English 395: Medical Rhetoric & The Technological Body

Section 01 | Mon/Wed | Time TBD | Location TBD

"We are fashioned creatures, but half made up."
—Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

Instructor:

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Office Hours: Mondays 9–11 am & by appointment

Catalogue Description:

Study of the influence of emerging technologies on rhetorical theory and practice. Rhetorical analysis of texts, including visual and audio texts. Invention and construction of digital media texts as a means of engaging rhetorical theory and analysis. Topics vary to adapt to emerging technologies and changing vernacular practices.

Course Description:

We live in a time when medical science offers an increasing array of life-saving and elective treatment options—options that can now even proceed us in life and follow us in death—and the medical establishment constantly reminds us of the materiality and mortality of the human body. "The body" is of particular interest within rhetorical studies because it is both an abstract conception that mediates experience and a physical entity capable of influencing that experience. This course examines this corporeal duality and the questions that arise when physical bodies come into contact with technological spaces and objects. Using a health humanities lens, we will analyze representations of the human body and its relationship to medical science and technology. We will begin in the contemporary medical school cadaver lab, make our way through MIT's *Frankenbook*—a digital collective-reading-slash-collaborative-annotation experience of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*—and use what we find to dissect the principles and methodology of biotechnological design.

Required Materials:
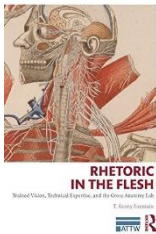
T. Kenny Fountain's *Rhetoric in the Flesh: Trained Vision, Technical Expertise, and the Gross Anatomy Lab* (2nd Edition).

Note: This text is getting more expensive than I feel comfortable requiring, so plan on finding these readings as PDFs on our Moodle site.

Roseanne Montillo's *The Lady and Her Monsters: A Tale of Dissections, Real-Life Dr. Frankensteins, and the Creation of Mary Shelley's Masterpiece*
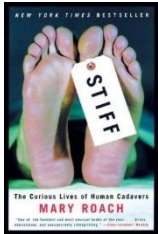
Mary Roach's *Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers*

Your fully charged laptop, equipped with Microsoft Word (or at least the ability to save files in .docx format). Other programs we will use (Google Docs, Slack, etc.) are available online.

Course Objectives:

1. Engage in interdisciplinary scholarship by identifying humanistic ways of knowing and applying them to the study of human health
2. Examine bodily rhetoric's role in the conception and development of emerging medical technologies and its influence over patients and consumers
3. Enhance group communication skills through participation in full-class discussion, small-group activities, and leading class discussion
4. Develop analytical skills in critical investigation, close reading, and visual analysis
5. Delimit the parameters of digital texts and participate in the process of expanding them
6. Design digital media artifacts for presentation to and education of diverse audiences

Course Design:

The course will be organized around the following principles:

Student-centered: My instruction will emphasize process: how to read, understand, interpret, analyze, and create oral, written, or multimedia texts. My role in this class is not to stand in front of you and lecture. Rather, I offer structure, motivation, support, perspective, and feedback as **you** engage with your classmates and the course projects. While I will ultimately take on the role of the judge at the end of the semester, my main focus is on empowering you to make decisions about work that interests you.

Workshop format: Classes will be taught using a workshop approach that emphasizes the role of learning by writing and promotes interactive, experiential education. Using a process-based approach, you will write multiple drafts, receive ongoing feedback from your peers and instructor, and participate in evaluating your own and others' projects throughout the composition process.

Process-based approach: As we move through each unit, assignments will build on each other. Small and overnight assignments are designed to give you practice with a particular skill. I do this to help you complete the more substantial projects that ask you to perform in-depth research and synthesize information from a variety of sources. I will give you full autonomy in terms of your research topics, so if there is something you need or want to see in a smaller assignment, I'm all ears.

Share and share alike: Much, if not all, of the writing you produce this course will be displayed publicly in some way, whether that be showing it to a classmate, a small group, or the entire class. Do not write anything you're uncomfortable sharing (personal data, your darkest secret, etc.).

