“Of all forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.” Martin Luther King, Jr. uttered these words in 1966. More than five decades later, equity and justice in the delivery of American medicine and healthcare remains elusive. In some ways, health outcomes among African Americans in the United States are no better today than they were during the late 1960s.

Racial health disparities in the United States are a deeply unsettling issue for American medicine and healthcare today; after all, their persistence suggests that there is something about American medicine and health institutions that contribute significantly to racial health disparities while doing less than they might do to remedy the problem.

What might historical scholarship contribute here? Can history understanding clarify the problem and contribute to its solution?

This course examines the enduring problem of racial health disparities in American healthcare while introducing students to the social histories of medicine, health, and disease in the United States from the nineteenth century to the present. The focus on racial inequity in American medicine and healthcare will provide students with opportunities

(1) to engage how medical and health issues reflect and illuminate matters of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality in American society,
(2) to discover how social movements have influenced efforts to deliver medicine or otherwise promote health (e.g., Jacksonian populism, progressivism, civil rights, feminism, gay liberation, AIDS and other disease-based aktivisms, consumer advocacy, and contemporary anti-racist actions), and
(3) to explore how industrialism, big business, consumerism, law, and health policy have structured experiences of health, disease, American medicine and U.S. healthcare.
Discussion topics will include the histories of American medicine and healthcare institutions in their relation to slavery, reconstruction, and racial segregation; the functional relations between medical concepts, therapies, and mainstream American social thought; the changing social context of medical innovation, experimentation, and progress in their relation to race, racism, and anti-racism; the changing social and medical responses to infectious and chronic disease in their relation to health inequities, as well as ongoing debates about healthcare delivery and access in the United States.

Above all, the course will emphasize how the enduring problem of racial health disparities in the United States cannot be understood or effectively addressed without significant commitments to historical understanding.

**Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- **Identify and correlate** key historical events, actors, and institutions since 1800 in the United States, and how they have shaped and influenced medicine, public health, and/or health care in American society – specifically in relation to problems of persistent inequality and/or inequity.

- **Describe and interpret** how race/ethnicity, gender, and/or class have factored into medicine, public health, and/or health care since 1800 in the United States.

- **Identify and describe** various controversies as well as events in medicine, public health and health care since 1800 and explain how historians approach the issues for better and/or worse.

- **Write an effective essay that describes and critically evaluate** the merits of various historiographical approaches to key events in the history of U.S. medicine, public health, and/or health care.

- **Demonstrate** information literacy consistent with being a graduate student including (1) locating, retrieving, and evaluating information relevant to the writing of an argumentative essay; (2) organizing, synthesizing, and communicating that information in clear, persuasive prose; and (3) producing a finished essay that employs principles consistent with the ethical and legal uses of information.

**Prerequisites**

Graduate standing and/or permission of instructor.

**Course Webpage (Canvas)**

There is a Canvas webpage for this course that the professor and class will utilize throughout the semester. Please consult this website regularly, preferably at least once before every class meeting and/or assignment due date. The webpage contains the syllabus, assignments, readings, and other features that will enhance your learning experience. **Canvas access here with your UCID** (NJIT identification number).

**Class Meetings**

This course meets in Conklin Hall 324 on the Rutgers-Newark Campus on Thursdays, 530-820 pm. This seminar room is accessible to students from 525 pm forward.
Office Hours

My regular office hours for graduate students are 4-5 pm Thursdays or by appointment on Mondays, Wednesday, Thursdays. Students who wish to meet with the professor individually outside of the regular class meetings or office hours are always welcome to do so. If you would like an individual appointment, please email me to arrange that meeting. Office hours and individual meetings will take place in my NJIT office or via Zoom or WebEx (as agreed at the time of the appointment).

Readings

The required reading for this course includes eleven books and a handful of short readings. Students should follow the semester schedule in the syllabus to determine what readings to complete for each class period.

Short Readings: Short readings are newspaper or magazine articles, scholarly essays, articles, or book chapters. These will be posted on the course webpage as pdfs or weblinks. Descriptions of these readings appear in the course schedule below on the class day they are due to be read and discussed.

Books: The books that are required reading in this course appear in the weekly schedule and include the ISBN for each title.

Copies are available at the NJIT Campus bookstore, the Rutgers University-Newark bookstore, or through online booksellers. Audiobook and electronic versions can be purchased in many cases.

