This seminar will explore a range of literary and cultural articulations of illness. While we will ground our study of illness narratives in some of its more conventional forms, such as the journal and documentary, the course will expand understandings about the forms that illness narratives take and the very definitions of illness itself. Our semester’s archive of illness narratives will include graphic novels, music, and performance art and it will also address disability studies, the politics of size/weight, and dominant perceptions of mental health. Texts will include (but are not limited to) *The Cancer Journals* by Audre Lorde; *The Pain Journal* by Bob Flanagan; *Southern Comfort*, directed by Kate Davis; *The Summer of Her Baldness* by Catherine Lord; *Our Cancer Year* by Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner; *Plague Mass* by Diamanda Galás; *Depression: A Public Feeling* by Ann Cvetkovich; and *Obsession: A History* by Lennard Davis. Students who are uncomfortable with frank discussions of sexuality, gender, and the body, should consider another seminar: please be aware that many of the texts contain sexually explicit material that may be objectionable to some.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES:**
- Situate texts in their cultural and historical contexts in order to engage with the politics and representations of illness.
- Develop critical abilities to assess and evaluate received cultural and historical knowledge about illness narratives.
- Demonstrate a close analysis of elements related to narrating illness in the assigned texts.
- Choose elements from the texts that provoke and organize discussion.
- Integrate primary and secondary material to produce theoretically informed analyses.

**BOOKS (AND MUSIC) TO PURCHASE:**
- Brabner, Joyce, Harvey Pekar, and Frank Stack. *Our Cancer Year*
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *Depression: A Public Feeling*
- Davis, Lennard. *Obsession: A History*
- Farmer, Joyce. *Special Exits*
- Flanagan, Bob. *The Pain Journal*
- Galás, Diamanda. *Plague Mass* [CD or digital download]
- Lord, Catherine. *The Summer of Her Baldness: A Cancer Improvisation*
- Lorde, Audre. *The Cancer Journals*
- Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration*

**FILMS TO WATCH/RENT: [R]**
- Aronson, Josh. *Sound and Fury* [rent via Amazon.com Instant Video; course reserves]
- Friedrich, Su. *The Odds of Recovery* [in-class clips]
- Davis, Kate. *Southern Comfort* [rent via Amazon.com Instant Video]
CONTENT VIA BLACKBOARD: [BB]
Guthman, Julie. “Neoliberalism and the Constitution of Contemporary Bodies”
Kafer, Alison. “Desire and Disgust: My Ambivalent Adventures in Devoteeism”
LeBesco, Kathleen. “Fat Panic and the New Morality”
Riley, Denise. “Some WHYS and why mes”
Sontag, Susan. from Illness as Metaphor

OPTIONAL/RECOMMENDED CONTENT:
Brodsky, Irene Taylor. Hear and Now
Chast, Roz. Can’t We Talk about Something More Pleasant?: A Memoir
Dick, Kirby. Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist [course reserves]
Keyes, Daniel. Flowers for Algernon
Lorde, Audre. A Burst of Light
Nelson, Ralph. Charly [course reserves]
Rubin, Laurie. Do You Dream in Color?: Insights from a Girl without Sight

GRADE BREAKDOWN:
Attendance and Participation: 30 points (15%)
Blackboard Blog Posts: 30 points (15%)
Presentation: 40 points (20%)
Proposal/Annotated Bibliography: 40 points (20%)
Seminar Paper: 60 points (30%)
Total points: 200 (100%)

PLEASE NOTE: In order to receive a grade, all portions of the above must be completed. Failing to complete any of the above will result in failing the class.

ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY:
Turn off and put away all cell phones – no cell phone use is allowed at any time during the class. No laptops, either. You must bring print-outs of the Blackboard readings to class. If you can reasonably justify why you require an e-reader for the material, you may be approved to use it (medical reasons, for instance) but don’t count on it. Even if approved, those students using e-readers for anything other than accessing the material will not be permitted to use them for the rest of the semester.
Read SDSU English Professor Peter Herman’s essay on laptops: http://timesofsandiego.com/opinion/2014/06/12/world-digital-please-close-laptop-class/

