ENG 6811 Cultural Contexts of Texts and Technology:
Rhetorical Studies of Health and Medicine
Spring 2015, M/W 6:00-7:15pm

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Overview

In this course we will explore the rhetorical dimensions of health and medical practices in clinical care, medical training, personal health management, and patient/public advocacy, and other arenas. This exploration will involve tracking the circulation, uptake, and transformation of specific health-related texts and technologies (e.g., health manuals, medical images, electronic health records, simulation technologies) across cultural contexts. It will also involve rhetorically analyzing the functions and effects of health-related texts and technologies. Finally, our exploration will involve co-producing digital and other texts to be used in healthcare practices.

This course could be useful in at least three ways. First, understanding how health-related texts and technologies function could inform our healthcare decisions and experiences. Second, the course will introduce you to a growing area of scholarship in rhetorical studies and the humanities more generally (see, for example, the journals *Configurations* and *Journal of Medical Humanities*). Third, rhetorical analysis can be a valuable methodological component of almost any Texts & Technology project, and so this course should be useful in helping you develop analytic concepts and approaches for your dissertation.

To this latter end, the course will be structured largely around methodological questions and assignments, and will ask you to engage a range of studies that employ different types of rhetorical analysis (e.g., informed by cultural studies, feminist studies, linguistics, ontology theory). Some of the questions we will ask of others' and our own studies include:
- What are the main questions guiding the analysis, and to what exigencies do they respond?
- What rhetorical concepts inform the analysis, and how does the analysis contribute to new conceptual understandings and tools?
- How does the analysis define "context" and track texts and technologies across cultural contexts?
- How does the analysis account for the relationship between discursive and material dimensions of rhetorical practices?
- What are the comparative advantages and limitations of the analytic approach?

Other notable features of the course include:
- Skyping and blogging with the authors of some of the published studies we read;
- Touring UCF's College of Medicine, including the simulation technologies used in medical education and research;
- Collectively analyzing practices involving electronic health records, but also developing individual analyses of practices that you choose;

- Co-creating texts for use in ongoing projects by the Florida Health Care Coalition (FHHC), a nonprofit org that represents Florida employers and works to improve healthcare through educational programs and quality improvement initiatives.

Required Texts

The following books (available at the UCF Bookstore) are required:
- *Rhetoric in the Flesh: Trained Vision, Technical Expertise, and the Gross Anatomy Lab* by Kenny Fountain
- *American Lobotomy: A Rhetorical History* by Jenell Johnson
- *Our Bodies, Ourselves and the Work of Writing* by Susan Wells
- *The Rhetoric of Pregnancy* by Marika Segal
- *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Clinical Practice* by Annemarie Mol

As a class, we will also read a selection of articles and segments of the following books (available as pdf files or as e-books):
- *How Doctors Think: Clinical Judgment and the Practice of Medicine* by Kathryn Montgomery
- *Black Dogs and Blue Words: Depression and Gender in the Age of Self-Care* by Kimberly Emmons
- *Risky Rhetoric: AIDS and the Cultural Practice of HIV Testing* by Blake Scott
- *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel and Environmental Justice* by Phaedra Pezzullo

Major Assignments

Major Assignments and Percentage of Overall Grade
1) Blog responses   20%
2) Methods Presentation and Handout (pairs)   20%
3) Collective Analysis Proposals of EHRs (groups)   10%
4) Healthcare Project, sponsored by FHHC (groups)   20%
5) Rhetorical Analysis Study   20%
6) Class Participation   10%