Course Policies:
Remember that the syllabus functions as a contract between the instructor and the students. You are responsible for knowing and abiding by these policies.

Technology
Computers: Please bring your computer to class every day. Be sure that it is fully charged (our classroom may have limited and inconveniently placed outlets) and Wi-Fi capable.

Cell Phones: Cell phones are not allowed in class. You may have them (obviously), but unless you are taking a picture of the board after discussion your grade will suffer if I see it.

Other Devices: Tablets and other devices are welcome in lieu of a computer for in-class work.

Moodle: We'll use Moodle quite often. Let me know ASAP if you can't access our Moodle page.

One-time Reminder: Just because you have access to the Internet during class does not mean you need to be on it. If I notice that your participation is suffering due to technological distractions, your assignment and course grades will do so as well. I do not give warnings for this type of behavior. If I see it, I note it.

Email
It is important that you check your email daily for messages and updates, as these will be our primary form of communication inside and outside of class.

Please keep all correspondence courteous and professional. Emails are not texts, and I am not your roommate—write accordingly.

I aim to respond to email within 48 hours. Note: I will neither acknowledge nor respond to emails that include questions answered by the syllabus and/or assignment sheets.

Because of the collaborative and cooperative nature of this course, class attendance is crucial. More than two weeks' worth of absences will result in failure to meet this element of the GEP requirement, and you will need to repeat the course. To sum up: **Your 5th absence in this class automatically earns you an F in the entire course.**

This policy does not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. All absences will count toward the total number (including the very first time we meet). **No matter the cause of the absences, _YOU_ are responsible for finding out what material was covered, getting notes, being prepared for class on the day you return, and turning in subsequent assignments on time.** You will be allowed to make up all course work missed. I will establish make-up assignments, standards for evaluation of such assignments, and a reasonable period after the absence within which they must be turned in, but if you fail to turn in make-up assignments or if the make-up assignments are of insufficient quality, your grade will be penalized.

At least once during semester, you will have an in-person conference with me to discuss a draft of your paper (in lieu of written feedback). **Missed conference appointments will be counted as absences.** Office hours are the best way to get my feedback on your work outside of regular grading—feel free to meet with me at any stage of the writing process.

As is the case for all courses, students experiencing extended medical or family emergencies during the semester should consult with the instructor about seeking a medical drop. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., varsity athletics, religious observances), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester.

Homework and Projects

Formatting: Everything assignment you turn in will be **typed** (because it's the 21st century), written in **12-point Times New Roman font** (because it's easy to read), and **double-spaced** (because school). In-class writing we do on Google Docs is exempt from these, but it never hurts.

Feedback: I am committed to providing you with timely written or verbal feedback on one draft of each major paper and written feedback and a grade on the final version of each major paper. You can generally expect my responses to your drafts and small assignments within **one week** of your punctual submission of them; graded final versions will be returned to you within **three weeks**.

Late Assignments: I do **not** accept late work. Should a major project be turned in within two days of the deadline, I will give **up to** half credit as a grade (which is still an F even if it's perfect).

Grading:

Grading for this course will follow the NCSU Letter Grade Scale:

A+	97	B+	87	C+	77	D+	67	F	0–59
A	93	B	83	C	73	D	63		
A-	90	B-	80	C-	70	D-	60		

Your course grade will be weighed as follows:

Homework & Reading Quizzes	10%
In-Class Exercises	10%
Short Analytical Papers (2)	30%
Discussion Leader	10%
Course Project	30%
Presentation	10%

Your final grade may be also adjusted up or down by one-third of a letter grade (B becomes B-, C+ becomes C, etc.) to account for the quality of your participation and ungraded work over the course of the semester.

Major Assignments/Projects:

Short Analytical Papers (15% each): Twice in the semester, you will compose a short essay (4–6 pages) that utilizes the analytical skills we have been developing in class. Each essay should respond to the prompt provided on the assignment sheet. Successful essays present a clear argument and thesis statement, provide supporting evidence from course text(s), offer detailed analysis, and maintain an academic tone, in addition to accurate mechanics (grammar, citation, etc.).