CLASS AND EMAIL ETIQUETTE:
Please be on time and come prepared and alert. Feel free to bring a beverage with a lid but please do not bring food. If, during class, you are listening to music, using electronic devices (unless approved), or show up without the assignments and/or the texts being discussed, you will be asked to leave. Emails should be clear and follow proper grammar, syntax, and spelling. They should be written like a business letter (Dear Professor Howard . . . signed with your first and last name). I will not respond to emails that resemble text messages. Please allow 24–48 hours for a response.
ATTENDANCE:
It is IMPOSSIBLE to do well without attending class. If you anticipate that you will need to miss more than one class, then you should withdraw. If you have two absences, you will forfeit all of your attendance and participation points. More than two absences will result in failing the class. If a situation outside your control causes you to miss a class, you are still responsible for the material covered in that day’s class. Attendance will be enforced. There will be a sign-in sheet circulated at the beginning of the seminar. If you are not here by the time the sign-in sheet goes around, then you will be considered absent.

PARTICIPATION:
One of the key components of learning how to be a scholar at the graduate level is the ability to articulate thoughts and engage in meaningful conversation about complex ideas. We will be exploring a variety of intriguing, controversial, and fascinating texts. In order to become fully engaged and get the most out of the seminar, sharing your observations and insights about the material is a significant portion of your grade. You will be expected to come to the seminars prepared with a set of questions and quotes that you intend to bring into the discussion.

BLACKBOARD BLOG POSTS:
All seminar participants will be required to post FIVE blog entries over the course of the semester. Your posts for your chosen weeks must relate to the material for those weeks. In other words, make sure your posts correspond with the syllabus’s schedule. Posts should be 300 words (approx. 1 page), well-written, and clearly indicate that the material for that week has been fully read, watched, listened to, and thought about (for instance, include quotes and other specific references from the texts). Be sure to use proper MLA documentation when citing. While these blog posts will serve as a supplementary discussion forum, make sure you post your own individual response rather than replying to someone else’s so that your posts can be accurately counted. Write your post in the body of the blog; do not attach your blog post as a separate document. We may refer to some of your posts during class sessions. The deadline for blog posts each week is Wed. by 5 p.m.

PRESENTATION:
Seminar participants will be required to present on one of the week’s texts and lead a portion of the class discussion. Please come prepared with a handout of questions, quotes, and key moments from the texts that you want us to discuss. Please check in with me at least one week prior to your presentation in order to discuss what you will be emphasizing.

PROPOSAL AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY:
Seminar participants will be required to submit a 500-word proposal and annotated bibliography of 10 sources for the seminar paper. You may opt to write on any of the texts and concepts covered in class. If you have a research agenda, you may also use the approaches we cover to develop your project, as long as it is clear that your paper is for this seminar. I strongly recommend discussing your ideas with me in advance.

SEMINAR PAPER:
Seminar participants will be required to submit an essay of 5,000 words (approx. 15 pages) based on the proposal and annotated bibliography.
LATE POLICY:
No assignments will be accepted after their due dates and times. No exceptions. Unless otherwise stated, always turn in hard copies of your assignments on their due dates, at the beginning of class. I do not accept assignments via email.

REQUIREMENTS FOR WRITTEN WORK:
All writing assignments must be typewritten, (12-point font, Times New Roman), double-spaced on one side of the page (no extra spaces between paragraphs), include your last name next to page numbers, and have one-inch margins. Follow the MLA documentation style for all in-text citations and works cited pages. Make sure you have a title for your essay but do not bold, italicize, or use a different font for the titles of your essays. Always put your full name, professor’s last name, class and assignment, and the date at the top of the first page. For example:

Andy Aztec (name)
Dr. Howard (professor)
English 606A/Assignment 1 (class number/assignment)
January 1, 2014 (date)

A: 95 – 100  B+: 86 – 89  C+: 76 – 79
A-: 90 – 94   B: 83 – 85   C: 73 – 75
     B-: 80 – 82  C-: 70 – 72

A writing will show original insight into the texts and theories in question. It will have a clear argument that is easily detectable. It will include well-developed body paragraphs centered around topic sentences, and include quotes from the texts. It will display no (or very little) grammar, spelling, or typographical errors and will provide close textual analyses of specific moments from the assigned content. It will synthesize the theories and the primary texts and have flawless MLA documentation.

