Course Syllabus
(v2 on 4/18/18)
for
Ethics, Pointillism, Epidemiology and Epistemology:
EPEE dueling with health science information
FALL Semester 2018

a Fall Semester Course in the First-Year Seminar Program
for the College of Arts and Science (CAS) at NYU

Course Name: Ethics, Pointillism, Epidemiology and Epistemology:
EPEE dueling with health science information
No. of Credits: 4 credits
Course Number: FYSEM-UA 278.001

Year of Curriculum: Freshman year in NYU College of Arts and Science (CAS)

Course Description:
The common citizen is well challenged—if not overly challenged—trying to deal with the flood of
scientific health information as presented in the media. ‘Scientific’ health findings of this week seem to
routinely conflict with the ‘scientific’ health findings of last week. As the movie theme song asked so
poignantly—for the first time some 51 years ago “What’s it all about, Alfie?” This course will explore that
question as related to scientific health information as used both by individuals to make personal life
decisions related to health behaviors as well as by society to protect its citizens via court decisions and
governmental regulations. Concepts from the fields of ethics, art and science will be central to readings and
discussions focused on how to make sense of it all. Beginning with the history and foundation concepts of
bioethics and epidemiology, the course will provide a frame for understanding how to make reasonable
sense of this flood of scientific health information, i.e., what are the strengths and limitations (and misuses)
of this free-flow of scientific health findings in our democratic ‘instant, electronic news’ world. Textbooks
and videos will cover background on the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, truth, polar bears, limes, and rubbish. As
the major course assignment, each student will write a newspaper-style “Op-Ed” article.

Course Director: Ralph V. Katz, DMD, MPH, PhD
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Dates of Course: Tuesday, September 4 – Tuesday, December 11, 2018
Meeting Times and Place:  Tuesdays, 12:30-3:00 PM, room location TBA
Contact Hours:  35 Seminar Hours

Course Requirements/Evaluation:
7 written weekly 2-pp papers = 50%  [all 7 must be turned-in, grade based on best 5 grades]
End-of-Term 3-pp Major paper on Zika = 30%  [due on last class, 12/4]
Final Exam: ‘Take-Home’ 3-pp Paper = 20%  [due on last day of Final Exams]
Course Total: 20 pp of writing 100%


Required Texts:
1)  Rashomon and Other Stories  by A. Ryunasuke, Liveright Publ Corp, 1999  (paperback)  (14 pp)
5)  Science on Trial  by Marcia Angell, MD,  W.W. Norton & Company, 1996  (paperback)  (272 pp)
9)  Zika: the Emerging Epidemic  by Donald McNeil, Jr., WW. Norton & Company, 2016  (paperback)  (208 pp)
10)  All articles on Zika from January-June 2016 in NYTimes, a spiral-bound book compiled by RV Katz  (46 pp)
11)  Truth: Red, White & Black  by Robert Morales and Kyle Baker (a 7 part pre-sequel to Captain America, Marvel Comics, 2004)  (by loan from course instructor, no need to buy)

Total pp for Course        2,266 pp
Average pp/week      162 pp/wk

[texts in BOLD above have a required ‘weekly 2-pp paper’ as part of the reading assignment]

Scientific Journal Articles:

Films to-be-viewed:
1)  ‘Rashomon’ (1950), directed by Akira Kurosawa  (film clips ‘in-class’)
2)  ‘Mississippi Burning’ (1988), directed by Alan Parker  (on You-Tube)
3)  ‘Bad Blood’ (1992), produced by Diverse Productions, Ltd  (film clips ‘in-class’)
4)  ‘Miss Evers’ Boys’ (1997), an HBO movie on You-Tube
5)  ‘President Bill Clinton’s Apology for the Tuskegee Syphilis Study’, CNN news broadcast  (film clips ‘in-class’)


Required 1-on-1 meeting with Course Director:
A 15-minute meeting (mid-Nov & early Dec) for each student to discuss
the student’s perception of, and progress within, the course