Assignments and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Grading Scale for Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>A = 89.5 to 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>B+ = 86.5 to 89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses (n=3*)</td>
<td>B = 79.5 to 86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>C+ = 76.5 to 79.4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C = 69.5 to 76.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D = 59.5 to 69.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>F = 59.4 to 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course Grade</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Consistent effort and improvement are weighted heavily in grading.

The primary goal of this course is to promote critical thinking about health, disease in its relation to society, both past and present. All students will be evaluated on their written and oral communication over the course of the semester. This requires that you do the reading and writing assignments dutifully. In addition to in-class participation, the student will complete a series of weekly assignments while conducting a research project in consultation with the professor.
**Participation**

The class participation grade will reflect both the student's presence in the classroom and their consistency and improvement in engaging the subject matter across the course. Students should promptly communicate any concerns about their ability to meet the following requirements with the professor. Participation will count **20%** of the final course grade; consistent effort and improvement are weighted heavily in grading participation.

**Attendance Policy.** Missing even a single class is not recommended. However, each student is allowed to miss one full class period without penalty to their participation grade. It is highly recommended that you consult with the professor about any missed class time. Class time missed beyond the one “excused” class could result in substantial reduction in the student's participation grade (as calculated as a percentage of formal contact hours for the semester). The professor will consider excusing repeat absences weighing individual circumstances. See policy on “Student Accommodations” below for further details. Overall, attendance will constitute half of the student’s participation grade.

**Student Engagement.** The student's verbal and non-verbal engagements with online classroom activities account for the other half of the participation grade. Each student should come to class promptly and regularly, actively listen to the presentations, and be prepared to ask questions and discuss the readings assigned for the day. Students should respect the learning environment by arriving on time and staying the full term of the session. Students who participate regularly and constructively in discussion will be rewarded with higher grades in their final participation grade. The student must contribute to the learning environment to receive full credit in this area. Meeting the professor in office hours also counts positively toward participation. The professor will also consider improvement and other factors in his assessment of each student’s participation grade, and he reserves the right to award extra credit to students who make substantial contributions to the learning environment.

**Reading Responses**

The professor will evaluate the student’s competency in the weekly assignments, in part, by assessing student performance on reading responses (usually comprised of short written responses). The act of doing these regular assignments is an important and comparatively easy way for students to see if they are grasping the main subject matter and/or key points from the relevant course reading or class presentation. If (as a student) you receive less than a B+ on any given assignment, then you should review the material with attention to what you missed. If the correct answers remain unclear to you after your review of that course material, please reach out to the professor for help. Collectively, these assignments will count **30%** of the final course grade.

**Presentation**

Each student will lead a discussion of the weekly reading assignment during one of the classes. The session for the presentation will be decided by the professor in consultation with the student. This assignment will count 15% of the final course grade.

**Final Essay**

Each student will write a final essay in consultation with the professor.

1. The student will identify a topic related to course readings by mid-semester.
2. The student will write a paragraph proposal statement and annotated bibliography at an agreed upon date.
The student will write their final essay based on the reading done and feedback received across the course. The instructions for the final essay will be available on the Canvas course webpage well in advance of assignment due date. In total, the student’s research project amounts to 30% of the course grade.

**Respect for Persons and the Learning Environment**

In the interest of an open exchange of ideas and collegiality, everyone participating in the class should strive to respect their classmates as persons. The professor will make every effort to facilitate a respectful environment for learning, but students should keep in mind their own responsibilities in the classroom. The same rules apply in the virtual and physical classrooms.

The professor reserves the right to ask you to leave the virtual classroom for any behaviors that do not meet the expectations of a proper, professional learning environment.

Web-surfing, texting and social media usage that is unrelated to class is disruptive of a respectful learning environment. Students are therefore expected to limit cell phone, tablet, and laptop use to class-related activities only during our designated class times.

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

Academic integrity is enforced in this course. Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found here.

It is the instructor’s professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu.

Students are also responsible for upholding the integrity of NJIT by reporting any violation of academic to the Dean of Students Office. The identity of the student filing any academic integrity violation will always remain anonymous.

Tutorials that explain acceptable academic writing for this course are available at the Van Houghton library website, here. The Library also maintains another web page on how to cite sources in your academic writing, here. Proper citation will help you avoid plagiarism. I prefer that students use the author-date citation format from the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) in their writing for this course.

