

# MEDICAL HUMANITIES

## Contact Information

### Medical Humanities

<https://medicalhumanities.rice.edu/>

116 Humanities Building

713-348-4548

### Kirsten Ostherr

Program Director

[kostherr@rice.edu](mailto:kostherr@rice.edu)

Medical Humanities is an interdisciplinary field that examines medicine and health through humanistic disciplines such as history, ethics, religion, literature, cultural anthropology, media studies, and the visual and dramatic arts. Students in the minor will learn about medical and health systems and practices using methodologies such as close reading, cultural comparison, historical contextualization, creative expression, and critical thinking. The field is committed to interpretive and qualitative work that explores the human dimensions of experiences of health and illness, for doctors and for patients. The Medical Humanities minor is an interdisciplinary course of study, housed in the School of Humanities.

## Minor

- [Minor in Medical Humanities \(https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/medical-humanities/medical-humanities-minor/\)](https://ga.rice.edu/programs-study/departments-programs/humanities/medical-humanities/medical-humanities-minor/)

Medical Humanities does not currently offer an academic program at the graduate level.

## Director and Advisor

Kirsten Ostherr

## Associate Director

Melissa Bailar

## Professors

Martin Blumenthal-Barby

Marcia Brennan

Tony N. Brown

Eugenia Georges

Bridget K. Gorman

Gisela Heffes

Vivian Ho

Rachel Tolbert Kimbro

Anne C. Klein

Kirsten Ostherr

Rebecca Richards-Kortum

Kamala Visweswaran

## Associate Professors

Niki Clements

Deborah A. Harter

Moramay López-Alonso

Fabiola López-Durán

## Assistant Professors

Victoria Massie

Samuel Reis-Dennis

## Senior Lecturer

Melissa Bailar

## Lecturers

Travis Alexander

Helena Fietz

Beverly Mitchell

## Steering Committee

Travis Alexander

Melissa Bailar

Marcia Brennan

Eugenia Georges

Victoria Massie

Kirsten Ostherr

Samuel Reis-Dennis

*For Rice University degree-granting programs:*

To view the list of official course offerings, please see [Rice's](#)

[Course Catalog \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/!SWKSCAT.cat?p\\_action=cata\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/!SWKSCAT.cat?p_action=cata)

To view the most recent semester's course schedule, please see [Rice's](#)

[Course Schedule \(https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/!SWKSCAT.cat\)](https://courses.rice.edu/admweb/!SWKSCAT.cat)

## Medical Humanities (MDHM)

### MDHM 201 - INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL HUMANITIES

**Short Title:** INTRO TO MEDICAL HUMANITIES

**Department:** Medical Humanities

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Distribution Group:** Distribution Group I

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level

**Description:** Examines the history of medicine, concepts of disease vs illness, narrative medicine, health disparities, religion, spirituality, and the role of science and technology on the practices of healthcare. Students will develop skills in close reading, interpretation, historical contextualization, critical thinking. This course (formerly HURC 201) is required for the minor in Medical Humanities. Mutually Exclusive with HURC 201. Credit cannot be earned for both HURC 201 and MDHM 201. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for MDHM 201 if student has credit for HURC 201.

### MDHM 238 - SPECIAL TOPICS

**Short Title:** SPECIAL TOPICS

**Department:** Medical Humanities

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Laboratory, Internship/Practicum, Lecture, Seminar, Independent Study, Lecture/Laboratory

**Credit Hours:** 1-4

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level

**Description:** Topics and credit hours may vary each semester. Contact department for current semester's topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.

### MDHM 250 - INTRODUCTION TO DISABILITY STUDIES

**Short Title:** INTRO TO DISABILITY STUDIES

**Department:** Medical Humanities

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level

**Description:** This course examines perceptions and implications of the meaning of disability for society. The course will cover the history of disability rights and offer alternative viewpoints of disability. Implications of this analysis will involve exploration of social justice themes in pursuing disability rights for individuals with disabilities.

