What is "normal"?

UGS 2250 – BlockU: Medical Humanities – Fall 2017
Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:25-1:45, CTIHB 459

Instructor: Rachel Mason Dentinger
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BlockU Support
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Course Description
What's normal? Are you normal? Medicine traditionally draws a clear line between the healthy and the diseased, the functional and the dysfunctional, the able and the disabled, the normal and the abnormal. These traditional dichotomies, however, are being challenged by science and culture. Members of the Deaf community vehemently defend their Deaf culture and argue that they do not suffer from hearing loss but instead benefit from "Deaf gain." Intersex humans are actively challenging physicians to avoid performing surgeries on newborns born with ambiguous genitalia. And still others are seeking to be better than normal with performance enhancing drugs designed to improve cognition or athletic performance.

In the Medical Humanities BlockU course we will discuss specific cases like these and embed them in larger questions about normalcy: Is there even such a distinction to be made between normal and abnormal? What does science and the humanities have to say about the matter? How can (or should) medicine intervene on the "abnormal"? And who decides on such interventions?

Course Objectives
1. Students will learn about historical attempts to enforce "normalcy" and the experience of those who were/are deemed "abnormal."
2. Students will become familiar with a variety of medical cases which challenge the traditional dichotomy between "normal" and "abnormal."
3. Students will critically engage literature from medicine.
4. Students will develop their ability to work effectively and responsively in teams.
Required text for purchase:

Work Required and Grading
Assessment will be primarily based in part on *three written assignments, posted on a class blog,* at [https://whatisonormalmedicalhumanities.wordpress.com/](https://whatisonormalmedicalhumanities.wordpress.com/). Two of these will be group collaborations and one will be solely your own work. The remainder of your grade will be calculated based on a number of smaller assignments. These will be explained on the first day of class. Attendance is not factored into your grade, however, missed in-class assignments can only be made up in the case of necessary absences (with documented warning in advances) and properly documented illness or emergency. For details on point values, see Canvas.

Electronics Policy
The use of phones will not be allowed in class.
Tablets and laptops are allowed for taking notes or else in the case of specific class days when devices may be used for the class assignment (such as creating blog posts).

Finding Required Readings
*All readings are available electronically, except for Ellen Forney’s Marbles, which you must purchase.* Many of the required readings are posted as pdfs on Canvas. If the assigned reading is not on Canvas, it may be accessed through the library’s course reserve website. All books associated with this course are on course reserve (some are electronic, linked from the list, while others are physical books, held at the course reserve desk on the 2nd floor of Marriott Library). Find the course reserve list by clicking the “Course Reserves” tab on the search bar of the main library website and then entering “2250-001” in the search bar.

Check the class website on Canvas and your email regularly, so that you are apprised of any changes or updates.

**Fall 2017 Weekly Schedule**

**WEEK 1**

22 Aug
**Intro I: What do we mean by “medical humanities”? What is this class about?**
Ice breaker and group formation
**Reading assignment for today:** Read syllabus carefully, bring questions.

24 Aug
**What is “normal”? How do we recognize it?**
**Speaker:** Christine Contestable, your student support advocate
WEEK 2
29 Aug

**Eugenics: Applied science, popular movement, human experience**

**Reading assignment for today:** Go to [www.eugenicsarchive.ca](http://www.eugenicsarchive.ca).

1) Click on “Encyc.” Of the following 10 entries, select **TWO** that look most interesting to you: Eugenic Traits; Eugenics: Positive vs. Negative; Feeble-mindedness; Fitter Family Contests; Huntington’s Disease; Miscegenation; Nature vs. Nurture; Racial Hygiene; Sterilization; Unfit, the. Read your two selected entries and come to class prepared to share what you learned with your fellow students.

2) Return to [www.eugenicsarchive.ca](http://www.eugenicsarchive.ca) and click on “Players.” Select **ONE** of the following figures and read about their history: Alexander Graham Bell; Charles Davenport; Sir Francis Galton; Reginald Ruggles Gates. Come to class prepared to tell your classmates about the role the person played in the eugenics movement.

3) Return to [www.eugenicsarchive.ca](http://www.eugenicsarchive.ca) and click on “Our Stories,” then click on the oval labelled “The Stories.” On the left will be 12 images, each of which link to the personal story of a eugenics survivor. Select **ONE** of these, reading the text and watching the associated video. Come to class ready to share the story.

31 Aug

**Disease as a biological, medical, and social phenomenon I**

**Reading assignment for today:** Jacalyn Duffin (2010), pages 65-71 and 92-97 only, from Chapter 4, “Science of Suffering: History of Pathology,” in *History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction*. PDF posted on Canvas, full text available online through Marriott Library.

**For next week:** Reading assignment and worksheet for collaborative reading exercise on 5 Sept: You will be assigned one of the following and must come to class on Thursday with a completed worksheet, prepared to teach your group about it:

**Reading I:** Susan Sontag (1990), pages 3-9 and 112-125, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors*. PDF posted on Canvas, book available at Marriott Library Course Reserve Desk.

WEEK 3
5 Sept
**Collaborative Reading: Disease as biological, medical, and social II**
*Reading Assignment for today: Given on 31 Aug*
*DUE: Collaborative reading worksheet*
*In class: Groups select topics for Blog I and Blog I worksheet distributed (due on Thursday)*

7 Sept
**Library research with Alfred I:**
*Finding material for Blog I*
*Reading assignment for today: Initial Blog I reading completed before class meeting*
*DUE: Blog I worksheet.*

WEEK 4
12 Sept
**Blog I group workshop**
*Reading assignment for today: Readings selected at library completed by today.*
*In class: Workshop Blog I, proposal due at the end of the class period*

14 Sept
**Biomedical ethics as theory and practice: Intro**
*NO reading assignment for today.*
Ethics debate preparation worksheet distributed.

