

**“The Writing of Health and Medicine” (English 407)**  
**Fall 2021 / Professor: Catherine Gouge/cgouge@wvu.edu | Weds 4-6:50pm**

This course will be especially interesting and relevant for any student pursuing a Medical Humanities or PWE Minor; for creative writing and literature students; and for any student interested in the writing of health and medicine. All students are welcome and encouraged to enroll--no expertise in professional writing, creative writing, or health and medicine are required.

### **Course Description**

---

“The Writing of Health and Medicine” will engage students in a critical exploration of influential genres in health and medicine for both care professionals and the general public.



As a class, we will explore the following questions: How are the ways that we write in and about health and medicine meaningful? Who is persuading whom of what in various genres in health and medicine—and how are they doing it? What roles do different texts and rhetorical practices play in shaping the knowledge and experience of health and medicine?

Discussions about how healthcare professionals communicate with patients and other care professionals are central to this, but reading and writing in a variety of genres—some of the creative, some of them fictional—are also critical both to understanding health and illness and to the practice of medicine. For this reason, we will examine genres conventionally thought of as “professional” (like charts, forms, letters, and reports) as well as “creative” genres getting a lot of attention in the medical humanities—parallel charts, non-fictional accounts of the experience of illness, “graphic medicine” texts, fiction, and poetry. Students will be given the opportunity to engage with these genres by reading them, thinking critically about them, and writing in some of them.

### **Course Texts**

---

1. *The Complete Guide to Medical Writing* (2007) edited by Mark C. Stuart.
2. Selected nonfiction, fiction, and poetry as well as graphic fiction and nonfiction authored by healthcare professionals and others having encounters with health, illness, disability, and medicine.

**Note:** This ENGL 407 course meets once a week and will be taught concurrent with ENGL 507, the graduate-level version of this course. That means that the course will be a vibrant, mixed, small class of both advanced undergraduate students and graduate students who will complete and discuss overlapping reading and graded work assignments. Because this is a split-level upper-division undergrad/graduate course, students who enroll should expect to be present, engaged, and prepared for all weekly class meetings.