

History 3844F
Scandals and Tragedies: Controversial Medical Cases in History
Fall 2024

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

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

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

Course Description

Using a case-based approach, this course tackles some thorny issues in the history of medicine. We shall attempt to make sense of several controversial events by exploring themes of risk, innovation, authority, the role of ‘experts’ and ‘publics’, health care access, issues of power, individual agency, experimentation, and more.

Prerequisite(s):

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

Course Syllabus

Content & Expectations

This is a course in the history of modern Western medicine that focuses on past medical scandals and tragedies. To what extent have past controversial medical cases resulted in positive or negative changes for science, medicine, and society? Are some past medical cases ‘more’ scandalous or tragic than others, and if so, in what way?

Debate and controversy often surround developments in medicine and science, and ever more so when fatal consequences and injustices occur. How best to understand controversial medical cases? Have past scandals and tragedies been genuine mistakes or media-fueled hysteria? Can medical mishaps be characterized as willful, even malicious, deception or unfortunate events for which specific actors should or should not be held accountable? What are the implications of controversial medical cases for science-society relations, medical practice, and individual health?

This course tackles some thorny issues in the history of medicine. We shall attempt to make sense of several controversial medical cases by highlighting themes of risk, innovation, and authority; the role of ‘experts’ and ‘publics’; professional and state responsibilities; experimentation, decision-making and tactics employed; individual patient outcomes as well as health-related values of society, and more. We will ponder various questions, including do controversies end? Are there distinct victims and perpetrators in controversial medical cases? Are disputes or controversies over scientific concepts or medical treatments useful, perhaps necessary? How do changes in medical practice arise (or not) from past controversial cases?

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The course aims to engage students in critical thinking to address past medical controversies, broadly understood as any instance of disagreement around medical or scientific issues and practices. Employing historical sources and methodology, students will analyze select events, cases, and actors involved in various scandals and tragedies in medical history and trace how concerns, issues, conflicts, and arguments evolved over time. By studying these historical cases, we seek to overcome simplistic views of controversies as easily solvable debates between truth and falsehood or right and wrong. For example, we shall approach past controversies as involving actors inside and outside the medical and scientific communities, identifying the lack of consensus within groups, and analyzing the competing perspectives and agendas. The short- and long-term effects of these thorny issues shall be discussed. Aspects of class, race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality will be discussed alongside issues of power, individual agency, medical outcomes, experimentation, professional authority, and more.

Each week's meeting will start with a controversial medical case, which will serve as an entry point to explore a broader theme in the history of medicine. This is a mixed lecture (full class) and breakout sessions (small groups) course. This format allows us to explore various topics by providing relevant content and case information, by considering different historical interpretations and contrasting points of view, and by examining numerous methods and theories used by historians to gather and evaluate historical evidence. Students will engage with a variety of primary sources throughout this course towards 'thinking and practicing as an historian.'

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 identify several changes in healthcare research, practice, and policy that occurred as a result of specific controversial medical cases, noting various factors that have influenced change;
- To explain several key medical principles and concepts, such as informed consent, human body dignity, patient autonomy and self-determination, professional competence and responsibility;
- 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;

Refer to history outcomes and expectations for 3rd year students at:

https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/expectations_outcomes.html

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Methods of Evaluation

- Quiz #1 (online; open book) 20 %
Due date: Flexible – between 12:30 p.m. on Oct 9 and 6:00 p.m. on Oct 11
- Comparative Readings assignment (approx. 1000-1250 words) 15 %
Due date: Flexible – between 12:30 p.m. on Oct 23 and 6:00 p.m. on Oct 25
- Quiz #2 (online; open book) 20 %
Due date: Flexible – between 12:30 p.m. on Nov 13 and 6:00 p.m. on Nov 15
- Research Essay (approx. 2000-2500 words) 30 %
Due date: Flexible – between 12:30 p.m. on Nov 20 and 6:00 p.m. on Nov 22
- 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. To be fair to all students in this class, anyone seeking course work extensions and/or a late penalty exemption must request this through Academic Advising/Counseling.