Written ‘weekly’ 2-pp papers: (1.5 vertical line spacing; 500 word max/pg as WORD.docx)
All 7 assigned ‘weekly’ 2-page papers are to be 1.15-spaced,…with:
- pg 1 titled: ‘Summary of Story’, and
- pg 2 titled: ‘My Personal View on [assigned topic/question as stated in the syllabus]’
with a 500 word per page MAXIMUM (excluding ‘page title’)….and will be submitted to the
ASSIGNMENTS section in our NYU CLASSES course website…by the listed due date/time.
DUE: on dates as given in Course Syllabus

Major End-of-Term 3-pp Paper: (1.5 vertical line spacing; 1,500 word max as WORD.docx)
This paper will address the assigned question “What differences and what similarities exist
between these two below listed source documents, and is one more ‘impactful’ in telling
the story—and if so, how?”:
1) Zika: the Emerging Epidemic by Donald McNeil, Jr.,
2) the spiral-bound book compiled by RV Katz of all NYTimes articles on Zika from Jan-June 2016
DUE: on 12/4, the last day of class

Final Exam ‘Take-Home’ 3-pp paper: (1.5 vertical line spacing; 1,500 word max as WORD.docx)
This will be a formal written essay on topics or specific questions assigned by the course
instructor related to either a specific reading or readings, or to an idea or problem associated
with the issues raised in this course.
DUE: on last day of Final Exams, Dec 21

[N.B., all versions of papers MUST BE SUBMITTED as a WORD.docx]

Use of ‘Electronic HANDSHAKE’ for written class assignments submitted by email:
‘Handshakes’ are a form of politeness….and ensure that documents sent electronically are—
in fact—received. In this course we will be polite…as well as protective!! So, whenever you
submit a written assignment to me, the Course Director, I will send you back an ‘Electronic
HANDSHAKE’ acknowledging that I have, indeed, received your submitted work. If you do
NOT get an ‘Electronic HANDSHAKE’ (hereafter referred to as an ‘e-Handshake’) from me
within 24 hours, assume I did NOT get your assignment…and re-send it as a ‘2nd sending’ asking
overtly for an ‘e-Handshake’ from me. Likewise, if I send you back a ‘graded or edited written
paper’, send me an ‘e-Handshake’ so I KNOW you got it. Real polite like! But mostly to ensure
that ‘what we sent has—in fact—been received’ …..and time (precious time!) is not ‘a-wasting’
under false assumptions.
**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity Statement:** NYU Abu Dhabi expects its students to adhere to the highest possible standards of scholarship and academic conduct as presented on this NYU website as official policy:

https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu.as/cas/academic.integrity.html

Students that engage in behaviors that violate the standards of academic integrity will be subject to review and may face penalties as set out in the NYUAD policy.

**RVK comment on Plagiarism...and academe’s failing attempt to ‘control’ it in today’s world:**

_in this modern, global, multicultural world of ‘online’, ‘social media’ and ‘blogs’, some confusion arises at times in a student’s mind whether it is necessary to ‘cite’ a source. First, let’s remember that there is no culture on this planet in which ‘taking credit for someone else’s ideas or writing….or possessions’ is well-regarded (except for criminal cultures!). Second, if you have any doubt as to whether a citation ‘is needed’, that very doubt suggests it is...so cited it! Remember: this is no penalty for ‘over-citation’, but severe penalties for omitting a required citation._

- **Operational Rule of Thumb:** “IF IN DOUBT, CITE IT” -

**PARTICIPATION**

*Active participation in class discussions is expected and highly encouraged.*

As a class we’re striving to create a inquiring and thinking class atmosphere....and our success hinges on your engaged preparation and active participation. This means students are expected not only to do the assigned reading and writing assignments, they are expected to come to class having completed assigned readings and ready to think, write, and speak regularly in class.  

[N.B., ‘participation’ is NOT graded separately, as it is fully expected that all...
students will fully participate in class discussions and that the resulting enrichment and insights gained will materially improve their written papers. But mostly, the absence of ‘participation’ is a ‘wasted opportunity to grow’ in thinking and articulation of one’s own ideas, which is the most critical skill to acquire in a liberal arts education."