**FRIDAY 15 September**
*DUE: Blog I posted by 10pm tonight*
WEEK 5
19 Sept
Biomedical ethics as theory and practice: Debate
Reading assignment for today: TBA
DUE: Ethics debate preparation worksheet

21 Sept
Blog I presentations (and questions for Kate Jirik)
Reading Assignment for today: Kate Jirik folder on Canvas.
In class:
-5-min group presentations about Blog I
-Group meeting to compose questions for Kate Jirik

FRIDAY 22 September
DUE: Blog I comments posted by 10pm tonight

WEEK 6
26 Sept
Social and Medical Models of Disability I: Nonstandard bodies through time
Speaker: Nadja Durbach
Reading assignment for today: Pages 1-4 and 14-18 only from Introduction, “Exhibiting Freaks,” from Nadja Durbach’s Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture (2010).

28 Sept
Social and Medical Models of Disability II:
Deafness
Reading assignment for today (32 pages):
-Solomon “Foreword: Deaf Loss” and Bauman and Murray, “Deaf gain: An Introduction,” from Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity.
WEEK 7
3 Oct
Social and Medical Models of Disability III: Meet Kate Jirik
Speaker: Kate Jirik (via Skype)
Reading assignment – done in advance, for 21 Sept.

5 Oct
Bases of sex and gender I: Intersex
Reading assignment for today (45 pages):
Prologue and Chapter 1 (pages 1-45) of Alice Domurat Dreger (1998),
*Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*. Available online through the UofU Library.
In class: Form new groups and select topics for Blog II, Blog II worksheet distributed.

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FALL BREAK – OCTOBER 8-15
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WEEK 8
17 Oct
Bases of sex and gender II: Meet Lisa Diamond
Speaker: Lisa Diamond
Reading assignment for today: Selection from Ch 2, “Gender Differences in Same-Sex Sexuality,” in Diamond’s *Sexual Fluidity?*

19 Oct
Blog II group workshop
Reading assignment for today: Initial Blog II readings completed before today
DUE: Blog II worksheet
In class: Workshop Blog II, proposal due at the end of the class period
WEEK 9
24 Oct
Mental Illness I
Reading assignment for today: First section of Forney, *Marbles: Mania, Depression, and Michelangelo, & Me*

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26 Oct
Mental Illness II: DSM, big pharma
Reading assignment for today: Selection from “American Moods and the Consumer Solution,” in Hirschbein, *American Melancholy*  

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WEEK 10
31 Oct
Mental Illness III:
**Theater Professor Xan Johnson** runs workshop based on *Marbles*
Reading assignment for today: remainder of Forney, *Marbles: Mania, Depression, and Michelangelo, & Me*

2 Nov
Race I
Speaker: (your peer mentor) James Carrington
Reading assignment for today: TBA
WEEK 11
7 Nov
Race II
Reading assignment for today: TBA

9 Nov
“Are You Normal?” exhibit visit: 5th floor of Marriott Library
Complete short assignment - Due on 14 Nov
NO class meeting.
NO required reading

FRIDAY 10 November
DUE: Blog II posted by 10pm
WEEK 13
21 Nov
Library research with Alfred II: Finding material for Blog III
Reading assignment for today: Initial Blog III readings completed before today
DUE: Blog III worksheet

23 Nov
Thanksgiving – No class

WEEK 14
MONDAY 27 November
DUE: Blog III draft, distributed to group members (Blog III Draft Review Form available on CANVAS, to be completed by Thursday for each group member’s draft).

28 Nov
Natural History Museum of Utah visit
IN CLASS: Assignment considering how exhibits are made
NO reading assignment today

30 Nov
Blog III workshop
Reading assignment for today: Your group members’ Blog III drafts
DUE: Blog III Draft Review Form for each of your group members

WEEK 15
5 Dec
Revisiting the question: What is “normal”? NO required reading

7 Dec
Pitch your topic 
NO required reading
DUE: Blog III posted before class begins – DUE: Present your pitch in class.

FINALS WEEK – Final meeting of 2017: TUES 12 DEC – 10:30-12:30 AM
NO EXAM, NO required reading
DUE: Blog III comments AND Future Directions Assignment
Required Notices

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, sensory, cognitive, systemic, learning and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact the instructor or teaching assistant of this course at the beginning of the semester to discuss any necessary accommodation. The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union, (801) 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

ADDRESSING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT
Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran’s status, or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, (801) 581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, (801) 581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, (801) 581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety (801) 585-2677 (COPS).

PLAGIARISM – FROM THE STUDENT CODE
“Plagiarism” means the intentional unacknowledged use or incorporation of any other person’s work in, or as a basis for, one’s own work offered for academic consideration or credit for public presentation. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to, representing as one’s own, without attribution, any individual’s words, phrasing, ideas, sequence of ideas, information or any other mode or content of expression. It can be the basis for failure of a course or dismissal from the University. This concern applies to all written reports and oral or written presentations in this course. See Student Code: http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html#section_5. If you have questions about what counts as plagiarism, please ask the instructors. Advice: Just Don’t Do It.