PHILOSOPHY & MEDICINE

Tuesday\Thursday mornings 8:00 - noon

Professor: Mary Ellen Waithe, Ph.D., Director, Bioethics Certificate Program, Cleveland State University. Specializes in bioethics and professional ethics in medicine, nursing, dentistry, psychiatry and has published in each of these areas.

LEARNING GOALS: To examine philosophical issues and concepts related to the healing professions. The following concepts will emerge through our readings and discussions: concepts of person, mind/body dualism, sexuality as it relates to mental and physical health and to reproduction, concepts of death, disease and health, concepts of patient and physician. We will look at these concepts as they developed from ancient times to the 20th century in western and non-western, white and non-white, masculist and feminist traditions. Accordingly, we will investigate, in addition to traditional philosophies of western medicine, concepts of self, health, etc. in Asian, African, indigenous peoples and feminist traditions. Readings will be drawn from ancient, medieval and modern as well as contemporary sources.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION: We will have readings and one film. We will have round table discussions during which students will be challenged to analyze and explain perspectives represented by the selected readings and the film. The first segment of each class will be dedicated to making journal notes about your ideas about the concepts we will be reading about. You will use class time for reading the materials. There will be adequate time reserved to make notes and answer probe questions in a journal prior to the commencement of the round table discussion. At the end of the discussion session, there will be at least 15 minutes allotted to writing a journal summary of how the discussion effected your understanding of the material/subject matter.

Journals will be submitted at the end of the course.

OUTLINE:

Session 1.
CONTEMPORARY NON-PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS.

8:00 a.m. Define the following in your journal: patient, role of physician in society,
8:30 a.m. Film: The Doctor. Even if you have already seen the film, I ask you to view it again in class.
10:30 a.m. Following the viewing, I will ask you to make notes about the following: the concept of patient, the role of the physician in society, concept of self, concepts of death, disease and health.

10:45 a.m. Discussion
11:45 a.m. Post-discussion journal reflections.

Session 2. SEX, GENDER AND MEDICINE I: Sex, Gender and Mind-Body Dualism.

8 a.m. Make some notes about your views on the following: the nature of psychosomatic disorders, the importance of the emotions to physical health; the relationship between hormones on the one hand and physical and mental illness on the other.


9:30 a.m. After reading the chapter, reflect upon and make notes on the following: Philosophical and scientific theories of earlier centuries held views of human nature that we now chuckle at. (1) What is there in your view of human nature, grounded in your scientific training and in your view of the universe, that will make 40th century physicians laugh? Do you believe (2) that contemporary medical science is value-neutral and objective, OR (3) that science cannot or does not need to be value-neutral and objective.

9:45 a.m. Discussion.
11:30 a.m. Post-discussion journal reflections.

Session 3.
SEX, GENDER & MEDICINE II: Sex, Gender and Scientific Objectivity.

8:00 a.m. Prior to today's reading, please make a few notes on your views of the following: (1) whether medical science really draws unwarranted inferences on the basis of gender. (2) what your knowledge of a patient's sex contributes to your ability to diagnose/heal them.


9:30 a.m. Following the reading make notes on examples from your own clinical experience as physician or patient (or from what you
have learned about others' clinical experiences) of research, theory, diagnostic or treatment errors that were at least partly attributed to gender/sex related views.

9:45 a.m. Discussion

11:45 a.m. Post discussion notes

Session 4. CULTURE & MEDICINE I: Asian Medieval Tradition of Shinto Buddhism.

8:00 a.m. Prior to reading today's section, please make notes in your journal regarding the following: (1) what does a person consist of? Body? Mind? Soul/Spirit? (2) which of these (or other) characteristics must co-exist in order for you to feel that "this is a person"? (3) when which of these (or other) characteristics are missing would you say "this is not a person?"

8:15 a.m. Read excerpts from Mary Ellen Waithe, "Murasaki Shikibu," in A History of Women Philosophers Volume 2, 500-1600 Dordrecht, Boston & London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989, pgs 1-26. YOU ARE REQUIRED TO READ ONLY SECTIONS IV & V (pgs. 10-24), but you may read the preceding material if you wish and if you have time for it.

