This module explores literary representations of health and sickness. Our understanding of illness is not simply determined by physical symptoms but influenced by class, gender, and ethnicity, and perceived differently by patients, practitioners, and policy-makers. Topics include anxiety, disability, euthanasia, the doctor-patient relation, pain, and mental health.

Together we will read a selection of short literary texts by authors such as A.S. Byatt, J.M. Coetzee, and Doris Lessing. You will be introduced to a selection of material from the history, philosophy and sociology of medicine. We will also reflect on the rise of narrative medicine and the requirement from the medical sciences for practice-based evidence.

No medical knowledge required.
6. Project Training Session
12. The Sick Role: J.G. Ballard, ‘Minus One’ (1963)
Assessment

1. Proposal (10%)
2. Annotated Bibliography (10%)
3. Final Essay (40%)

Your essay will defend an original thesis about two of the texts read in class and forge interdisciplinary links between literature and the history, sociology, or philosophy of medicine. Plenty of advice and support will be provided through tutorials, office hours, and constructive feedback on the formative proposal and bibliography.

4. Special Project (40%)
You will be invited to reflect on the literary texts studied for the module in relation to a real-world public health issue. You can film yourself, or take stills and put them together with text on powerpoint, or make posters. You can even create an installation, or paint, or draw or use digital media, as long as you forge a connection between the arts and humanities and current debates on health and healthcare.