

**Dr. Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo**

melmalsal@nyu.edu

www.melthestorydoc.com

929.375.1121

Office Hours: by Appointment



Why do people in some cultures suffer illnesses caused by fear, nerves, and the evil eye, and what cures exist? Who are shamans, and what roles do they play across cultures? How can specialists trained in biomedicine be more sensitive to their patient's cultural beliefs? What is being done to address the AIDS pandemic? We will explore these questions and many more throughout the semester regarding ethical practice.

Ideas about and experiences of health, "disease," and medicine are profoundly shaped by culture, transnational flows of people, ideas, and resources, histories of colonialism, structural inequalities, and the development of new technologies. For this reason, in today's rapidly changing world of health and illness, complex ethical issues arise in many contexts—from the private, interpersonal interactions between doctor and patient to the broad, mass-mediated controversies that make medicine headline news. In this course, students will learn to think about issues of health, disease, and medicine in cross-cultural and global terms.

While this course examines ethical problems and policy issues in contemporary medicine, health

care, and biomedical research, we will also explore tools for ethical analysis to understand how ethical principles can be applied to various topics and fundamental questions in bioethics. Perspectives from social science, history, and law also inform the course, which will consider relationships, end-of-life decision-making, human experimentation, reproductive technology, public health, and genetics. Perspectives from social science, history, and law also inform the course, which will consider ethical issues in their social and institutional context.

The course will also examine the relatively new field of bioethics, raising questions about what ethical issues count as ethical ones and exploring the role of ethical expertise in contemporary societies.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To understand core concepts of ethical analysis.
- To defend personal decisions in complex moral situations.
- To learn a critical-philosophical *approach* to ethical issues in medicine will allow students to contribute constructively to ongoing debates and discussions.
- To learn to see the existence of ethical issues and separate ethical questions from factual questions.
- To think, Write, and Communicate Critically about ethical issues.
- Understand core concepts of self-government, including rights, duties, public and private goods, pluralism, minority rights, and majority rule, and apply them to understand medical ethics further.

### **Moses Statement**

You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. If you are a student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212.998.4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu). Information about the Moses Center can be found at [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

- Due to the topics discussed in class, conflicting opinions and thoughts are expected. However, all class discussions should be conducted and presented with the utmost respect for others. (We “*call in*”- no, “*calling out*.”)
- This course consists of lectures, discussions, and ethical reasoning exercises.
- The course will run *asynchronously*.
- If you need help meeting the requirements of this course, please come and speak with me as soon as possible. I will work with you and will remain invested in your success.
- Though I will remain as faithful as possible to this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes. These will be announced in advance in class and in writing when appropriate.
- This is a tough time; however, you are not alone. I am here for you, and I hope that as the course progresses, we can become a community

to support each other.

### **Grade Breakdown**

#### **Reflections- 30%**

- A total of 3 reflections addressing the week's themes/texts.
- You will have to engage with 2-3 texts, provide an analysis, and reflect critically on the broader implications.
- Videos/Lectures/documentaries also count as texts.
- Focus on demonstrating evidence of what you have learned with the application of language and terms of the course.
- Reflect on a range of texts and understandings (do not repeat texts in your reflections).

For example, choose another text you have yet to explore if we have discussed the documentary with discussion questions.

- Do not summarize the readings/texts.
- These submissions are reflections on the texts in conversation *with* the lecture.
- Maximum three (3)pages, minimum two (2).
- Post in the **assignment tab** only.
- **Due Weeks 4, 8, 12**
  - Reflection 1 can address any topic/text from week -1-5  
due **February 26, 2023**
  - Reflection 2 can address any topic/text from week -6-10  
Due **April 2, 2023**
  - Reflection 3 can address any topic/text from weeks  
11-14 **due April 30, 2023**

#### **Homeworks and Ethical Exercises-30%**

- Discussion Questions
- Ethical Exercises
- Revised Hippocratic Oath Revision (Due April 6, 2023)

#### **Class Participation -10%**

- Responses to Classmates

#### **Final/Illness Narrative- 20%**

- You will be required to submit an abstract in **Week 13**.
- It must be approved before you start working on the final.
- You can write a personal illness narrative (your own story) or a patient illness narrative.
- Review *Explainer* on assignment.
- 4-5 pages long. (double-spaced, TNR Font, standard)
- You will read many illness narratives throughout the semester, so you can propose an illness narrative that can be creative or “non-traditional.”

- I am open to creative interpretations of this project. Please feel free to propose an adaptation of this project to highlight your creative skills/interests. Some examples include short documentaries, monologues, or artistic interpretations.

