

Designing Disease: Modern Media in the Age of Pandemics

Last Updated: Mon, 01/05/2026

Course prefix: LMC

Course number: 3318

Section: RMZ

CRN

35481

Instructor first name: Jennifer

Instructor last name: Orth-Veillon

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

Covid, despite modern advances in medical technology, taught us that pandemics are not just about medical or biological phenomena. Preventing the contagion and controlling the outbreak of information gleaned –both accurate and inaccurate–proved almost as challenging as containing and curing the virus. Via the lens of world literature, film, and media, this class will explore ethical questions throughout the history of biology and medicine during pandemics. From the Middle Ages to the contemporary world, we will look at representations of health, disease, and the medical establishment, and the cultural implications of medical innovation. Along with literature, film, and media, students will consult a variety of scientific and cultural artifacts that will add to ethical discussions about pandemics. Over the course of the semester we will reflect on the profound assumptions rooted in the language, images, and media used over time to deal with disease and pandemics.

And, since we are in Metz, we will put special emphasis on Europe, France, and the Alsace-Lorraine region as we take required Friday outings that enhance our inquiry. For example, we will visit WWI sites to learn about war's role during the Spanish flu. We will also travel to Colmar to view the Isenheim Altarpiece to discover art's role in health communication as well as to the Fort de Queuleu concentration camp in Metz to understand Nazi ideology regarding the human body.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's

academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Arts, Humanities & Ethics area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts in English or other languages, or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence