Course Syllabus

Course Title: Pain, Its Paradoxes, and the Human Condition (HEHE 5750)

Meeting: M, 17:00-19:50

Location: Room 1105, Education I

Credit Hours: 3

Prerequisites: None

Grading System: A-F

Instructor: Daniel S. Goldberg, J.D., Ph.D
Core Faculty, Center for Bioethics and Humanities
Associate Professor
Department of Family Medicine, CUSOM
Department of Epidemiology, CSPH
Scholar in Equity, Health & Law
Farley Health Policy Center
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Contact Information: Fulginiti Pavilion – Room 205
13080 E. 19th Avenue, CB B137
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus
Aurora, CO 80045
Tel: 303-724-8946
Fax: 303-724-3997
daniel.goldberg@ucdenver.edu (preferred)
Twitter: @prof.d.goldberg

Office Hours: By appointment. Please note that I make frequent use of Zoom for meetings and conferences, and both I and learners often find it mutually convenient.

Course Description:

Pain, as Emily Dickinson once noted, has an “element of blank.” It is an immensity that can at times blot out the world. And yet pain of some form or another is as close as any other to a universal feature of the human condition. The Institute of Medicine recently estimated that 116
million American adults suffer from chronic pain. This number is likely a vast underestimate as it does not include adolescents, children, or infants, all of whom experience pain. However, one of the many paradoxes of pain is that although pain is universal, it is also quintessentially subjective: my pain is by definition different from your pain, even if the cause of the pain is identical. Elaine Scarry notes another paradox: pain is simultaneously one of the most privately certain and publicly doubted experiences. In addition, some who experience pain do not seem to suffer, while others who suffer do not seem to experience pain. Finally, there is overwhelming evidence both that pain is poorly treated across the globe – including in the U.S. and the global North – and that there are stark domestic and global inequalities in the prevalence and treatment of pain.

This interdisciplinary course will explore the lived experiences of pain, its many paradoxes, and the extent to which it is a key feature of the human condition. Readings and analyses will be drawn from modalities as diverse as history, religious studies, philosophy, literature, poetry, public health, epidemiology, medicine, and law.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the time this course is done, learners will be able to

1. Explain several paradoxes of pain;
2. Describe the relationship between suffering and pain;
3. Articulate reasons why pain sufferers have historically endured significant stigma;
4. Evaluate the extent to which pain is fundamentally alienating; and
5. Describe key determinants in the inequitable distribution of pain across the globe.

**Evaluation:**

Students will be graded according to their written work and class participation. There are two kinds of writing in this course: reflective writing, or writing-to-learn, and academic writing.

*Reflective Writing (Writing-to-Learn)*

The course will provide students with a number of opportunities to write informally and reflectively, the details of which will be provided over the semester. The reflective writing tasks will be evaluated on a ✓+/✓/✓- system and will make up 25% of the final grade.
Academic Writing

There are three required writing assignments for this class. The first is a 5-7 page structured assignment requiring short answers to several questions. The second is a 5-7 page cohesive essay on an instructor-provided topic.

The third writing assignment offers learners a choice. You may author a 8-10 page cohesive essay or you may choose to design an educational module. Either the paper or the module may focus on any topic of your choosing so long as it relates to the course material. Detailed instructions for the module option will be provided, but it will include components such as a literature review, learning objectives, a syllabus, assessments, and a weekly facilitator’s guide or lesson plan.

All of the writing assignments must be accompanied by a “Writer’s Memo,” which asks you to reflect on what the writing process was like for you. Instructions for the completion of this Memo will be provided.

The first two writing assignments are worth 15% of the final grade. The third writing assignment is worth 20% of the final grade. A rough draft for this third writing assignment is mandatory and will comprise 5 points on the third writing assignment (so 5% of the overall course grade).

For each of the writing assignments, citation should generally conform to the Chicago Manual of Style. Wikipedia may not be used as a source.