8:45 a.m. Please make pre-discussion notes on the following: (1) How does Ukifune's concept of existing as a person differ from your own? (2) Would suicide be a valid expression of Ukifune's own personal identity? (3) From your own knowledge of other past or contemporary cultures, describe your understanding of concepts of salvation, reincarnation, and explain whether it would be tantamount to acting disrespectful of cultural differences to interfere with a person's pursuit of salvation/reincarnation to interfere with his or her suicide, or, to medically prolong the process of their death. (4) Explain your view regarding pain management for your patients: Is there something psychologically depraved about a person who wishes to suffer without receiving pain management? Or, can suffering sometimes be ennobling? Should we encourage patients to tolerate minor pain, or should patients who request pain management for what we perceive to be minor pain receive it on request?

9:30 a.m. Discussion

11:30 a.m. Post-discussion reflections in your journal.

Session 5.

8:00 a.m. Please make pre-reading journal notes on the following: (a) If you could go back in time and meet your great, great, great,
great grandmother who lived 150-200 years ago, and explain to her what you had learned about the nature of the human body, how would you describe the inside of the body in a way that communicated how it functioned? What metaphors would you use? (b) How would you explain what disease is and what causes it and how bodies develop diseases? (c) How would you describe to her the role that the mind and the emotions play in health and disease? (d) How would you explain or describe the human life cycle from birth to death in terms of the development of abilities/capacities, and the eventual loss of them? (e) How would you explain why some people are disabled? (f) How would you explain the distinction between disease and disability?

8:45 a.m. Read "Oliva Sabuco de Nantes Barerra," YOU ARE ASSIGNED TO READ ONLY PAGES 261-278, HOWEVER YOU MAY READ THE REMAINDER IF YOU ARE INTERESTED AND IF YOU HAVE TIME.

9:30 a.m. Pre-discussion journal notes: Please make notes about what you think Sabuco de Nantes' views would be on the same questions you just offered explanations for to your great-great-great grandmother.

10:00 a.m. discussion.

11:45 a.m. Post discussion journal notes.

Session 6.
CULTURE & MEDICINE III. African Traditions: Translations excerpted from a variety of African sources.

8:00 a.m. Please make some notes in your journal regarding your views of the following: (a) how individuals' health care needs should be balanced against the needs and interests of the community and against the financial and other resources of the community; (b) whether individuals have a responsibility to remain as healthy as they can, and to whom they might owe this responsibility (i.e., to themselves, to family members, to their community); (c) should the delivery of health services to a community be made by all members of the community, by its leaders, or by better-educated outsiders?

8:30 Readings from African sources including: The Egyptian Book of the Dead, Walda-Heywat (17th century Ethiopia), Ewe proverbs (traditional from Ghana, Togo, Benin), Akan (Ghana) traditions recorded by Kwame Gyekye (20th century).

9:15 Discussion

Session 7.
CULTURE & MEDICINE IV. Traditions of Indigenous Peoples: Examination of a Native American and Central American native traditions.

8:00 a.m. Prior to reading today's assignment, please make notes
in your journal about your view of a range of faith healing activities: (a) Christian Scientist prayer healing (b) laying on of hands, (c) placing trust in God that He will provide and work His will, (d) voodoo potions, curses and other so-called magic or witchcraft?

8:30 Read: (a) Wiedman, D. "Big and Little Moon Peyotism as health care delivery systems," Medical Anthropology: 12(4)371-387 (11/90).

9:30 Pre-discussion journal notes: (a) How has what you have just read affected the views you expressed in today's journal entry? (b) What claims made in each of the articles seemed the most controversial to you?

9:45 Discussion

11:45 Post-discussion journal notes.

Session 8. ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS:


8:15 a.m. Following your reading, please make notes about Aesara and/or and Theano’s views of the following: the concept of patient, the role of the physician in society, concept of self, concepts of death, disease and health.

8:45 a.m. Discussion of ancient women philosophers’ views on medicine. Comparison to those represented in earlier sessions.

9:30 a.m. Post-discussion journal reflections.

9:45 a.m. Please turn to the beginning of your journal and re-read it in its entirety with the following questions in mind:

1) How have your views on the role of the physician in society expanded? In what way?

2) In what way has what you have discovered about the history of medical science in the western tradition made you more skeptical or critical about what you are learning in medical school? Give me some examples.

3) In what way has what you have discovered about the concepts of death and suicide in other cultures and from other times affected
the view you held of those concepts prior to this course?

4) Does knowledge of different peoples' religious views of salvation, reincarnation, etc. affect your view of the proper role of medicine in preventing pain, in healing and in saving lives?

5) Does what you have learned about cultural differences in healing methods and what you have learned about bias in the history of western medical science affect your views of faith healing, and methods of healing other than those within your own tradition?

11:00 Discussion of responses to above questions.

11:45 Please complete and hand in the evaluation for this course. Thank you.