

## Representations of the Nurse in Literature, Film & Television

*Consortium for Culture and Medicine—Fall 2008*

*CCFM 411/6411/1411, CCM 434/534, ETS 405*

**Tuesdays 4:30 to 7:30, Room 1507 Setnor Bldg.**

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**Office hours by appointment—call or email**

**Course Description:** How the nurse has been represented historically in literature, film, and television is explored, focusing specifically on the relationships among images of nurses, ideologies of nursing, and the practice of nursing. Representations of nursing in late nineteenth-century and twentieth-century texts are examined in relation to larger class and gender issues, including the ways in which the nurse threatened traditional notions of women. The social contexts of representations of nurses in late twentieth-century culture are analyzed, from Nurse Ratched in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* to the gay male nurse Belize in *Angels in America*, and stereotypes and iconoclastic figures are identified. Focusing on more recent literature, film, and television, the figure of the nurse is considered in relation to contemporary concerns about the nursing profession, such as the relationship between nurses and physicians, the economy of the hospital and health care, and the nursing shortage. Professional nurses guest lecture in the course.

### Course Topics and Readings

#### **Week 1 (8/26): What Is a Nurse?: Introduction to Course**

Introductions

In-class reading, visual representations of nurses, and discussion

#### **Week 2 (9/2): From the Domestic to the Public Sphere**

Selections from Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches* (21 pp.) [handout]

Chap. 1 from Kalisch and Kalisch, *The Changing Image of the Nurse* (8 pp.) [handout]

#### **Week 3 (9/9): Angels of Mercy, Agents of Reform: Sympathy, Empathy, and Nursing**

Selections from Edith Wharton's *The Fruit of the Tree* (75 pp.)

#### **Week 4 (9/16): The Nurse at the Front: Nurses in WWI**

Selections from Ellen N. La Motte, *The Backwash of War*, and Mary Borden, *The Forbidden Zone* (60 pp.)

#### **Week 5 (9/23): "Horsie": Negative Stereotypes of Nurses**

Ben Ames Williams, "The Nurse" (9 pp.)

Dorothy Parker, "Horsie" (25 pp.)

T. K. Brown, "A Drink of Water" (1958) (22 pp.)

Chap. 2 from Kalisch and Kalisch, *The Changing Image of the Nurse* (16 pp.)

**September 30—NO CLASS: Eid ul-Fitr**

**Week 6 (10/7): The Nurse at War: Authority, and Ethics**

Selections from Lynn Hampton's *The Fighting Strength* (30 pp.)

Mary Reynolds Powell's *A World of Hurt* (40 pp.)

Walt Whitman, *The Wound Dresser* [handout]

Guest speaker: Priscilla Worral, PhD, RN

**Midterm paper proposals due**

**Week 7 (10/14): Self-Representation: Nurses' Poetry and Memoir**

Selections from Tilda Shalof, *A Nurse's Story: Life, Death, and In-between in an Intensive Care Unit* (70 pp.)

Selections from *Between the Heartbeats: Poetry and Prose by Nurses* (18 pp.)

**Discussion of midterm papers-in-process**

**Week 8 (10/21): Midterm Paper Due**

**Discussion of midterm papers**

Screening: Forman, Milos, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)

**Week 9 (10/28): The Big Nurse: The Nurse as Establishment**

Barbara Melosh, "Doctors, Patients, and 'Big Nurse': Work and Gender in the Postwar Hospital" (22 pp.)

Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, "Nurses: The Satiric Image" (12 pp.)

Leslie Fiedler, "Images of the Nurse in Fiction and Popular Culture" (10 pp.)

**Week 10 (11/4): Between Patients and Institutions: The Nurse and Ethics**

David Feldshuh, *Miss Evers' Boys* (101 pp.)

Screening: Sargent, Joseph, *Miss Evers' Boys* (1997)

Guest speaker: Pat Knox, MSN, FNP, RN, Clinical Coordinator of Palliative Care Consult Service

**Final paper proposals due**

**Week 11 (11/11): Representations of Others**

Screening: Selections from Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, *The Celluloid Closet* and Marlon Riggs, *Color Adjustment*

Paul Darke, "Understanding Cinematic Representations of Disability" (16 pp.)

Kathleen LeBesco, "Framing Fatness: Popular Representations of Obesity as Disability" (10 pp.)

**Discussion of final paper proposals**

**Week 12 (11/18): Crossing Boundaries: Representations of (Gay, Black, Male) Nurses**

Screening: Nichols, Mike, *Angels in America* (2003)

Brian Phillip Harper, "Walk-On Parts and Speaking Subjects" (4 pp.)

