

# Archival Expeditions Module for Doctor's Stories

## Cure: Then and Now

Instructor: Kimberley Bridgette Dimitriadis

### Rationale:

For 'Cure: Then and Now', I will use historical objects, manuscripts, and advertisements to help students understand how the fictions they've encountered in the classroom are supported by the physical instruments and documentation in circulation prior to or at the time of writing. Through an encounter with the medical archives, it's my goal for students to develop a deeper understanding of how fiction is responding and contributing to a wider field of discourse that is at least partly responsible for shaping medical practices and thought. Students will be encouraged to ask:

- What can objects, manuscripts, and newspaper advertisements tell us about how practitioners and patients understood 'cure' in their given context(s)?
- What narratives do material objects convey, and how should we approach these materials?
- Do past practices and interpretations of cure determine how we understand the role of medical practices today?

### Module Learning Objectives:

1. Students will develop empirical research skills. The module is designed to teach students how to use their sensory experience and reasoning skills to deduce information about a material artifact and, by extension, its context.
2. Students will acquire analytical and critical thinking skills. *Doctors' Stories* focuses on the analysis and interpretation of works of fiction, theoretical material, and historical texts and objects. We want students to understand how all such material works in tandem to determine the forms and rhythms of medical practices.
3. The module and accompanying assignment are designed to teach students how to establish a dialogue between the past and the present.
4. Students will obtain the knowledge they will need to navigate the library and its special collections. The module will not only introduce students to the resources and support available to them at the Rubenstein, but students will also learn basic skills, such as how to request items and where to find help as well as how to optimize their search results.

## Session 1: What is Cure?

**Location: Classroom (Allen building, TBC)**

### Session Timeline:

**15 minutes:** Introductory lecture given by instructor

**30 minutes:** Instructor-led discussion (open-ended question and answer format)

**20 minutes:** Group work in class

**15 minutes:** Share findings from group work

### Session Objectives:

1. Students will critically respond to texts during in-class discussion
2. Students will recognize and describe common literary terms used for critical engagement with fiction
3. Students will identify the key concerns of the assigned short stories and place them in their general historical context

### Description:

This session is designed to introduce the topic of cure to the students and to familiarize students with several of the themes that they will be asked to think about in the archives. Prior to class, students will read two short stories: Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The Birthmark' (1843) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 'The Yellow Wallpaper' (1892). This session comprises of three activities: a short lecture given by the instructor to historicize the short stories and furnish students with information about their authors; instructor-led discussion centered on questions of gender and cure and how literature in particular represents, responds to, and problematizes these concerns; group work in class, with the final fifteen minutes dedicated to sharing the students' findings.

### Introductory Lecture:

This lecture will cover:

- Biographical information about Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Publication details of the two stories
- Historical information about nineteenth-century America
- Social expectations of women in nineteenth-century society
- Information about hysteria and the rest cure
- Preliminary information about the short story form

### Instructor-Led Discussion:

In order to link the short stories to the topic of cure, the discussion will begin with a brainstorming exercise during which the students will be asked to define what cure means using examples from the readings. On the board, we will create a mind-map around "cure". We will ask:

- What is cure?
- What are the objectives of cure/what does it mean to cure someone?
- Does cure mean the same thing to doctors and patients?

Because we want students to critically respond to the texts they have been assigned, the class will be asked to think about how literary works shape and respond to their historical

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context, and particularly to questions of gender and health. We want the discussion to flow organically, and for students to engage with one another, therefore the following questions are to serve only as a guide to facilitate discussion. Building from our mind-map around “cure”, as a class, we will ask of the short stories:

- What ideas of cure to these texts put forward?
- Who is being cured, and who is performing cure?
- Does cure mean the same thing to the different characters depicted?
- How do these texts narrate cure from different subject positions?
- What kinds of language or formal techniques do these writers use to convey ideas of cure?
- What links can we draw from the biographical information about our authors to their literary output? What might be some of the limitations of a strictly biographical approach to these literary works?
- Formal considerations: what kind of text is a short story? What can a short story do that a novel or a poem cannot? Why would our authors choose to write these tales about processes of treatment and cure as short stories?

### **Group Activity:**

In small groups of 2-3, answer the following questions. Before you start, choose someone to be the scribe and someone who will present your findings:

1. Choose a character from one of the short stories
2. Is this character being cured or attempting to cure someone?
3. What idea of cure does this character promote or represent? How should we interpret this depiction of cure?
  - Support your answer by providing textual evidence and identifying the formal technique(s) used in your example(s) by way of answering this question (e.g. narrative voice, irony, narrative perspective, tone, metaphor, etc.)