Discussion Leader (10%): In pairs (or trios depending on enrollment), you will have the opportunity to lead the class in discussion on the day's readings. Discussion leaders are responsible for presenting a small reading quiz, facilitating class dialogue about that day's text (or portions of it), and completing a reflection after the class period.

Course Project (30%): In this course, I want you to pursue an intellectual project that interests and inspires you. Therefore, you will have the option to develop a project in whatever mode of composition or expression best suits your learning, whether independently or in a group. Regardless of your choice, you will turn in a non-graded proposal and peer-workshop a draft in preparation for this assignment. Failure to complete any of these preliminary assignments will impact your final project grade.

> **Academic Project:** Academic projects typically present an original argument that is grounded in textual analysis. You will select a genre of academic composition—conference paper, academic blog post, podcast episode, etc.—that best suits your project. The length of the project will depend on the genre, but should not exceed 10 written pages without professor permission.

> **Creative Project:** Drawing inspiration from course texts, create your own work of art, short film, memoir, or something else related to a course topic. You will also submit a statement of rationale (3–5 pages) that explains your creative choices, influences, and the scholarly conversations that your creative piece engages in.

> **Medical Design Project:** If you'd like to split the difference between the academic and creative options, our course lends itself very well to a hybrid project. The medical design project I have in mind is a paper that (1) presents research about the invention, design, and

use of a medical apparatus (pacemakers, colostomy bags, crutches, etc.) and (2) offers up technical and visual suggestions for improving, explaining, and/or marketing the device. Students choosing this type of project could also request the option to build and reveal a "prototype" of the new-and-improved apparatus for their presentation.

Presentation (10%): On the last day of class, you will present your course project to the class. The format of these presentations will vary based on what type of project you choose, so you have as much autonomy over your presentation as you do the content of your project. Also, please know I am very (*very*) open to "unconventional" presentation formats—installations, photo essays, video games, etc.—so ideas from outside the box are allowed and encouraged.

Accommodations:

Reasonable accommodations will always be made for students with verifiable disabilities and may be made for lifelong medical conditions, persistent medical conditions, or temporary medical conditions. To take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with the Disability Resource Office. You may contact them via web at https://dro.dasa.ncsu.edu/ or by phone, 919-515-7653.

Disabilities can be visible and invisible, and I am dedicated to ensuring that all students succeed in my course. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. If you have information you wish to share with me about a disability, disorder, or neurodiversity issue; if you have emergency medical information you think I should know about; or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please set up an appointment with me to discuss this during office hours.

Plagiarism/Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism is defined as copying the language, phrasing, structure, or specific ideas of others and presenting any of these as one's own, original work; it includes buying papers, having someone else write your papers, and improper citation and use of sources. When you present the words or ideas of another (either published or unpublished) in your writing, you must fully acknowledge your sources. Plagiarism is considered a violation of academic integrity whenever it occurs in written work, including drafts and homework, as well as for formal and final papers. We will discuss what constitutes plagiarism in a class session.

The NCSU Policies, Regulations, and Rules on Student Discipline set the standards for academic integrity at this university and in this course. Students are expected to adhere to these standards. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be handled through the university's judicial system and may result in failure for the project or for the course.

See the Office of Student Conduct website for additional information about academic integrity: http://studentconduct.ncsu.edu/academic-integrity-resources.

Revealing or sharing another student's course work to which he or she may have access as a member of the class is considered a form of academic dishonesty prohibited by the Code of Student Conduct. As a condition for enrollment in this class, students may only share another student's course work with third parties after obtaining the express consent of the student author and the course instructor. "Sharing with third parties" includes posting or causing the course work to be posted on social-networking or other websites. Violations of this condition will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, which may take further action.

Helpful Resources:

If you'd like additional help outside of class (and my office hours), visit **WSTS**, which offers free tutoring services for students. You may visit them at any point in the writing process to ask for help with a specific paper, whether you are concerned with developing ideas and content, organizing your assignment, or working on style issues. To make an appointment and/or browse their resources, please go to https://tutorial.dasa.ncsu.edu/wsts-overview-programs/wsts/. To make the best use of your time there, please bring a copy of both your assignment sheet and your draft with you.

