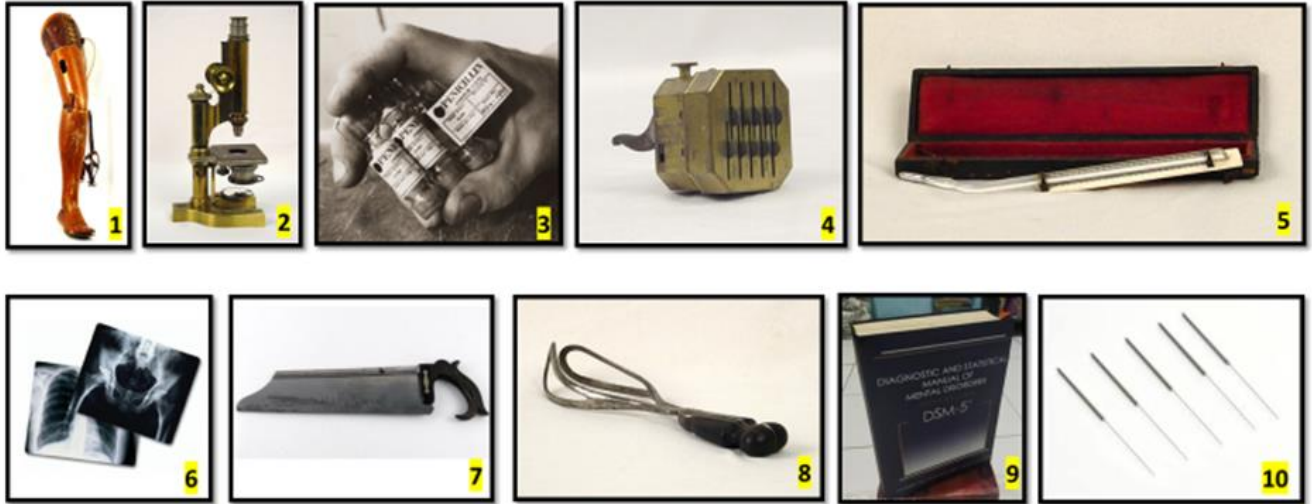


**History 3840G**  
**Microscopes and Amputation Saws: A History of Medicine**  
**in 10 Objects**



**Winter 2025**

Instructor: Prof Shelley McKellar

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Office: **Department of History, Lawson Hall 2227**

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

**Course Description**

Using 10 objects as entry points into the history of medicine, this course explores the changes and continuities in Western medical knowledge and practice since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. New and old medical treatments, different medical theories, professional authority, socio-cultural expectations, and issues of power, class, race, gender will be explored.

**Prerequisite(s):**

None. This is a 2-hour weekly in-person class meeting.

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## Course Syllabus

### *Content & Expectations*

This is a course in the history of modern Western medicine that focuses on medical **KNOWLEDGE** and **PRACTICE**. This course aims to highlight the changes and continuities in Western medicine, identifying key individuals, ideas, treatments, structures, and contexts that reinforced or shifted the practice of medicine, predominantly from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to present day. In this course, we will ask (and trace): What medical practices changed, and why? How did certain medical practices reinforce or disrupt medical knowledge at various periods of time? Who and what (individuals, technology, structures) were involved in these changes?

Each week's topic will start with a medical object, which will serve as an entry point to explore a broader theme or aspect in the history of medicine. In this course, we will spotlight 10 medical objects and tackle 10 distinct areas of medical history, covering such topics as the germ theory revolution, the history of surgery, and more. Our weekly lectures and discussion will delve into various topics by providing relevant content and object information, considering different historical interpretations and contrasting points of view, and examining numerous methods and theories used by historians to gather and evaluate historical evidence. Issues of class, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality will be discussed alongside themes of individual agency, professional authority, consumerism, and more. Students will engage with a variety of primary sources throughout this course and be exposed to material culture study.

This is a mixed lecture and breakout sessions course. Each week, there will be a lecture and break-out discussions in small groups. There will be a hands-on component in the form of a Medical Artifact Collection workshop for which students will work in small groups. This workshop session is scheduled during class time, so please note the change of venue (the workshop location differs from our regular classroom).

### *Who can take this course?*

This course is open to all students. Students in history, science, social sciences, health sciences, or arts and humanities are welcome. Students do not need a background in science, medicine, or history to take this course.

### *Course-Level Learning Outcomes:*

By the end of this course, students shall be able:

- To differentiate the changes and continuities (historical shifts and patterns) in medical knowledge and practice over time, and how individual agency, professional authority, socio-cultural expectations, and issues of power, class, race, and gender may influence this;
- To explain key medical developments, such as the establishment of the germ theory and the introduction of new medical technologies and treatments;
- To recognize that medical knowledge and practice are shaped by time and place;
- To analyze critically various source materials – primary and secondary sources – from which to understand the history of medicine;
- To formulate and communicate an effective argument, which demonstrates good research, writing and analytical skills;

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Refer to history outcomes and expectations for 3<sup>rd</sup> year students at:

[https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/expectations\\_outcomes.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/expectations_outcomes.html)

