partner*, Abraham Verghese; *Complications*, Atul Gawande; *The Heart’s Truth*, Cortney Davis; *Fourteen Stories*, Jay Baruch; *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*, Jean-Dominque Bauby; *The Soul of Medicine*, Sherwin B. Nuland; *Wit*, Margaret Edson. All texts are available at the Upstate bookstore in Campus Activities Building; you can also buy them through Amazon or find many of them at local libraries. There will also be a packet of readings given to each student on the first day of class.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<td>Aug 31</td>
<td>Introduction and Requirements</td>
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| Sept 7 | *The Heart’s Truth* (pp 1-30)  
*The Soul of Medicine* (pp 1-30)  
***Quiz*  
Journal Due |
| Sept 14 | **The Doctor** (film)  
Handout: Poems  
Journal Due |
| Sept 21 | *Complications* (pp 1-106)  
***Quiz*  
Journal Due |
| Sept 28 | *Wit*  
*The Heart’s Truth* (pp 31-62)  
***Quiz*  
Journal Due |
| Oct 5  | *Wit* (film)  
*The Soul of Medicine* (pp 31-99)  
***Quiz*  
Journal Due |
| Oct 12 | *The Tennis Partner* (pp 1-128)  
***Paper #1 Due* (5-7 pages, typed)  
***Quiz* |
| Oct 19 | *The Tennis Partner* (pp 130-342)  
***Quiz*  
Journal Due |
| Oct 26 | *The Healing Muse* celebration |
Overview: Medicine in Literature and Film intends to provoke thoughtful discussion and analysis about health care and those who provide it as depicted in fiction, poetry, essays, and film. We will compare and contrast first person accounts from physicians and nurses with the fictional worlds we encounter in the movies and on TV. We will also be reading accounts from people who have been witnesses to or active participants in medical care giving. We’ll look at various ethical dimensions that are often part of medicine such as confidentiality, autonomy, beneficence, and justice. How is confidentiality, for example, compromised when a physician or a nurse writes about a particular patient or encounter? Is the notion of autonomy challenged when a loved one is responsible for making medical choices for a partner or a dependent? Do the layers of hierarchy within our health care system and our current obsession with legal ramifications mean that justice is not always a primary concern? Is illness defined differently by those who have it compared to those who wish to treat it? Is technology serving medicine well? How about patients and their caregivers? How does narrative play an important role in good medical care? And we will be interested in the creative process itself as manifested by these writers. Which writers seem to negotiate most fluidly the tension between medicine’s requirements and narrative’s demands? How do they accomplish this? When packaged for a more popular audience (such as for TV or film), do medicine and the health professions seem to promise more than they can deliver?
OBJECTIVES: The student will compare and contrast popular culture’s depiction of the profession of medicine as seen in television and film with those of medical, nursing, and other health professionals and caregivers in literature. The student will analyze how health, illness, and identity are defined and treated by the health care system and compare and contrast that with how an individual who suffers from a particular illness sees his/her identity. The student will be able to write an in-depth study of an assigned piece of literature, relating it to what we have discussed during the semester.

STRUCTURE and REQUIREMENTS: Attendance and participation are obviously important in a course like this. Bring your most open and intellectually curious self to class. If you miss class, you are responsible for checking the assignment for the next class. There will often be a 10-minute quiz on the week’s required reading; this quiz will be given at the beginning of class. Quizzes cannot be made up: if you are absent, you receive an F for that week’s quiz; if you are late to class, you receive an F for that week’s quiz. I will drop your lowest two quiz grades at the end of the semester. Students will keep a weekly journal, with a minimum of two excerpts per week. The journal will describe the student’s responses to the week’s reading and/or any discussions the student is having with others about the course’s topics. You may send the journal to me via e-mail or bring a hard copy of it to class each week. If you use the email option, your journal should arrive before 4 pm each Wednesday; if you do not send the journal by e-mail, I will expect a hard copy each week at 4 pm in class. I will return a copy to you each week with my comments.

There are two required papers. Papers must be typed and double-spaced; writing should reflect your undergraduate or graduate status. Paper topics will be discussed a few weeks before the paper is due. Yes, spelling and grammar matter for everyone! Use an English handbook and dictionary. Graduate students will be expected to do further research on their topics; I will meet with graduate students in the first weeks of class to discuss this.

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will result in failure for the paper and referral to SUNY Upstate Medical University’s Judicial Board. Citations are essential in research papers; students may use the citation method preferred by their individual professions. Please don’t hesitate to talk to me about any of these requirements. I look forward to a rewarding semester for all of us.

GRADING:
Paper #1 (30%)
Quizzes (20%)
Journal and Class Participation (20%)
Paper #2 (30%)