Tutorials on how to evaluate appropriate online source material can be found here.

Tutorials appropriate to doing coursework in a history class, such as this one, can be found here.
The Librarians at NJIT and Rutgers-Newark can field your questions about how the library resources can help you succeed in this history class. They are experts who are happy to help you. You can reach the NJIT librarians and Rutgers librarians via each library’s website.

Again, all students are expected to abide by the norms outlined in these websites, this syllabus as well as the course webpage for this class, and students will be penalized for failure to do so. Please consult the professor if you have any concerns about academic integrity, academic reading, writing and citation, plagiarism or their meanings in actual practice.

Students will also be required to submit their original written work to Canvas – at which point it will automatically be subject to a reader’s report created by Turnitin.com, an online service used by NJIT instructors to detect plagiarism and irregularities in sourcing and citation of the written word and claims.

All of the above links can also be accessed on the course webpage.

**Student Accommodations and Privacy**

If a student needs accommodation for illness, disability, death in family, religious reasons, etc., University Policy dictates that the student must inform the [Dean of Students Office](#). Instructors can only accommodate a student at the direction of the Dean’s Office. Please consult the DoS webpage devoted to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) to see how you should proceed with your concern.

Students that require special accommodations [Disabilities Service Policy Students](#) with disabilities who are otherwise qualified and are college able will receive reasonable accommodations to support their special needs. Students must self-identify to the Disabilities Services office to qualify to receive services. NJIT is in full compliance with the Regulations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

If you need accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Office of Accessibility Resources & Services (OARS), Fenster Hall Room 260 to discuss your specific needs. A Letter of Accommodation Eligibility from the OARS authorizing your accommodations will be required. Information about accessibility resources and services and forms to initiate accommodation are available [here](#).

Students who have concerns that might impact their learning experience beyond the issues stated above may identify the nature of that concern with the professor so that he may advise you appropriately. The professor will hold all individual communication with students in confidence.
Semester Schedule

Week 1. Thurs, Sept 8. Introductions


Suggested reading on Medical/Health Humanities: Keith Wailoo, “Patients are Humans Too: The Emergence of Medical Humanities,” *Daedalus* (2022) 194-205

https://muse.jhu.edu/book/85070

Week 2. Thurs, Sept 15. Interpreting Narrative Non-Fiction in its relation to U.S. Social History of Medicine & Health


Week 3. Thurs, Sept 22. Anti-Black Racism and Health Disparities in the U.S.A.


Selection from *The 1619 Project: Dorothy Roberts, “Race”*

Suggested further reading:
Week 4. Thurs, Sept 29. Slavery, Health, and Medical Care in the Antebellum South


Sept 30. First Reading Response Due.
(Choose Prompt for Week 2, 3, or 4, and respond by this date)

Week 5. Thurs, Oct 6. Racial Fitness in the Long-Nineteenth Century

Selection from The 1619 Project: Jennen Interlandi, “Healthcare”

Suggested further reading: Gretchen Long, Doctoring Freedom: The Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation (2016); Rana Hogarth, Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World (2017); Kathryn Olivarius, Necropolis: Disease, Power, and Capitalism in the Cotton Kingdom (2022)

Week 6. Thurs, Oct 13. Race, Sex, and Reproductive Health

Reading: Deirdre Cooper Owens, Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology (University of Georgia Press, 2018) ISBN 978-0820354750
Selection from The 1619 Project: Linda Villarosa, “Medicine”


Suggested viewing: Partners of the Heart (PBS, 2003)
Week 8. Thurs, Oct 27. Tuskegee’s Truths and Legacies


Oct 28. Second Reading Response Due
(Choose Prompt for Week 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8, and respond by this date)


Selection from John Dittmer, The Good Doctors, “Preface & Ch. 3” (2009)
Selection from Dan Royles, To Make the Wounded Whole, “A Disease, Not a Lifestyle: Race, Sexuality, and AIDS in the City of Brotherly Love” (2020)


Week 10. Thurs, Nov 10. Disease and the Politics of Race and Health


Thanksgiving Break

Week 12. Thurs, Dec 1. The Implications of Defining and Managing Disease


Dec 2. Third Reading Response Due. (Choose Prompt for Week 9, 10, 11, or 12, and respond by this date)


Mon, Dec 15. FINAL ESSAY DUE