

Social and Cultural Studies of Biomedicine

Spring 2015 Syllabus

HTS6123/LMC8803

Wednesdays 4pm-7pm, Stephen C. Hall Building, Room 5

Professor Anne Pollock

Office hours: Wednesdays 10-12 or by appointment, Skiles Building, Room 360, apollock@gatech.edu

This course is a graduate seminar that explores current scholarship in the social and cultural studies of science, technology and biomedicine in the 21st century. Although many of the themes addressed have a long history, the emphasis will be on recent interdisciplinary science and technology studies scholarship of current conditions, drawing together work in sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and related fields. Objects of attention range in scale from molecules to personhood to environments of risk, and the texts for this course attend to diverse contexts of laboratory practices, clinical encounters, patient social movements and broader social debates.

Objectives

- Deepen awareness of and think critically about social and cultural contexts of contemporary biomedical research;
- Compare and contrast key theoretical engagements in biomedicine from diverse interdisciplinary perspectives;
- Hone skills in communicating about these issues of vital import, orally and in writing.

Assessment

- **Regular reading responses (10 total) 30%:** Before each class for which there is a book assigned, each student writes an entry responding to the readings for that day on the blog section of T-Square. The weekly responses should be ~500 words each and must be posted at least an hour before class (by Wednesday at 3pm). Your responses need not be polished or formal, but they should give a sense of the overarching project and argument of the book, highlight some of its key theoretical and empirical contributions, and note specific comments and questions that you would like to raise in class.
- **Class participation 30%:** This course is designed as a seminar in which active participation from all students is necessary; the benefits of this class come from talking as much as listening. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in depth, and to devote engaged attention to classmates' contributions.
- **Midterm take-home essay exam 20%:** Two questions, ~1200 words each, due Feb 27. One question will ask you to analyze a key theme across a range of readings, and the second will ask you to choose one chapter from *Biomedicalization* and analyze it in the context of the unit.
- **Final 20%:** ~2400 words, Due April 22. The structure of the final is flexible. You might choose to structure it along the same lines as the midterm: one part analyzing a key concept across a range of course readings, another part relating an outside source to the readings. Alternatively, you might use the final as an opportunity to reflect on how ideas from this class relate to your main research in your own discipline, or another mutually-agreed upon structure that demonstrates your mastery of course material and insightful analysis of biomedicine and culture.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Jan 7

Introductions

In-class reading and discussion on biopower: Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Translated by Robert Hurley, New York: Vintage Books, 1990 [1978], pp. 135-145.

UNIT 1: BIOMEDICALIZATION AND BIOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP

Week 2: Jan 14

Adele Clarke et al., *Biomedicalization: Technoscience, Health, and Illness in the U.S.* (Duke 2010)
*Read only Introduction and Part 1 (pp. 1-171).

Week 3: Jan 21

Nikolas Rose *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the 21st Century* (Princeton 2007) *Chapters six and eight are optional.

Week 4: Jan 28

Adriana Petryna *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens After Chernobyl* (Princeton 2013 [2003]) *Chapter 3 is optional.

Week 5: Feb 4

Anne Pollock *Medicating Race: Heart Disease and Durable Preoccupations with Difference* (Duke 2012)

Week 6: Feb 11 - No class, professor at conference

Week 7: Feb 18

Ruha Benjamin *People's Science: Bodies and Rights on the Stem Cell Frontier* (Stanford 2013)

Week 8: Feb 25

Each student selects one chapter from Part 2 or 3 of *Biomedicalization*, presents it to the class
This anchors one question of midterm, Due Friday Feb 27

UNIT 2: BIOMEDICAL ENCOUNTERS

Week 9: Mar 4

Annemarie Mol *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice* (Duke 2002)

Week 10: Mar 11

Melinda Cooper and Catherine Waldby *Clinical Labor: Tissue Donors and Research Subjects in the Global Bioeconomy* (Duke 2014) *Chapters 4 and 8 are optional

Week 11: Mar 18 - SPRING BREAK

Week 12: Mar 25

Mei Zhan, *Other-Worldly: Making Chinese Medicine Through Transnational Frames* (Duke 2009)

Week 13: Apr 1

Cori Hayden *When Nature Goes Public: The Making and Unmaking of Bioprospecting in Mexico* (Princeton 2003) *Chapter 5 is optional.

Week 14: Apr 8

S. Lochlann Jain *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us* (California 2013) *Chapter 6 is optional

Week 15: Apr 15 - Catch-up week

Week 16: Apr 22 - Final due at 3pm, wrap-up class