### MDHM 260 - TOPICS IN CREATIVE WRITING FOR MEDICAL HUMANITIES: WRITING AND READING (NEAR) DEATH EXPERIENCES

**Short Title:** CREATIVE WRITING FOR MED HUM

**Department:** Medical Humanities

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level

**Description:** "I learned a lot of things in medical school. Mortality wasn't one of them." So begins Atul Gawande's bestselling memoir about the challenges of end-of-life medicine in a culture obsessed with avoiding death at all costs. How do we talk, write, and think about the Gordian knot near death experiences create —increasingly common as lifesaving technologies rapidly advance? In this course, students will read literary writing on the subject of death and its attendant challenges, and well as learn to write creatively and concisely about it — in their own lives and in the experiences of others. Students will learn directly from writers, physicians, and historians during in-class visits and gain valuable skills as communicators, to enhance their future endeavors as students and health care professionals. Repeatable for Credit.

### MDHM 275 - TOPICS IN HEALTH INEQUITIES

**Short Title:** TOPICS IN HEALTH INEQUITIES

**Department:** Medical Humanities

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Seminar

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level

**Description:** This topics course will introduce students to the most prevalent types of health inequities and prepare them to understand their history and possible interventions within the fields of medicine and public health. Topics vary but may include gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, language, fat bias/weight stigma, immigration, documentation, and nationality. Repeatable for Credit.

### MDHM 280 - MEDICAL HORROR IN FILM AND LITERATURE

**Short Title:** MEDICAL HORROR IN FILM & LIT

**Department:** Medical Humanities

**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter

**Course Type:** Lecture

**Credit Hours:** 3

**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.

**Course Level:** Undergraduate Lower-Level

**Description:** Medicine is scary business. So is the body. This course proposes to document the role of literature, painting, popular music, and, especially, cinema have played in memorializing our shared dread over not just the human body's failures, but also their treatment. While primarily focused on the American twentieth century, this course will begin in Romantic-era Britain with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and will culminate in the very-recent past with Jordan Peele's *Get Out*. Along the way, we will attend to the 70s slasher film, the work of body horror's cinematic dean, David Cronenberg, Japanese cyberpunk, extreme metal and grindcore lyrics, the paintings of Lucien Freud and Francis Bacon, high postmodern literature, any many more texts. We will propose to ask what these narratives can tell us about why we fear the body & its dangers, as well as how that anxiety has changed over time, both in response to changing medical/surgical technology and other developments. These questions will in turn find us asking whether the horrors of embodiment and medicine are inflected by the specificities of the body in question—axes, that is to say, of gender, sex, sexuality, race, and ability. Is there a reason why the overwhelming majority of directors working in medical horror are straight white men? Do depictions of medical aberrations stage and exorcise fears about the otherness about the nonwhite, queer, or female body? Do they enact sadistic fantasies of seeing into—and possibly destroying—these bodies? This course counts towards the elective requirements for the MDHM minor.

**MDHM 300 - IMMUNITY IN MEDIA, SCIENCE, AND CULTURE****Short Title:** IMMUNITY- MEDIA/SCI/CULTURE**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level

**Description:** This course will consider the conceptual history of immunity and autoimmunity. We will track immunity as it migrates from the domains of law and politics into biomedicine. What are the consequences of this provenance? How have seemingly objective medical conceptions of the body preserved or retained this militaristic belief in independence, power, and control? And what are its consequences for those whose bodies are exposed to that domination? How does the history of immunity inspire contemporary depictions of BIOPOC, trans, queer, and undocumented lives as pathogenic to the flourishing of “healthy” bodies and in turn to their state-sponsored exposure to death? We will propose to answer these questions by integrating an interdisciplinary archive of fiction, film, philosophy, and law. Recommended Prerequisite(s): MDHM 201 Repeatable for Credit.

**MDHM 306 - PERSPECTIVES IN HEALTH AND HUMANITIES****Short Title:** PERSPECTIVES HEALTH+HUMANITIES**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level

**Description:** Faculty and advanced graduate or medical students from Rice University, University of Texas School of Public Health, and University of Houston, as well as practitioners in the Texas Medical Center and other professionals, will give talks and lead discussions on different aspects of the health industry, research trends, and patient experiences. Students from other schools may also attend the talks, though Rice students will have additional separate meetings for additional discussion. Students will read essays, case studies, and fiction or watch films to prepare for talks and will complete multiple short assignments as well as a longer research or creative project. Instructor Permission Required.

