


# LITERATURE & MEDICINE: MEDICINE, RACE, & GENDER

GNDR\_ST 361 & ENGLISH 381

SPRING  
2023



We often think of the humanities and sciences as opposite pursuits. While the humanities seem to focus on subjectivity and feeling, we see the sciences as objective and fact-based. Yet attending to the history of medicine demands a troubled acknowledgement that medical inquiry both shapes and is itself shaped by cultural assumptions about race and gender. Indeed, critics have pointed time and again to how the seeming impartiality of medical fact reveals biases about which kinds of bodies feel pain and who is prone to certain diseases, distinctions that have been assigned moral and social meaning. In this class, we will read literature about medical encounters in order to investigate how ideas about race and gender shape medical experiences. How do these individual accounts reflect larger structural injustices? What kinds of barriers and assumptions do women and people of color face when they receive treatment? What about people seeking gender affirming care? Beginning with the nineteenth century and moving towards the present day, we will examine the surprising history of how medical knowledge often depended on the exploitation of racialized bodies, grapple with the tangled enmeshment of femininity and illness, and explore how claims about medicalized bodies became a metric for citizenship.

Ilana Larkin

---

TTh 3:30-4:50pm  
Kresge Hall 2-329