The final fifteen minutes of class will be dedicated to sharing our responses.

## Session 2: Introduction to Archival Artifacts

### Location: Rubenstein Reading Room (TBC)

#### Session Timeline:

- 10 minutes:** Explanation of session
  - 20 minutes:** Groups look at object #1
  - 20 minutes:** Groups look at object #2
  - 20 minutes:** Share findings from group work
- (10-minute buffer built in for groups to move around)

#### Session Objectives:

1. Students will develop empirical research skills. This session is designed to teach students how to use their sensory experience and deductive reasoning skills to deduce information about a material artifact and, by extension, its context
2. Students will learn to manage contradictory perspectives and ideas. They will discover that disagreements enable scholars to provide more accurate accounts and construct stronger arguments about their objects of study
3. Students will gain experience of working collaboratively in small groups
4. Students will present and defend their opinions, and explain how they arrived at their conclusions based on the limited information they were given

#### Description:

In small groups of 2-4, students will be given a worksheet with a list of questions plus a particular object, book, or newspaper/magazine advertisement to investigate. Each group will spend time with at least two different items. Students are not allowed to Google or otherwise research their items; they must answer the questions on the worksheet in collaboration with their peers. This activity is designed for students to use their empirical, deductive, and collaborative problem-solving skills, and to allow students to obtain practical experience in physically handling archival items from the get-go. The instructor will walk around the room and consult with groups to make sure their answers are on the right track during the allocated time.

#### Group Work:

Students will work together to answer questions from a worksheet (see Appendix A: Worksheet(s) 1 and 2 for sample worksheets)

Items selected for examination include:

1. Bow saw [from the Dr. Josiah Charles Trent Collection]
2. Collection of 17 medical bottles from the 19th-early 20th century [from the George D. Wilbanks Collection]
3. ‘Warner’s Safe Cure’ [from the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History]
4. ‘Chamberlain’s Liniment’ [from the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History]
5. ‘Perkins’s Tractors’ [from the History of Medicine Artifacts Collection] incl. 2 additional documents
6. ‘The Fox and the Goose’ [from the William H. Helfand Collection]
7. ‘The Out-Door Girl’ [from the William H. Helfand Collection]

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8. Bloodletting fleam in leather case [from the Beyer Family Collection]
9. 'The Anatomy of the Human Bones and Nerves' (1741) by Alexander Monro

**Concluding Discussion:**

At the end of the session, we will share results as a group. We will think about the similarities and differences in the answers the groups came up with when answering questions about the same item. How and why did these differences arise?

The instructor will prompt students to share any difficulties they may have had in answering the questions, and the strategies they came up with when they found themselves stuck. Students should also be encouraged to share what parts of the exercise they found most interesting, enjoyable, or surprising.

## Session 3: Gender and Cure

### Location: Rubenstein Reading Room (TBC)

#### Session Timeline:

- 25 minutes:** Library/Archive Skills Information Session  
**35 minutes:** Lecture and Discussion on Gender and Cure  
**20 minutes:** Requesting items for Session 4 and 5

#### Session Objectives:

1. Students will develop analytical and critical thinking skills related to the analysis and interpretation of works of fiction, theoretical material, and historical texts and objects. We want students to understand how all such material works in tandem to determine the forms and rhythms of medical practices
2. Students will compare practices related to women's health across time, thereby establishing a dialogue between the past and the present
3. Students will obtain the knowledge they will need to navigate the library and the special collections
4. Students will be introduced to the resources and support available to them at Duke's Rubenstein Library

#### Description:

This session is designed around two main components. The first is an introduction to the library website, the special collections website, and information about how to optimize search results when using these resources—ideally to be delivered by a member of the library staff. Students will have a chance to put into practice what they have learned at the end of the session: the students (in their groups) will request a particular item from the special collections that they will research for Sessions 4 and 5. The second component is a lecture and discussion about 'Gender and Cure,' in which we will think about nineteenth-century women's health, guided by our prior reading and discussion of Hawthorne and Perkins Gilman.

#### Library/Archive Skills Information Session:

A library skills information session to cover what kinds of material students can find in the archives, how students can access those items, and strategies for finding them by using digital search engines. We will also discuss what to expect when working with archives, including possible challenges students might face (e.g., deciphering handwriting).