Course Materials

- No course textbook
- Weekly readings posted on OWL Brightspace course site

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Course Schedule and Readings

Week	Date	Topic and Case	Readings
1	Sep 11	Introduction: Why a Case-Based Approach as an Entry Point into the History of Medicine?	None.
2	Sep 18	Body Autonomy, Human Dissection and Medical Education: Case #1 – The Burke and Hare Murders	Christine Woodcock, “Notorious Edinburgh,” <i>History Magazine</i> (Apr/May 2018): 40-42. Phil Jones, “The Deadly Business of Burke and Hare,” <i>History Magazine</i> (Nov 2008): 11-14. Susan E. Lederer and Susan C. Lawrence, “Rest in Pieces: Body Donation in Mid-Twentieth Century America,” <i>Bulletin of the History of Medicine</i> 96, 2 (Summer 2022): 151-181.
3	Sep 25	Quackery, Nostrums, and Health Frauds: Case #2 – Dr. Bull’s Cough Syrup	Lori Loeb, “British Patent Medicines: ‘Injurious Rubbish’?” <i>Nineteenth Century Studies</i> 13 (1999): 1-21. Erin Elizabeth Bramwell, “‘She Used to Doctor Us Up Herself’: Patent Medicines, Mothers, and Expertise in Early Twentieth-Century Britain,” <i>Twentieth Century British History</i> 31, 4 (Dec 2020): 555-578.
4	Oct 2	Eugenics and Compulsory Sterilization: Case #3 – Carrie Buck	Erika Dyck and Maureen Lux, “Population Control in the ‘Global North’?: Canada’s Response to Indigenous Reproductive Rights and Neo-Eugenics,” <i>Canadian Historical Review</i> 102, s3 (Aug 2021): ps876-s902. Jana Grekul, “Sterilization in Alberta, 1928 to 1972: Gender Matters,” <i>Canadian Review of Sociology</i> 45, 4 (Nov 2008): 247-266.
5	Oct 9	Pharmaceuticals and Drug Regulation: Case #4 – Thalidomide Use	Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, “The Good Mother of Science: Emotional Letters to Frances Oldham Kelsey during the Thalidomide Crisis,” in <i>Feeling Feminism: Activism, Affect, and Canada’s Second Wave</i> , edited by Lara Campbell, Michael Dawson, and Catherine Gidney. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022), pages 51-72. Susanne M. Klausen and Julie Parle, “‘Are We Going to Stand By and Let These Children Come Into the World?’: The Impact of the ‘Thalidomide Disaster’ in