Begin reading Suzanne Gordon (see next week)

**Week 13 (11/25): The Image of the Nurse on Television**

*Nurse, M\*A\*S\*H, China Beach, ER, House, Grey's Anatomy*

Selection from Suzanne Gordon, *Nursing Against the Odds* (pp.147-172)

**Week 14 (12/2):**

**Final Paper Due, Wrap-up, and Course Evaluation**

9/15/08

## Course "Texts"

### Fiction, Poetry, Play, and Memoir

- Alcott, Louisa May, *Hospital Sketches* (1863) [handout]
- Borden, Mary, *The Forbidden Zone*, selections from *Nurses at the Front: Writing the Wounds of the Great War*, ed. Maragret R. Higonnet (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001) [E-reserve]
- Brown, T. K. "A Drink of Water" (1958) from *American Nurses in Fiction: An Anthology of Short Stories*, ed. Barbara Melosh (NY: Garland, 1984) [E-reserve]
- Feldshuh, David, *Miss Evers' Boys* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1995) [bookstore]
- Hampton, Lynn, *The Fighting Strength: Memoirs of a Combat Nurse in Vietnam* (Warner Books, 1992) [E-reserve]
- Intensive Care: More Poetry and Prose by Nurses*, ed. Cortney Davis and Judy Schaefer (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003) [E-reserve]
- La Motte, Ellen N. *The Backwash of War*, selections from *Nurses at the Front: Writing the Wounds of the Great War*, ed. Maragret R. Higonnet (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001) [E-reserve]
- Masson, Veneta, *Ninth-Street Notebook: Voice of a Nurse in the City* (Washington, DC: Sage Femme Press, 2001) [E-reserve]
- Parker, Dorothy, "Horsie," from *American Nurses in Fiction: An Anthology of Short Stories*, ed. Barbara Melosh (NY: Garland, 1984) [E-reserve]
- Powell, Mary Reynolds, *A World of Hurt* (Chesterland, Ohio: Greenleaf Enterprises, 2000) [E-reserves]
- Shalof, Tilda, *A Nurse's Story: Life, Death, and In-between in an Intensive Care Unit* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004) [E-reserve]
- Wharton, Edith. *The Fruit of the Tree* (1907; Prometheus Books, 2004) [E-reserve]
- Whitman, Walt. *The Wound Dresser*, <http://www.bartleby.com/42/818.html> [handout]
- Williams, Ben Ames, "The Nurse" (1926) from *American Nurses in Fiction: An Anthology of Short Stories*, ed. Barbara Melosh (NY: Garland, 1984) [E-reserve]

### Film

- Epstein, Rob and Jeffrey Friedman *The Celluloid Closet* (1995)
- Forman, Milos, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)
- Nichols, Mike, *Angels in America* (2003)
- Riggs, Marlon, *Color Adjustment* (1992)
- Sargent, Joseph, *Miss Evers' Boys* (1997)

### Television

- Janet Dean* (1954)
- M\*A\*S\*H* (1972-1983)
- China Beach* (1988-1991)
- ER* (1994-present)

## History and Cultural Analysis

- Darke, Paul, "Understanding Cinematic Representations of Disability," in *The Disability Reader: Social Science Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 1998), pp. 181-197 [E-reserve]
- Gordon, Suzanne, *Nursing Against the Odds: How Health Care Cost Cutting, Media Stereotypes, and Medical Hubris Undermine Nurses and Patient Care*, The Culture and Politics of Health Care Work (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2005) [E-reserve]
- Harper, Brian Phillip, "Walk-on Parts and Speaking Subjects: Screen Representations of Black Gay Men," *Callaloo* 18(2): 390-394 [E-reserve]
- LeBesco, Kathleen, "Framing Fatness: Popular Representations of Obesity as Disability," in *Revolting Bodies?: The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), pp. 74-84 [E-reserve]
- Melosh, Barbara, "Doctors, Patients, and 'Big Nurse': Work and Gender in the Postwar Hospital" from *Nursing History: New Perspectives, New Possibilities*, ed. Ellen Condliffe Lagemann (NY: Teachers College Press, 1983) [E-reserve]
- Kalisch, Beatrice J. & Philip Arthur Kalisch, *The Changing Image of the Nurse* (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1987) [handout/E-reserve]
- Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, "Nurses: The Satiric Image and the Translocated Ideal," from *Images of Nurses: Perspectives from History, Art, and Literature* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), ed. Anne Hudson Jones [E-reserve]

## E-Reserves

You can access E-reserve course readings through your Upstate or a LEAP account. Go to <http://www.upstate.edu/library/> and click on *Electronic Reserves*, then *Consortium for Culture and Medicine*, then *Representations of the Nurse*.

## Upstate Medical Bookstore

*Miss Evers' Boys* will be available at Upstate's bookstore, CAB, 155 Elizabeth Blackwell St. (entrance to CAB on Irving Ave., between Adams and Harrison, on west side of street). Tel. 464-5560.

## Course Requirements

### Attendance:

This class meets only once a week; therefore you will be allowed one unexcused absence.



### Class Participation:

The class will be run as a seminar, not a lecture, and therefore depends on your ideas and input! You are expected to participate in class discussion.