## Methods of Evaluation

- Quiz #1 (online; open book) ..... 20 %  
Due date: Flexible – between 1:30 p.m. on Jan 29 and 6:00 p.m. on Jan 31
- Workshop Assignment: Medical Object Reflection (video) ..... 15 %  
Due date: Flexible – between 1:30 p.m. on Feb 26 and 6:00 p.m. on Feb 28
- Quiz #2 (online; open book) ..... 20 %  
Due date: Flexible – between 1:30 p.m. on Mar 12 and 6:00 p.m. on Mar 14
- Research Essay Assignment (approx. 2500-3000 words) ..... 30 %  
Due date: Flexible – between 1:30 p.m. on Mar 19 and 6:00 p.m. on Mar 21
- Participation (Break-out sessions; class interactions) ..... 15 %  
Due date: Every class\*

*Please note that flexible due dates are offered for quizzes and written assignments. As such, with this intentional flexibility, requests for academic consideration for submission (including late penalty exemptions) of these assignments/quizzes may be denied (as per [Western's Senate's Policy on Academic Consideration](#)).*

*\* Students earn participation grades for demonstrating aspects of "thinking and practicing as an historian". There will be weekly participation breakout sessions in weeks 2-12 (excluding week 6 reading week) for a total of 10 participation grades per student. The lowest 2 participation grades, including missed participation breakout sessions, will be dropped from consideration when calculating your final overall grade for participation. As such, with this intentional flexibility, requests for academic consideration for these participation breakout sessions may be denied (as per [Western's Senate's Policy on Academic Consideration](#)).*

**Assignments** -- Assignment handouts are posted on the OWL Brightspace course site. Students will have some choice in assignment topics.

**Submitting Your Course Work** -- Students will complete quizzes online and submit digital copies of assignments via the OWL Brightspace course site. A **digital copy** of all assignments is required for grading. As per [Western Senate Academic Policy](#), "the last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course".

**Late Penalties** -- Penalty for late assignments is 2% each day (including Saturday and Sunday) after the due date. As per [Western Senate Academic Policy](#), course work cannot be submitted after the last day of scheduled classes in the term. As per [Western Senate Academic Policy](#), academic consideration for late or make-up submissions may be denied since there is already flexibility built into the submission framework (a 58-hour submission window for quizzes AND 2 grades dropped of 10 weekly participation grades). To be fair to all students in this class, anyone seeking course work extensions and/or a late penalty exemptions must request this through Academic Advising/Counselling.

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## Course Materials

- Jacalyn Duffin, *History of Medicine: A Scandalously Short Introduction*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021). Available at [Western Libraries](#); Available for purchase in paper and eBook at <https://utorontopress.com/9781487509170/history-of-medicine/> or at [The Western Book Store](#)
- Additional documents circulated for in-class group discussions posted on OWL Brightspace course site

## Course Schedule and Readings

Week	Date	Topic	Duffin Textbook Chapters
1	8 Jan	Introduction - Why Objects as an Entry Point into the History of Medicine?	Chapter 1
2	15 Jan	<b>Artificial Leg (Object #1)</b> - History of the Body	Chapter 2, Chapter 3
3	22 Jan	<b>Microscope (Object #2)</b> - History of Pathology & Disease Theories	Chapter 4
4	29 Jan	<b>Penicillin (Object #3)</b> - History of Pharmacology  <b>Online Quiz #1 opens</b> -- Students responsible for material covered & assigned during classes of Jan 8, Jan 15, Jan 22, and Jan 29 inclusively; this quiz <u>to be completed before 6:00 p.m. on Jan 31</u> to avoid a zero grade	Chapter 5
5	5 Feb	<b>Scarificator (Object #4)</b> – History of Bloodletting	Chapter 8
6	12 Feb	<b>WORKSHOP in the Medical Artifact Collection (LwH 2262)</b>  *** workshop session held in LwH 2262 – the Teaching Classroom connected to the Collection Storage Space  <i>A workshop sheet guiding you through your artifact examination will be provided. No pens, no food, and no drink are allowed in the collection teaching space.</i>	None

	19 Feb	<b>Spring Reading Week – NO CLASS MEETING</b>	None
7	26 Feb	<b>Thermometer (Object #5)</b> - History of Measurement & Diagnosis  <b>Workshop Assignment due</b> -- Students to upload a digital copy of their assignment to OWL course site <u>by 6:00 p.m. on Feb 28</u> to avoid late penalty	Chapter 9  (over 2 weeks)
8	5 Mar	<b>X-ray (Object #6)</b> - History of Hospitals	Chapter 9  (over 2 weeks)
9	12 Mar	<b>Amputation Saw (Object #7)</b> - History of Surgery  <b>Online Quiz #2 opens</b> -- Students responsible for material covered & assigned during classes of Feb 5, Feb 26, Mar 5, and Mar 12 inclusively; this quiz <u>to be completed before 6:00 p.m. on Mar 14</u> to avoid a zero grade	Chapter 10
10	19 Mar	<b>Obstetric Forceps (Object #8)</b> - History of Childbirth & Pediatrics  <b>Research Essay Assignment due</b> -- Students to upload a digital their assignment to OWL course site <u>by 6:00 p.m. on Mar 21</u> to late penalty	Chapter 11, Chapter 13
11	26 Mar	<b>The DSM or Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (Object #9)</b> - History of Psychiatry	Chapter 12
12	2 Apr	<b>Acupuncture Needle (Object #10)</b> – Numerous Healing Practices in History	None

### Additional Statements

You may not make any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, for any assignments in this course.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.