### COURSE SESSIONS & TOPICS

*all classes meet from 12:30 – 3:00 PM on Tuesdays, room location TBA*

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<th>date</th>
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<th>SESSION TOPIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ETHICS I</td>
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<td>Part I: - Welcome, Course Logistics &amp; Introductions</td>
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<td>- Introduction to Course Concept: ‘What’s it all about, Alfie?’</td>
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<td>[define: Ethics, Pointillism, Epidemiology &amp; Epistemology]</td>
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<td><em>Assignment:</em> - begin reading <em>Bad Blood</em> by Jim Jones….complete book by 9/17</td>
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<td>9/11</td>
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<td>ETHICS II</td>
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<td>Part I: discussion of <em>Bad Blood</em>…. opening 4 chapters by Jim Jones</td>
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<td>Part II: film-clips of Mississippi Burning</td>
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<td><em>Assignment:</em> - complete reading <em>Bad Blood</em> by Jim Jones….by 9/17</td>
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<td>- prepare 2 page paper on <em>Bad Blood</em> (i.e., the BOOK!) (due on 9/17)</td>
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<td>1 pg: summary of story/events</td>
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<td>1 pg: your personal view on ‘why &amp; how it happened’ ….and: could it occur again?</td>
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<td>(N.B., all assigned weekly “2 page papers” are to be 1.5-spaced vertically,…with pg 1 titled: ‘Summary of Story’, and pg 2 titled: ‘My Personal View on [assigned topic/question]’ with 500 words per page MAXIMUM (excluding ‘page title’)….and will be submitted as a WORD.docx to the Assignments section of our NYU CLASSES course website by the due date/time.</td>
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<td>9/18</td>
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<td>ETHICS III</td>
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<td>Part I: view Bad Blood video clips by Diverse Productions, Ltd</td>
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<td>Part II: discussion of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (TSS): Could it happen again?</td>
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<td><em>Assignments:</em> - read short-story ‘In a Grove’ in the book ‘Rashomon and Other Stories’</td>
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<td>- prepare 2 page paper on ‘In a Grove’ in <em>Rashomon</em> (due 9/24)</td>
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<td>1 pg: summary of story/events</td>
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<td>1 pp: your personal view on ‘what this parable is all about’</td>
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<td>9/25</td>
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<td>ETHICS IV</td>
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<td>Part I: view film clips of ‘Rashomon’ by Kurosawa</td>
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Part II: -discussion: what is the relevance of ‘Rashomon’ to the TSS

Assignments: - read 2 graphic novels

1) Incognegro by Mat Johnson

- write 1 pg paper on “Graphic Novels: how this genre of novel tells the story differently”
  (due 10/1)

10/2 5 ETHICS and EPIDEMIOLOGY I
Part I: lecture “Impact of the ‘Legacy’ of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study” (TSS)
- impact of TSS ‘legacy’ on Black & White U.S. citizens: ‘the gut’ vs ‘the head including the TSS Legacy Information Stream’
- impact of TSS on national and world-wide bioethical standards

Part II: discussion of 2 Graphic Novels: Incognegro and Truth: Red, White & Black

Assignments: - read Foreword, Preface and Introduction sections of ‘The Search for the Legacy of the USPHS Syphilis Study at Tuskegee’
- watch (online or rent) HBO movie at home: “Miss Ever’s Boys”
- be prepared to identify & discuss 2 key ‘new story elements’ that appear in this HBO movie version vs true historical story as told in Bad Blood by Jim Jones
  .....including ‘why’ these 2 key ‘new story elements’ were introduced

10/9 - NO CLASS - due to Legislative Day

10/16 6 ETHICS and EPIDEMIOLOGY II
Part I: discussion of Foreword, Preface, and Introduction of “The Search...at Tuskegee”
  (including presentation on the Mistrust in Research 12 year gap hypothesis)
Part II: discussion of HBO movie “Miss Evers’ Boys”
Part III: combo video ‘Bad Blood’ by Diverse Productions, Ltd
  + Presidential Apology (by CNN news)