#### Gender and Cure:

The instructor will present a lecture on gender and cure, focusing particularly on the nineteenth century, but also extending the discussion to the present day. The lecture is designed to be interactive and will draw on items from Duke's Rubenstein Library to demonstrate certain concepts. Engaging with items from the History of Medicine collection (including the 'ivory anatomical manikins' from the Trent Collection and 'Obstetrics and gynecology instruments' from the Fritz Collection) will allow students to think about how institutions and material objects have codified women's health over time.

During our discussion, students will be encouraged to consider how these artifacts construct a particular idea of female subjectivity and the female body, how these items

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potentially contribute to producing the condition that they are designed to heal, and how each promotes a particular idea of what women's health is or should be. Topics that will be covered during the lecture and discussion include:

- Historical taboos about women's health and childbearing
- Hysteria and its cures (including the rest cure)
- The gendering of mental illness (exhaustion, etc.)
- Ongoing issues related to women's health—how have these ideas persisted?
- How do these texts and objects narrate women's health?
- How might fiction be able to do criticize, problematize, or support ideas of cure in comparison to the items we have seen in the archives (such as advertisements, medical texts)?
- Considering Hawthorne and Perkins Gilman, how do male and female authors differ in their representation of women's health? Why do we think that is?

### **Requesting Items for the Assignment**

The last twenty minutes of the session is designed to bring the first two components together. Students will work in their groups to select an item from Duke's History of Medicine Collection (from a list pre-selected by the instructor) that they will be researching in Sessions 4 and 5. The students will then request this item to the Rubenstein Reading Room for the following session.

The assignment will also be handed out and explained to the class in preparation for the following sessions.

## Session 4: Gender and Cure

### Location: Rubenstein Reading Room

#### Session Timeline:

**20 minutes:** Check-in to Reading Room

**50 minutes:** Work on Assignment

**10 minutes:** Discussion

#### Session Objectives:

1. Students will develop analytical and critical thinking skills related to the analysis and interpretation of works of fiction, theoretical material, and historical texts and objects. We want students to understand how all such material works in tandem to determine the forms and rhythms of medical practices
2. Students will establish connections between the experience of working with archival resources and their own research strategies and approaches
3. Students will gain experience of working collaboratively in small groups
4. Students will gain practical experience with archival research and analysis
5. Students will deduce what types of secondary sources are reputable and trustworthy, and how to use these sources either to support or to repudiate their arguments

#### Description:

This session will focus on teaching students how to research and investigate objects. Having requested their items in the last session, students will spend the first twenty minutes checking into the reading room and receiving their items. They will then begin investigating, deciphering, reading, and researching their objects. (Given the different objects on offer, each group's work will be different. For example, the letter will need to be transcribed, the advertisements will need to be researched, portions of the autobiography to be read etc.). The instructor will walk around and facilitate the group's investigation. The assignment is designed for students to develop their research skills, and to put into practice the skills and methods they have learned during their experience so far with archival objects.

#### Assignment:

In the Rubenstein, you will work in groups and select an object from a shortlist of objects. In groups, you will write up an exhibition card for an online exhibition titled 'Gender and Cure in Duke's History of Medicine Collection'. Images of the item, including transcriptions of letters if applicable, plus a short exhibition card (150-200 words) will be uploaded onto an Omeka platform, using JS timeline.

- Your label will be read both by people who are experts on the subject and those without any prior information so be sure to choose language that is clear, concise, essential, and avoids jargon.
- Select information that provides contextual significance about the object and its place in the exhibition.
- Keep the order of information logical and sequential, and include key points of interest about the object or item to give important story line information.
- Keep in mind audience fatigue and stick to a 150-200 word limit.



- Remember that the theme of the exhibition is ‘Gender and Cure’—so make sure to include in your exhibition card how this object, or how a particular institution related to the item, defines or produces what it means to “cure” problems associated with women’s health.

Items available for examination include:

1. Letter from L.G. Lawrence to S.W. Mitchell, April 24, 1906 [from the Silas Weir Mitchell Papers]
  - Box 2, Folder #25
2. Female manikin (Item htrent0026) [from the Dr. Josiah Charles Trent Collection]
3. Female manikin (Item htrent0029) [from the Dr. Josiah Charles Trent Collection]
4. Dr. John Hooper's female pills (1743) (Item hbeyer0029) [from the Beyer Family Collection]
5. ‘The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: An Autobiography’ (1935)
6. J Marion Sims’ speculum with duck bill blades (Item hlinda0011) [from the Lindahl Collection]
7. Advertisements for vinyl outfit for weigh loss [from the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History]
8. ‘Dr. A. W. Chase’s Nerve Pills’ Advertisement [from the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History]
9. Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière : service de [J.M.] Charcot [History of Medicine Collection]

### **Discussion:**

In the final ten minutes of this session, students will be encouraged to discuss their findings thus far, to let the instructor know of any difficulties that they might be facing, and to garner solutions to these problems from the instructor and class.