B writing will have the same characteristics as A writing but will also have some grammar, spelling, and typographical errors that compromise readability. It may also occasionally show somewhat underdeveloped insight into the texts and theories in question.

C writing will have some of the same issues that keep B writing from being A writing but will have noticeable and/or consistent grammar, spelling, editing, and MLA documentation problems. It will also have reductive analyses of texts and not include enough evidence from the texts and theories. It will show very little originality and have a disorganized paragraph structure.

D writing reflects that the bare minimum has been done to pass the assignment.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:
Plagiarism includes: copying the ideas or writings of someone else and claiming it as your own work, collaborating with someone else on an assignment, and/or resubmitting work that you have done for another class. DON’T DO IT. Anyone caught plagiarizing will not only fail that assignment, but is likely to fail the class and will also face disciplinary action in accordance with the San Diego State University policy. You are responsible for reviewing SDSU’s policy on academic dishonesty at http://csrr.sdsu.edu.
DISABILITY SERVICES:
If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Please also visit http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/cps/. SDS is located in Calpulli Center, Suite 3101 (third floor) and is open 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS:
Public Safety: 619.594.1991
Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities: 619.594.3069
Counseling and Psychological Services: 619.594.5220
Center for Intercultural Relations: 619.594.7057

SCHEDULE:
DATES BELOW INDICATE WHEN THE MATERIAL WILL BE DISCUSSED. THIS MEANS YOU NEED TO COMPLETE THE MATERIAL LISTED FOR EACH DAY/WEEK PRIOR TO CLASS, UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE.

BE SURE TO BRING ALL MATERIALS LISTED FOR EACH WEEK.

AUG. 28: INTRODUCTION TO COURSE
Presentation sign-up
Maija Tamm, from Removals

SEPT. 4: WRITING
Lorde, The Cancer Journals
Sontag, excerpt from Illness as Metaphor
Riley, “Some WHYS and why mes”
OPTIONAL: LORDE, A BURST OF LIGHT

SEPT. 11: BODY-TEXT
Lord, The Summer of Her Baldness
Friedrich, The Odds of Recovery [in-class clips]

SEPT. 18: PAIN
Flanagan, The Pain Journal
OPTIONAL: DICK, SICK: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF BOB FLANAGAN, SUPERMASOCYST

SEPT. 25: COMFORT
Flanagan, The Pain Journal continued
Davis, Southern Comfort [R]

OCT. 2: ILLUSTRATING
Pekar, Brabner, and Stack, Our Cancer Year
OCT. 9: DISINTEGRATING
Wojnarowicz, *Close to the Knives*

OCT. 16: LISTENING
Galáš, *Plague Mass*

OCT. 23: “HEALTH” I
Guest speaker [via Skype]: Wonda Baugh, Ph.D. Candidate, American Culture Studies, Bowling Green State University
Aronson, *Sound and Fury* [R]
OPTIONAL: BRODSKY, *HEAR AND NOW*
OPTIONAL: RUBIN, *DO YOU DREAM IN COLOR?*

OCT. 30: DEPRESSION
Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling*

NOV. 6: OBSESSION
PROPOSALS/ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE
Davis, *Obsession: A History*
OPTIONAL: KEYES, *FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON*
OPTIONAL: NELSON, *CHARLY*

NOV. 13: “HEALTH” II
Guest speaker: Dr. Esther Rothblum, Professor of Women’s Studies, San Diego State University
Lebesco, “Fat Panic and the New Morality” [BB]
Guthman, “Neoliberalism and the Constitution of Contemporary Bodies” [BB]
Kafer, “Desire and Disgust: My Ambivalent Adventures in Devoteeism” [BB]

NOV. 20: EXITING
Farmer, *Special Exits*
OPTIONAL: CHAST, *CAN’T WE TALK ABOUT SOMETHING MORE PLEASANT?*

NOV. 27: NO CLASS – UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

DEC. 4: DRAFT WORKSHOP
ROUGH DRAFTS DUE

DEC. 15: SEMINAR PAPERS DUE BY NOON
Hard copies to my office, AL 259
I [print name]___________________________________ have read the syllabus for the above-named class in its entirety and fully understand the policies and expectations.

Justification for using an e-reader for content via Blackboard:

Type of e-reader:
Approved/Not Approved:

Student signature__________________________________________________

Date signed________________