Academic writing assignments will be graded along the following criteria:

1. Cogency of and technical rigor in the argument;
2. Engagement with and use of course material (readings, in-class discussion, electronic/cyber discussion, etc.); and
3. Mechanical aspects of good essay writing, including the existence of a clear thesis, proper paragraph structure, correct grammar and spelling, and appropriate diction and syntax.

Rubrics will be provided for each Formal Writing Assignment, and will be released concurrently with the instructions for each.

Class preparedness and participation is worth 15% of the final grade and consists of familiarity with the readings and engagement with the class material.
Several forums will be provided for class discussion, including in-class discussion and in-class group work, Canvas, and social media.

Presentation
Towards the end of the course, students will deliver a brief (10-15 minutes) presentation on a topic of their choosing. This is worth 10% of the final grade.

Social Media Usage
This course will make regular use of social media as teaching and learning tools. Although not required, it is recommended that students have a Twitter account for class discussion. Students are free to use a previously established Twitter account or generate a new account specifically for participation in the class.

More details on the purpose behind and usage of Twitter in our course will be provided prior to and during the first class session.

The University of Colorado system encourages the use of social media to further its mission. Resources, including university policies that govern social media usage, are available here: http://www.cu.edu/university-relations/cu-offices/university-relations/social-media-guidelines

Grading Scale
This class will be graded on the Plus-Minus grading system, using a 10-point scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Accommodations for Qualified Individuals with Disabilities

I have a background in disability studies and am committed to making every course accessible to people of various functionings and capabilities. At a minimum, I do my best to incorporate principles of Universal Design into course architecture and mechanics. Although I am uneasy with the requirements of self-disclosure that the legal structure of disability accommodations require, nevertheless, it is difficult for me to assist without knowledge or understanding of the specific needs and requirements of different learners.

Thus, it is the policy of the University of Colorado to make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability and desire accommodations to complete your course requirements, please contact me after class or make an appointment within the first two weeks of classes. All discussions will remain confidential. Additionally, students should contact the Office of Disability Services at AMC, which can then work with me to ensure we have all needed accommodations in place.

Honor Code/Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to show academic integrity and to adhere strictly to the Student Academic Honor and Conduct Code for the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus.

Military Service:

If you might be called to military service and/or training during the course of the semester, you should contact your school/college Associate Dean or Advising Office immediately.

Religious Observation:

Conflicts with classes and assignments arising out of religious observance will be accommodated. Please contact the instructor to arrange such accommodations.
Readings:

Required Texts:


All other readings will be posted on Canvas.

Class 1:

Introduction: Pain and Its Paradoxes

Reading Assignment:

1. “Pain,” by Emily Dickinson.

Class 2:

The Culture of Pain

Reading Assignment:

Class 3:

Pain and Suffering

Reading Assignment:


Class 4:

Pain, Suffering, and Sin

Reading Assignment:


*First Writing Assignment Due.*
Class 5:

Pain, History, and A Moral Calculus

Reading Assignment:


Class 6:

Pain and Stigma

Reading Assignment:


Class 7

Pain & Gender

Reading Assignment:


Recommended Reading:


Class 8:

Pains & Brains

Reading Assignment:


Class 9:

Pain and the Visible Lesion

Reading Assignment:

3. Richard Deyo, “Imagi

ining Idolatry: The Uneasy Intersection of Patient Satisfaction, Quality of Care, and Overuse,” *Archives of Internal Medicine* 169, no. 10 (2009): 921-923.

Class 10:

Pain and the Social Determinants of Health

Reading Assignment:


*Second Writing Assignment Due.*

Class 11:

Pain and Clinical Practice (Guest Speaker)

Reading Assignment:

Class 12:

Pain and Inequalities

Reading Assignment:


Class 13:

Pain & Language

Reading Assignment:


*Rough Draft of Third Writing Assignment Due.*

Class 14:

Images of Pain/Writing Assignment #3

‘Reading’ Assignment:

1. [Walking on Fire](Living with Chronic Pain), A film by The Wellcome Trust

*Third Writing Assignment Due.*
Class 15

Presentations & Final Thoughts

No Reading Assignment.