Medicine and the Five Senses

Meetings: Online via Zoom, Thursdays, 5-6pm, March 2-April 6, 2023

Course Instructor: Gideon Manning, Ph.D (Gideon.Manning@csmc.edu)

Course Description:

Medicine studies the senses, works to repair them when they are lost or damaged, and utilizes them in training, diagnosis, and therapy. This course will examine medicine’s reliance on the five senses, moving quickly from Greek Antiquity and the European Renaissance to the rise of the modern physical exam in the nineteenth-century and then to the present, where technology has stepped into the space between healthcare providers and their patients. One obvious consequence of technology’s expanding footprint has been the elevation of sight and visualization over the other senses in the presentation of data gleaned from technology. Another has been less direct contact with patients, especially with the rise of telehealth. In addition to learning about these consequences, the course will consider the positives and negatives we might assign to the ever changing and current role of the five senses in medicine.

Learning outcomes:

1. Understand the evolution of our reliance on the senses in medical theory and practice.
2. Appreciate the technological changes driving the development of medicine and patient care.
3. Apply medical history to understand the current state of medicine and its likely future.

Schedule of Topics (subject to revision)

Week 1. Introduction (March 2, 2023)

Week 2. The art of anatomy (March 9) – Guest Lecture: Monique Kornell, PhD, CSMC
Readings: M. Kemp, “‘The mark of truth’: looking and learning in some anatomical illustrations from the Renaissance and eighteenth century”

Week 3. The physical exam and the rise of technology (March 15, **Wednesday class**)  

Week 4. The senses in nursing (March 23) – Guest Lecture: TBD
Readings: M. Sandelowski, Devices & Desires: Gender, Technology, and American Nursing (Selections)

Week 5. The senses in surgery (March 30)
Readings: G. Brieger, “Sense and sensibility in late nineteenth-century surgery in America,” and E. Henderson, “Surgical robots to incorporate senses comparable or even superior to humans”

Week 6. 20th-Century Technology and Telehealth (April 6) – Guest Lecture: TBD
Readings: J. Greene, The Doctor Who Wasn’t There: Technology, History, and the Limits of Telehealth (Selections)