### **Drugs over Dinner - 10%**

- Review *Explainer* on the assignment.
- [www.drugsoverdinner.org](http://www.drugsoverdinner.org)
- Register on the website.
- DOD will send you a curated selection of texts and prompts, which you will facilitate with your group. You will write a reflection on your experience conducting the exercise, the conversations, and how it shaped your perspective on drugs/addiction.
  - A group can include family, peers, or friends.
  - One other person is enough to complete the assignment.
  - To learn more about this exercise, please watch <http://vimeo/131935139>
- Submit the assignment on Brightspace, assignment tab only.
- 2-3 pages long (double-spaced, 12-point font, TNR)
- If you need help organizing a group, please reach out.

### **Course Schedule\***

**Monday-** Weekly Check-In Posted on Brightspace

**Tuesday-** follow the Syllabus

**Thursday-** follow the Syllabus

**Fridays-** Assignments/HWs due

**Sunday-** Class participation responses are due

*\*All deviations or revisions to the schedule will be communicated in writing. The syllabus will then be revised accordingly, and the latest version will be posted on Brightspace.\**

### **COURSE OUTLINE**

#### **Week 1-January 24, 2023**

##### **Introductions**

- Review Syllabus
- Overview of the Course
- Homework- Introduce yourself! Post on the discussion board & assignment tab.

#### **January 26, 2023**

##### **Medical Ethics and Bioethics**

###### Lecture

- Introduction to Medical Ethics

###### Read

- AMA Code of Ethics

- "A Brief Introduction" in *Rethinking Healthcare Ethics* by Stephen Scher and Kasia Kozłowska
- "Everyday Medical Ethics and the Law"

## **Week 2**

**January 31, 2023**

### Read

- "Hippocratic Oath"
- "Methods and principles in Biomedical ethics" by TL Beachcham

### Watch

- *Patch Adams* (1997)

### Homework

- Post in the Discussion board tab and the assignment tab (due Friday)
- Respond to 2 of your classmates (due Sunday)

## **WEEK 3**

**February 7, 2023,**

### **The Sick Business of (Public) Health**

### Lecture

- Medical Ethics and Public Health

### Read

- "It Saves Lives. It Can Save Money. So Why Aren't We Spending More on Public Health?" by Aaron E. Carroll and Austin Frakt (recommended)
- "The Preventable Tragedy of Polio in New York" by Dhruv Khullar
- "The Chart" by Rafael Campo

### Watch

- "Inside an ICU: Through a Nurse's Eyes" by NYTimes

**February 9, 2023**

### Lecture

- Bias

### Read

- "A Code of Ethics of Public Health" - editorial
- "Costa Ricans Live Longer than We Do. What's the Secret?" by Atul Gawande
- "The Case for Wearing Masks Forever" by Emma Green

### Watch

- "Doctors Explain Why U.S Healthcare Is So Expensive" by VICE News

## **WEEK 4 Business of Pain**

**February 14, 2023**

### Lecture:

- Ethics of Pharma

Read

- “Can What We Eat Affect How We Feel?” by Richard Schiffman
- “Responding to the Pain of Others” by Anne Jurecic

Watch

- “Marketing to Doctors” on *Last Week Tonight*

**February 16, 2023**

Lecture

- Ethics of Pain Management

Read

- “The Pain Scale” by Eula Biss
- “Ethical and Technical Aspects of Emotions of Create Empathy in Medical Machines” by Jordi Vallerdu and David Casaberta

Watch

- “The Amazing Story of the Man who Gave us Modern Pain Relief” by Latif Nasser (TED Talk)

**Week 5-February 21, 2023**

**Empathy and Care**

Lecture

- Doctor/Patient Relationship

Read

- “Doctor, Talk to Me” by Anatole Broyard
- “Doctor, What’s Wrong with me?” by Megan O’Rourke

Watch

- “Can Empathy help us Heal healthcare?” by Adrienne Boissy (TED Talk)

**February 23, 2023**

Lecture

- Reflective Writing in Medical Ethics

Read

- “The Rights of Machines: Caring for Robotic Caregivers” by David J. Gunkel
- “The Dobbs Decision Has Unleashed Legal Chaos for Doctors and Patients” by Jessica Winter

**Weeks 6-February 28, 2022**

**Racial and Gender Bias in Medicine**

Lecture

- Racial Health Disparities

Read

- “How Race Becomes Biology: Embodiment of Social Inequality” by Clarence C. Gravlee

- “What ‘Racism is a Public Health Issue’ Means” by Lila Thulin

Watch

- “Gender and Racial Bias in Medicine” on *Last Week Tonight*
- “Racial Wealth Gap” in *Explained* (recommended)

**March 2, 2023**

Lecture

- Women’s Health

Watch

- *Unrest* (2017)

Homework

- Respond to discussion questions (due Friday)
- Respond to 2 of your classmates (due Sunday)

**WEEK 7**

**March 7, 2023**

**Mental Health and Trauma-Informed Care**

Lecture

- Mental Illness, Stress, and Stigma

Read

- *Drinking a Love Story* by Caroline Knapp (excerpt)
- “God Knows Where I Am” by Rachel Aviv
- “Argentinidad or Neurosis” by Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo

Watch

- “Mental Healthcare” in *Last Week Tonight*

**March 9, 2023e**

Lecture

- “The Trauma Episode” in *What is Medical Anthropology?* (Podcast)  
\*Trigger Warning\*

Read

- “How a Pre-Wedding Diet Led to an Eating Disorder” by Kelsey Herbers
- “A Gun to his Head as a Child. In Prison as an Adult” by Audra Burch

Watch

- “How Childhood Trauma affects Health Across a Lifetime” by Nadine Burke Harris (TED talk)

**WEEK 8- March 13-19, 2023      SPRING BREAK**

**WEEK 9**

**March 21, 2023**

**Differences/Disabilities and Medicine**

Lecture

- Disability Ethics

### Read

- “Waist-High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled” by Nancy Mairs
- “What Patients with Disabilities Teach us about the Everyday Ethics of Healthcare” by Elizabeth Pendo (recommended)
- “After a COVID Expert Struggled to Obtain New Treatment for his Patients, He Tweeted a Road Map” by Evans Osnos

### Watch

- “I am not your Inspiration, Thank you very much” by Stella Young (TED Talk)

**March 23, 2023,**

### Read

- “I’m not Lazy. I’m Ill” by Melissa Maldonado-Salcedo
- “Blindness” by Jorge Luis Borges

### Watch

- *Lives Worth Living* (2011)

### Homework

- Respond to Discussion Questions (due Friday)
- Discussion Questions and respond to 2 classmate’s responses (due Sunday)

**WEEK 10- March 28, 2023,**

**Social Determinants, Inequality, and Health Disparities**

### Lecture

- Social Determinants of Health

### Read

- “How Should Physicians Counsel Patients Who Live in Food Deserts?” by Annalyn Skipper
- “Policies to Reduce Food Insecurity: an Ethical Imperative” by Daniel P. Miller & Margaret Thomas (recommended)
- “The closing of the Tops market on Buffalo’s East side has created a ‘food desert’” by Troy Closson

### Watch

- “France” in *Where to Invade Next* (2015)

**March 30, 2023,**

### Watch

- *Soul Food Junkies* (2012) - available on Kanopy

### Homework

- Respond to Discussion Questions (due Friday)
- Respond to 2 classmate’s responses (due Sunday)
- Food Label Assignment (due Sunday)

**WEEK 11- APRIL 4,2023**

**Medical Futility**

### Lecture

- Medical Futility

### Read

- “Letting Go” by Atul Gawande
- “My Own Life” by Oliver Sacks

**April 6, 2023**

### Due

- Rewrite the Hippocratic Oath (HW)  
(Review Explainer)

**Due on April 9, 2023**

## **WEEK 12-April 11, 2023**

### **Structural and Cultural Competency**

#### Lecture

- Structural Competency

#### Read

- “Culture and Medicine: Reflections on Identity and Community in an Age of Pluralism” by Sylvestre Quevedo (recommended)
- “I don’t mind if you say I have a little O.C.D.” by Maia Szalavitz
- “Living with Voices” by T.M Luhrmann

#### Watch

- “A Native American Tribe is Using Traditional Culture to Fight Addiction” by VICE News

**April 13, 2023**

- Drugs over Dinner

## **WEEK 13-April 18, 2023**

### **Illness Narratives and Storytelling**

#### Lecture

- “Honoring the Stories of Illness” by Rita Charon (TED Talk)

#### Read

- “Illness as Metaphor” by Susan Sontag (excerpt)
- *The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion (excerpt)

**April 20, 2023**

#### Lecture

- Writing up the Illness Narrative

#### Read

- “The Very Old Man with Enormous Wings” by Garcia Marquez
- “Hunger” by Roxanne Gay

#### Watch

- *No Crying at the Dinner Table* (2021)

## **Week 14**

**April 25, 2023**

### Lecture

- Medical Communication

### Read

- “The Use of Force” by William Carlos Williams
- “In the Cemetery where Al Jolson is Buried” by Amy Hempel

### Watch

- “Misinformation” on *Last Week Tonight*

**April 27, 2023**

### Lecture:

- Health Equity

### Read

- “The Importance of Being” by Abraham Verghese
- “When a Patient is Dying, Food Appears” by Daniela Lamas

## **WEEK 15**

**May 2, 2023**

### Lecture

- Reproductive and Environmental Justice

### Read

- “How Black Feminists defined Abortion Rights” by Keanaga-Yamahatta Taylor
- “Self Determination begins in the Womb” by Brianna Theobald
- “Transgender migrant rights, reproductive justice, and the Mexico–US border in the time of COVID-19” by Leandra Hinojosa Hernandez and Sarah De Los Santos Upton

**May 4, 2023**

### Watch

- *After Tiller* (2013)

### Homework

- Respond to Discussion Questions (due Friday)
- Respond to 2 classmate’s responses (due Sunday)