**MDHM 310 - TOPICS ON EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS****Short Title:** PAIN**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level

**Description:** If two people say “ouch” at the same time, are they feeling the same thing? In this course, we will consider this question, among others, in the context of a larger examination of pain as a topic in art, an embodied experience, and a medical phenomenon. We will study the history of representations of pain, the complex renderings of pain in art, the way pain is observed and measured in contemporary medicine, and the challenges of representing different “kinds” of pain. In doing so, we will develop a complex understanding of what Susan Sontag called our “more onerous citizenship” in the “kingdom of the sick” and collectively propose new ways of understanding pain. This course counts towards the electives requirement for the MDHM minor. Repeatable for Credit.

**MDHM 325 - ETHICAL DEBATES IN MEDICINE: DIGNITY AND WELFARE****Short Title:** ETHICAL DEBATES IN MEDICINE**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level

**Description:** This course will survey a range of contemporary controversies in medicine, focusing especially on conflicts between promoting welfare and respecting human dignity. Repeatable for Credit.

**MDHM 359 - RESPONSIBLE AI FOR HEALTH****Short Title:** RESPONSIBLE AI FOR HEALTH**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Distribution Group:** Distribution Group I**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level

**Description:** This interdisciplinary course explores how artificial intelligence, machine learning, and related tools are poised to transform healthcare – for better and for worse. Examines the latest uses of these tools in clinical healthcare settings, in public health, and in day-to-day wellness apps. Considers the social, cultural and ethical issues related to the development and application of AI for health. Explores the ways that technology can have unintended consequences that reproduce existing health disparities, especially racial and intersectional health disparities. This course will count as an elective in MDHM minor, the STSM minor, and the ENGL major. It may count as an elective for the DSCI minor (contact the program advisor).

**MDHM 397 - TOPICS IN MENTAL HEALTH****Short Title:** MENTAL HEALTH IN AMER CULTURE**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level

**Description:** Since the arrival of Covid, we have seen a proliferation of novel therapeutic practices like mental telehealth, as people around the globe cope with unprecedented isolation and require the ability to communicate, confess, and introspect with a professional, a stranger. This course will investigate several things. First: what is the history of psychotherapy both in the US and globally? How, in other words, did we get here? And second: how have literature, film, and now social media represented this changing history back to us? Have our understandings of conditions like depression, schizophrenia, anxiety, and psychosis come to be thought—and even lived—as, themselves, essentially cinematic and literary experiences? Has social media now assumed some of this responsibility of narration and explanation? And if so, to what end? This course will examine the works of authors such as Poe, Plath, Lynch, and Moshfegh. Repeatable for Credit.

**MDHM 402 - HEALTH, HUMANISM AND SOCIETY SCHOLARS MEDICAL HUMANITIES PRACTICUM 1 (1 YR SEQUENCE)****Short Title:** HHASS MED HUM PRACTICUM 1**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Prerequisite(s):** MDHM 201

**Description:** Students are matched with medical humanities research projects in TMC. Students conduct 6-8 hours of research per week under guidance of on-site supervisor and follow curriculum under guidance of Rice faculty, developing skills for careers after graduation. Yearlong sequence continues as MDHM 403 in spring. Must have completed MDHM 201 and at least 9 credit hours in a humanities discipline for course eligibility. Instructor Permission Required. Recommended Prerequisite(s): Humanities or Social Science Major Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for MDHM 402 if student has credit for HUMA 402.

**MDHM 403 - HEALTH, HUMANISM AND SOCIETY SCHOLARS MEDICAL HUMANITIES PRACTICUM 2 (1 YR SEQUENCE)****Short Title:** HHASS MED HUM PRACTICUM 2**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Prerequisite(s):** MDHM 402 or HUMA 402

**Description:** Students are matched with medical humanities research projects in TMC. Students conduct 6-8 hours of research per week under guidance of on-site supervisor and follow curriculum under guidance of Rice faculty, developing skills for careers after graduation. Continuation of MDHM 402 as yearlong sequence. Instructor Permission Required. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for MDHM 403 if student has credit for HUMA 403.

