Inverting the framework begun by physician and literary scholar, Rita Charon, to train medical students and physicians in empathy through close reading of literary texts, this course approaches the medical encounter from interdisciplinary humanist perspectives. The course is a hybrid: as literary scholars, you will read and write critical papers about the assigned health memoirs and essay collections; as experiential thinkers, you will try your hand at writing short creative pieces about your own medical interests and encounters. You will read both patient and practitioner narratives, considering the role of interpretation (a parallel to diagnosis) in understanding the medical and social ambiguities as well as boundaries of sick bodies (including sexuality, gender, race, class, and citizenship). You will study the cultural constructions of diagnosis, misinterpretation, and illness; of disability and invisibility; suffering and empathy; healing, caregiving, and death; and bioethics and social justice. Employing the theories of empathy you’ll study, you will consider your position and responsibility in reading other people’s health narratives.

Course Texts may include:

- Mark Doty, *Still Life with Oyster and Lemon* (Beacon Press, 2001)
- Sonja Huber, *Pain Woman Take Your Keys and Other Essays from a Nervous System* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017)
- Sarah Manguso, *Two Kinds of Decay* (Picador, 2008)
- Arianne Zwartjes, *Detailing Trauma: A Poetic Anatomy* (University of Iowa Press, 2012)
- Stephen Kuusisto, *Planet of the Blind* (Delta, 1988)
- Audre Lorde, *Cancer Journals*
- Teresa Marie Mailhot, *Heart Berries* (Counterpoint, 2018)