### Presentations:

Each student will give a presentation on a concept related to the week's readings/viewings or on a text (lit, film or TV) related to the week's readings/viewings. The presentations will be 10 to 15 minutes in length (depending on the size of the class) and will be graded on the selection and organization of information presented, its relevance to the narrative, and, to a lesser extent, the "performance" of the presentation.

### **Paper Proposals:**

Write one full page, single-spaced. You can also include an outline and a proposed title. Your proposal should cover most if not all of the following: what your argument/thesis might be; which texts you'll be discussing and which passages you might be focusing on through "close readings"; which concepts from class you'll be making use of in your analysis; problems you might encounter in writing; and a discussion of why you're writing the paper. We will devote a large part of a class session to discussing these proposals. **Students will read and discuss each other's final paper proposals.**

**Class Participation, your Presentation, and Paper Proposals count for 20% of your final grade.**



### **Study Questions (1-2 pages per set; four highest grades at 5% each for total of 20%)**

Each week I'll give you a list questions and/or suggestions for discussion that will cover the next week's readings. These will help you to know what in the readings I'm interested in, and they'll help you to formulate *your* ideas and opinions about the readings. You can use these writings as a basis for class discussion. I may ask you to read one or more of your responses out loud to the group. Write a couple of paragraphs in response to each, totaling one to two pages. Think of this writing as preparation for your papers.

**Midterm Paper (5 pages for undergrads, 5-7 for grad students; 20% of final course grade)**

**Term Paper (8-10 pages for undergrads, 10-15 for grad students; term paper is 40% of the final course grade.)**

### **Papers (See also Paper Proposals above):**

Both midterm and term paper topic (each student's choice and approved by me) will relate to some aspect of the texts (film, lit, and/or TV), concepts covered, and class discussions. These papers comprise a large part of the course grade, so students should think carefully about which aspect of the texts they wish to focus on intensively. It might be one element they find in two or more texts, or students may wish to focus on several aspects of a single text. During the course, I will discuss with students how to select a topic for their papers and how to refine that topic into a question or argument that will lead into a fruitful paper project.

I will provide an overview of and many resources for reviewing essay form so that students feel clear and confident about writing the paper. I will prepare the students for the paper writing process and leave a portion of each class period open for discussion of papers.

Papers will be graded on the clarity of writing, the logic of the argument(s), demonstration of comprehension of concepts discussed in class, the coherence, and the persuasiveness of the essay. Form and content are two sides of the same coin; clear, logical, and carefully considered analysis will best reflect comprehension of the ideas set forth in the narratives we read and in our class discussions. All papers will be graded on the clarity of writing, because it is interwoven with clarity of thought. Students will be guided to choose topics that will allow them to focus their energies on clear and straightforward engagements with their topics. Papers must be proofread and edited for grammatical clarity (another component of one's argument). Students will be teamed up to share this tedious but crucial task.

**Undergraduate students** are encouraged to write without resorting to outside perspectives on their topic other than the readings assigned and recommended for the course and to focus carefully on the texts at hand, engaging with their topic by plotting out an outline for the exploration of the question or argument and finding examples from the reading(s) that support or further the question/argument. The paper is a way to think through a specific idea by poring over one or more readings and writing through one's ideas about it/them. Putting your thoughts into writing that can be understood by others and persuades them of your argument demands that you set down and logically organize your ideas and test your hypotheses in a way that oral discussion does not require. Thus students who may not have a background in writing are nonetheless as capable of well-argued writing as students with more experience writing.

**Graduate students** will be expected to read critical and socio-historical texts (I'll help you choose these) relevant to their paper topics, and their papers will be graded in part on the aptness of the cited texts and the way that the students integrate them into their line of questioning or argument. The emphasis is on the usefulness of the material cited, rather than on the number of citations. **Grad students are expected to know the rules of proper citation, both ethically and in terms of citation format, and to demonstrate that knowledge in their papers.** I will supply students with resources for reviewing documentation and avoiding ambiguous citation that might appear as plagiarism. Papers must include close readings of the text(s), where either a selected passage or passages are discussed in detail or images, tone, sequence of events, or other details of the structure of the narrative are explored in terms of language and the ideas expressed.

**Students from the College of Medicine may register for one-credit units of the course.** One five-page paper with accompanying paper proposal, study questions, one presentation, and class participation are required. See instructor to arrange registration.

### **Plagiarism**

"To use another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source is to plagiarize. Plagiarism, then, constitutes intellectual theft. . . . Plagiarism in student writing is often unintentional. . . . At all times during research and writing, guard against the possibility of inadvertent plagiarism by keeping careful notes that distinguish between your own musings and thoughts and the material you gather from others. Forms of plagiarism include the failure to give appropriate acknowledgement when repeating another wording or particularly apt phrase, when paraphrasing another's arguments, or when presenting another's line of thinking. . . . In writing your research paper, then, you should document everything that you borrow—not only direct quotations and paraphrases but also information and ideas."

—from the Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, fifth edition (MLA: 1999), pp. 30-33