The **Purdue Online Writing Lab** (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/) and your textbooks are fantastic resources for learning more about mechanics, style, grammar, and citations.

The **Career Development Center** (careers.ncsu.edu) Explore career options, build resumes and cover letters, develop internship/ job search strategies, prepare for interviews, maximize career fairs, and more. Use ePACK to make an appointment with your career counselor.

Note: If you need help, ASK! These writing courses are small to increase access to your peers and professor. If you are falling behind or need extra help, please let me know. We can discuss brief concerns before or after class, and we can have an extended conversation and/or writing conference during my office hours. To schedule an appointment, please email me. You can also find help almost 24/7 on the library website—you can even book a research help appointment with a librarian. It's a great way to get individualized help with research, and they can help with any part of the research process, from topic selection to citation.

(Course Calendar below)

Course Calendar:

Our course calendar (which is subject to change) can be found below and at the following link:

Week	Discussion/Workshop Topics	What to Read/Watch (Before Class)
	Bodily Rhetorics	
1	**Embodied Rhetoric**	Hauser, Gerald A. *Introduction to Rhetorical Theory* (2002). [Chapters 1 & 2]
		Chavez, Karma R. "The Body: An Abstract and Actual Rhetorical Concept" (2018).
2	**Bodies at Work in the Health Humanties**	Jones, Therese, et al. "Introduction: The Why, The What, and the How of the Medical/Health Humanities" (2014).
		Belling, Catherine. "Andromeda's Futures: A Story of Humanities, Technology, Science, and Art" (2014).
3	**Learning to See: Medical Rhetorics**	Fountain, T. Kenny. Rhetoric in the Flesh (2014). [Chapters 1, 2, & 4]
	Rhetoric Is Dead	
4	**Imaging & The Medical Stare**	Gilman, Sander L. "Seeing Bodies in Pain" (2014).
		Foucault, Michel. "Open Up a Few Corpses" from *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973).
5	**Dissecting Rhetoric**	Fountain, T. Kenny. Rhetoric in the Flesh (2014). [Chapter 5]
		Roach, Mary. *Stiff* (2003). [Chapter 1, "A Head Is a Terrible Thing to Waste"]

6	**Ode to a Cadaver**	Fountain, T. Kenny. Rhetoric in the Flesh (2014). [Chapter 6]
		Roach, Mary. Stiff (2003). [Chapter 4, "Dead Man Driving..."]
7	**The Animated Corpse**	Dima, Vlad. "You Only Die Thrice: Zombies Revisited in *The Walking Dead*
		The Walking Dead (AMC) - Episode 1
	The Modern Prometheus	
8	**Back to the Future: Frankenstein's Monster in Context**	Wolpe, Paul Root. "Knowing and Seeing: Reconstructing Frankenstein" (2014).
		Montillo, Roseanne. *The Lady and Her Monsters* (2013). [Chapter 3, "Making Monsters"]
9	*Frankenstein*	*Frankenbook* (2018) - Vol. 1
10	*Frankenstein*	*Frankenbook* (2018) - Vol. 2
11	*Frankenstein*	*Frankenbook* (2018) – Vol. 3
	The Future Is Now	
12	**The Six Million Dollar Hand**	Clement, Rhys, et al. "Bionic Prosthetic Hands: Review of Present Technology and Future Aspirations" (2011).
		Aman, Martin, et al. "Bionic Hand as Artificial Organ: Current Status and Future Perspectives" (2019).
13	**Form ∩ Function: Art's Work in the Age of Biotechnology**	Foss, Sonja K. "Theory of Visual Rhetoric" (2005).

		Medium.com UX Blog. "How Form and Function Play into the Rise of Good Design" (2017).
14	**Transhumanism: Bioethics Encarnated**	Benedikter and Siepmann. "'Transhumanism': A New Global Political Trend?" (2016). H+ Website
15	**Workshop**	
16	**Presentations (Final Exam)**	