**MDHM 410 - ETHICS AND THE HUMAN BODY****Short Title:** ETHICS AND THE HUMAN BODY**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Seminar**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level

**Description:** This course will explore the ethical significance of the human body and human body parts, focusing especially on the implications of this ethical significance for medical practice. This course will count towards the electives requirement for the MDHM minor.

**MDHM 420 - MEDICAL HUMANITIES SPANISH PRACTICUM ABROAD****Short Title:** MED HUMANITIES PRACTICUM SPAIN**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Prerequisite(s):** MDHM 201**Corequisite:** SPAN 324

**Description:** This highly individualized course focuses on developing students' abilities through interaction and active participation in a health project research developed with a community partner in an organization in Pamplona, Spain. Partners may vary by semester. Possible partners include ASPACE, Paris 365, Red Cross, Food Bank of Pamplona, and others. Students learn about these organizations, work with them, and develop an exploratory project in medical humanities that they will present to the public in a workshop, flier, web-based presentation, or other format. This course counts towards the practicum requirement for the MDHM minor and may count towards completion of other programs of study. Instructor Permission Required. Recommended Prerequisite(s): An approved MDHM elective.

**MDHM 430 - HEALTH, HUMANISM AND SOCIETY SCHOLARS MEDICAL HUMANITIES PRACTICUM (ONE SEMESTER)****Short Title:** HHASS 1-SEM MED HUM PRACTICUM**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Prerequisite(s):** MDHM 201

**Description:** This research-based course is conducted in partnership with health institutions in Houston. Qualified and advanced students apply for or develop projects in specific research areas and work 6-8 hours per week on site with health professionals, archivists, and center directors. Students follow curriculum under guidance of Rice faculty and meet regularly to discuss research and develop skills for careers after graduation. Must have completed MDHM 201 and at least 9 credit hours in a humanities discipline for course eligibility. Instructor Permission Required. Mutually Exclusive: Cannot register for MDHM 430 if student has credit for HURC 430. Repeatable for Credit.

**MDHM 435 - TOPICS IN APPLIED MEDICAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH****Short Title:** APPLIED MEDICAL HUMANITIES RES**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Internship/Practicum**Credit Hours:** 3**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Prerequisite(s):** MDHM 201

**Description:** In this practicum, students work as a team to design humanities-based solutions or create resources for a local organization related to health. Under the guidance of the faculty instructor, students will co-create a research plan, including a timeline, benchmark goals, a possible budget, and the division of tasks. Students will also complete common readings and visit the partner institution and relevant local sites as a group to gain insights into the broader context of the topic they will be researching. A mentor or team from the partner site will meet with the class periodically throughout the semester to answer questions, provide feedback, and connect students with relevant resources. By the end of the semester, the team will complete a project or resource for the organization and present their work to a relevant audience. Partners and projects vary by semester. This course counts towards the elective requirements of the MDHM minor. Recommended Prerequisite(s): Two additional Humanities courses OR two additional MDHM elective courses. Repeatable for Credit.

**MDHM 477 - SPECIAL TOPICS****Short Title:** SPECIAL TOPICS**Department:** Medical Humanities**Grade Mode:** Standard Letter**Course Type:** Lecture/Laboratory, Internship/Practicum, Laboratory, Lecture, Seminar**Credit Hours:** 1-4**Restrictions:** Enrollment is limited to Undergraduate, Undergraduate Professional or Visiting Undergraduate level students.**Course Level:** Undergraduate Upper-Level**Description:** Topics and credit hours may vary each semester. Contact department for current semester's topic(s). Repeatable for Credit.

## Description and Code Legend

**Note:** Internally, the university uses the following descriptions, codes, and abbreviations for this academic program. The following is a quick reference:

### Course Catalog/Schedule

- Course offerings/subject codes: MDHM

### Department (or Program) Description and Code

- Medical Humanities: MDHM

### Undergraduate Minor Description and Code

- Minor in Medical Humanities: MDHM

### CIP Code and Description <sup>1</sup>

- MDHM Minor: CIP Code/Title: 51.3204 - Medical/Health Humanities

<sup>1</sup> Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) 2020 Codes and Descriptions from the National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cipcode/>