## **Session 5: Gender and Cure**

### **Location: Rubenstein Reading Room**

#### **Session Timeline:**

**20 minutes:** Check-in to Reading Room

**40 minutes:** Work on Assignment

**20 minutes:** Upload Image(s) and Exhibition Card to Website

#### **Session Objectives:**

1. Students will develop analytical and critical thinking skills related to the analysis and interpretation of works of fiction, theoretical material, and historical texts and objects. We want students to understand how all such material works in tandem to determine the forms and rhythms of medical practices
2. Students will establish connections between the experience of working with archival resources and their own research strategies and approaches
3. Students will gain experience of working collaboratively in small groups
4. Students will gain practical experience with archival research and analysis
5. Students will deduce what types of secondary sources are reputable and trustworthy, and how to use these sources either to support or to repudiate their arguments

#### **Description:**

This session is designed for students to have additional time with their selected items, and to complete the assignment they will present in Session 6. Time will be allotted to uploading the items to the Omeka platform in the final twenty minutes of the session.

## Session 6: Presentations and Conclusion

### Location: Classroom (Allen building, TBC)

#### Session Timeline:

**60 minutes:** Class Presentations

**10 minutes:** Conclusion

#### Session Objectives:

1. Students will present their ideas in a clear, logical, and concise manner
2. Student will reflect on difficulties they faced in interpreting and/or researching their archival objects
3. Students will evaluate how they overcame any difficulties faced when dealing with archival material
4. Students will determine how archival objects can assist us in evaluating our ideas of “cure” and how these ideas have shaped, and continue to shape, medical practice

#### Description:

In this final session, students will have the chance to present their exhibition cards to the class. We will then conclude by discussing what we’ve learnt about cure and about working in the archives.

#### Presentation:

Students will be asked to address the following questions in their presentations:

- Give a brief overview of your object
- How does this object fit into the exhibit ‘Gender and Cure in Duke’s History of Medicine Collection?’
- What idea of cure does your item promote or suggest? What are the characteristics of this method of cure?
- How has this idea of cure continued to shape medical practice?
- Reflect on any troubles or difficulties you faced in interpreting and/or researching your item
- Explain and evaluate how you overcame these obstacles

#### Conclusion:

Questions for the concluding discussion:

1. What is the value of working with objects and items from the archive? What kinds of things did you learn from archival objects that you wouldn’t have been able to learn from a book?
2. To what extent have your ideas of what it means to “cure” someone (which we came up with in Session 1) been influenced by your work in the archives?

## Appendix A: Sample Worksheet 1

### Special Topics in Language and Literature: Doctor's Stories

English 390S

Module: Cure: Then and Now

Session 2: Introduction to Archival Artifacts

In small groups of 2-4 answer the questions on this worksheet. Please do not Google or otherwise research the items; you must answer the questions on the worksheet in collaboration with your group. Put your empirical, deductive, and collaborative problem-solving skills to the test! At the end of the exercise, we will come together to share our results, and to see if our deductions were correct.

Item: 'Warner's Safe Cure' from the John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History.

1. What is this artifact? Can you guess at when it was made? How do you know?
2. Who might have produced it and why?
3. What is this item intended to cure? How do you know this?
4. What idea of cure does this item promote? What are the characteristics of this method of cure?
5. What kind of information would you want to know to make sense of this item, and how might you obtain it?

## Sample Worksheet 2

### Special Topics in Language and Literature: Doctor's Stories

#### English 390S

#### Module: Cure: Then and Now

#### Session 2: Introduction to Archival Artifacts

In small groups of 2-4 answer the questions on this worksheet. Please do not Google or otherwise research the items; you must answer the questions on the worksheet in collaboration with your group. Put your empirical, deductive, and collaborative problem-solving skills to the test! At the end of the exercise, we will come together to share our results, and to see if our deductions were correct.

Item: 'The Fox and the Goose' from 'The William H. Helfand Collection of Medical Prints and Posters

1. What is this item? Can you guess at when it was made? How do you know?
2. Who might have produced it and why?
3. What is this item intended to cure, if anything? How do you know this?
4. What idea of cure does this item problematize or promote? What are the characteristics of this method of cure?
5. What kind of information would you want to know to make sense of this object, and how might you obtain it?