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			<p>South Africa, 1960-1977,” <i>Journal of South African Studies</i> 41, 4 (2015): 735-752.</p> <p>Online Quiz #1 opens 12:30 p.m. on Oct 9 -- Students responsible for material covered & assigned during classes of Sep 18, Sep 25, Oct 2, and Oct 9 inclusively; this quiz to be completed before 6:00 p.m. on Friday, Oct 11 to avoid a zero grade</p> <p><i>*note intentional flexibility of deadline</i></p>
6 Oct 16		<p>Reading Week –</p> <p>NO CLASS MEETING</p>	None.
7 Oct 23		<p>Informed Consent:</p> <p>Case #5 – The Tuskegee Syphilis Study</p>	<p>James H. Jones and Susan M. Reverby, “50 Years After Tuskegee Revelations: Why Does the Mistrust Linger?” <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> 112, 11 (Nov 2022): 1538-1540.</p> <p>TED Ed talk (5 min) at https://ed.ted.com/lessons/ugly-history-the-u-s-syphilis-experiment-susan-m-reverby</p> <p>Susan M. Reverby, “Race, Medical Uncertainty, and American Culture,” [Introduction] <i>Examining Tuskegee: The Infamous Syphilis Study and Its Legacy</i> (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); pp 1-12.</p> <p>Comparative Readings assignment due 12:30 p.m. on Oct 23 -- Students to upload a digital copy of their assignment to OWL course site before 6:00 p.m. on Oct 25 to avoid late penalty</p> <p><i>*note intentional flexibility of deadline</i></p>
8 Oct 30		<p>Assisted Reproduction and Ethical Quandaries:</p> <p>Case #6 – Louise Brown</p>	<p>Laura Beers, “Not a Priority: Infertile Women and the Symbolic Politics of IVF in 1980s Britain,” <i>Gender & History</i> 35, 3 (Oct 2023): 1111-1134.</p> <p>Sarah Feber, Nicola Jane Marks, Vera Mackie, “Towards the Two 1978 Births,” [Ch 2] <i>IVF and Assisted Reproduction: A Global History</i> (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020): pp.27-70.</p>
9 Nov 6		<p>Human Experimentation?</p> <p>Case #7 – Louis Washkansky</p>	<p>Shelley McKellar, “Clinical First—Christiaan Barnard’s Heart Transplantations,” <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i> 377, 23 (2017): 2211-3.</p> <p>Susan Lederer, “Medicalizing Miscegenation: Transplantation and Race,” [Chapter 6] <i>Flesh and Blood: Organ Transplantation and Blood Transfusion</i></p>

			<i>in Twentieth Century America</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 165-184.
10 Nov 13	Patient Activism: Case #8 – The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)	<p>Anna Blume, “Layers of Disaster” [interview] <i>The New Centennial Review</i> 21, 2 (Fall 2021): 27-43.</p> <p>Megan Hicks, “AIDS and Activism” [exhibit review] <i>Journal of the Australian & New Zealand Society for the History of Medicine</i> 15, 2 (2013): 112-118.</p> <p>Eduard Grebe, “The Treatment Action Campaign’s Struggle for AIDS Treatment in South Africa: Coalition-Building through Networks,” <i>Journal of South African Studies</i> 37, 4 (Dec 2011): 849-868.</p> <p><u>Optional:</u> <i>United in Anger: A History of ACT UP</i> (ACT UP Oral History Project, 2012) VIDEO 93 minutes - Kanopy</p> <p>Online Quiz #2 open 12:30 p.m. on Nov 13 -- Students responsible for material covered & assigned during classes of Oct 23, Oct 30, Nov 6, and Nov 13 inclusively; this quiz to be completed <u>before 6:00 p.m. on Friday, Nov 15</u> to avoid a zero grade *note intentional flexibility of deadline</p>	
11 Nov 20	Public Health Crisis: Case #9 – Canada’s Tainted-Blood Tragedy	<p>Michael Orsini, “The Politics of Naming, Blaming and Claiming: HIV, Hepatitis C and the Emergence of Blood Activism in Canada,” <i>Canadian Journal of Political Science</i> 35, 3 (Sept 2002): 475-498 * <i>1st section of article</i></p> <p>Marcia Martinho Costa, “Unspeakable: The Truth about HIV-tainted blood in Canada,” <i>The Lancet Infectious Diseases</i> 19 (Sept 2019): 942.</p> <p>Research Essay Assignment due 12:30 p.m. on Nov 20 -- Students to upload a digital copy of their assignment to OWL course site <u>before 6:00 p.m. on Nov 22</u> to avoid late penalty *note intentional flexibility of deadline</p>	
12 Nov 27	Surgery: Case #10 – The silicone breast implant controversy	<p>Angela Powers, “Newspaper Coverage of the Breast Implant Controversy,” <i>Women & Health</i> 30,2 (2000): 83-98.</p> <p>Steven Dayan, “Revision Plastic Surgery Reality Television: What’s Good about <i>Botched</i>?” <i>JAMA</i> 319,21 (June 5, 2018): 2156-57.</p>	

13 Dec 4		Wrap Up – What did I learn from these controversial medical cases?	None.
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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 for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.