Assignments: - read Essays #1,2,3,10,11,14 + any 2 other Essays of your choice (specify which ones) in ‘The Search for the Legacy of the USPHS Syphilis Study at Tuskegee’
- write 1 pg paper on ‘The Search for the Legacy...Tuskegee’ (due 10/25)
  1 pg: ‘Which Essay impacted you the most…and why’

10/23 7 ETHICS and EPIDEMIOLOGY III
Part I: discussion of the 8 read Essays in “The Search for the Legacy of...at Tuskegee”
Part II: discussion of the assigned topic: “What is the ‘Legacy’ of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study?”

Assignments:
- read ‘Science on Trial’ (including Afterword)
- write 2 pg paper on ‘Science on Trial’ (due 10/29)
  1 pg: summary of story/events
1 pp: your personal view on ‘how an epidemiologic story unfolds sequentially over time’

10/30 8 POINTILLISM and EPIDEMIOLOGY I
   Part I: discussion of Science on Trial
   Part II: lecture: “Pointillism, Epidemiology and Disease Causation”
      - Pointillism: a painting technique reveals how to perceive scientific findings
      - Epidemiology: What it is.....what it can do...what it cannot do
   Assignment: - read ‘How We Know What Isn’t So’ [HWKWIS]
               - write 2 pg paper on ‘How We Know What Isn’t So’ (due 11/5)
                 1 pg: summary of book
                 1 pp: your personal view on what this means for
                        how people absorb and react to ‘health news’

11/6 9 EPISTEMOLOGY I
   Part I: discussion of ‘How We Know What Isn’t So’
   Part II: lecture on research into ‘How do we know what IS so?’.....the TLP Questionnaire
   Assignment: - read ‘How to Lie with Statistics’

11/13 10 EPISTEMOLOGY II
   Part I: discussion of ‘How to Lie with Statistics’
   Part II: discussion of public perceptions/misperceptions of risk in life
      - The Polar Bear Strategy (only RVK Summary Sheets)
        using ‘principles’ from ‘HWKWIS’ + ‘The Polar Bear Strategy’
   Assignment: - read ‘Rubbish: The Archeology of Garbage’
               - write 2 pg paper on ‘Rubbish’ (due 11/19)
                 1 pg: summary of book
                 1 pp: your personal view on implications for appropriateness and
                        efficiency of ‘do-gooder’ activities by the public

11/20 11 ETHICS, POINTILLISM, EPIDEMIOLOGY, and EPISTEMOLOGY I
   [ EPEE Dueling: the 4-way Intersection]
   Part I: discussion of ‘Rubbish: the Archeology of Garbage’
   Assignment: - read ‘Limeys’ (due 11/27)
               - write 2 pg paper on ‘Limeys’
                 1 pg: summary of book
I pp: parallels between what this book says about the role of politics (i.e., vested interests) as they influence ‘public policy’ decisions, and today’s on-going debate on ‘universal health coverage’ in the U.S.

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY on Thursday-Sunday, Nov 22-25

11/27 12 ETHICS, POINTILLISM, EPIDEMIOLOGY, and EPISTEMOLOGY II
   Part I: discussion of ‘Limeys’
   Part II: appropriate film clips
   Part III: dissemination & explanation of the ‘take-home’ FINAL EXAM
   (which is due by email to ralph.katz@nyu.edu by 9 AM on 12/17)

Assignment:
   - read 3 articles on scientific investigation into Legacy of the TSS:

12/4 13 ETHICS, POINTILLISM, EPIDEMIOLOGY, and EPISTEMOLOGY III
   Part I: discussion of 3 assigned TLP articles with focus on how research investigates such a complex issue as ‘the Legacy’ of the TSS

12/11 14 Part I: discussion of ‘course overview & summary
   Part II: courses evaluations: NYU online form + RVK paper form

.... the end!