

Essay 2

First draft (800-1000 words): 09/24, Bring 3 hard copies to class

Final draft (1000-1250 words): 10/03

How does metaphor obscure or illuminate our understanding of suffering, pain, disease or illness?

Metaphors are a fundamental mechanism through which we understand the world around us, especially in the face of complexity. The use of metaphor in the medical field is pervasive. According to *The Atlantic*, one [study](#) from 2010 “found that physicians use metaphors in almost two-thirds of their conversations with patients who have serious illnesses. Physicians who used more metaphors were seen as better communicators. Patients reported less trouble understanding them, and felt as though their doctor made sure they understood their conditions” (“[The Trouble with Medicine’s Metaphors](#)”).

But metaphor can do more than help us understand; it can shape our perception. Consider the common use of militaristic language in medicine. Cancer is the *enemy*, an *invader* that doctor and patient must *battle*, *fight*, *overcome*, *destroy*, *annihilate* and/or *eradicate*. Does this adversarial language help patients and doctors? The outcomes are victory or defeat, should we call terminal patients and their doctors *losers*? Are they *defeated* by their disease? Are patients managing chronic conditions *POW’s*?

For this essay, you will focus on two **concrete** examples of metaphor: one from a topic section text, and one that you have heard, read, seen somewhere else. Describe them exactly. For each metaphor, delineate the two things being compared (metaphor is a comparison of two things). And, what properties are transferred from the first entity (usually the more concrete) to the second (usually the more abstract). Then widen your scope, discuss how each metaphor shapes our understanding of pain, suffering, disease or illness. And whether these metaphors representative of how we as a society understand these issues?

When composing a comparative essay, be aware of:

- **Frame of reference:** The frame of reference may consist of an idea, theme, question, problem, or theory; a group of similar things from which you extract two for special attention.
- **Grounds for comparison:** The rationale behind your choice. Why are you comparing the two things? Where did you read it or hear it?
- **Thesis:** Thesis in a comparative essay depends on how the two things you've chosen to compare actually relate to one another. Do they extend, corroborate (that is confirm or reinforce), complicate, contradict, correct, or debate one another?

Format: The essay should appear traditional (MLA guidelines *The Norton Field Guide for Writing* or the [Purdue OWL](#)) on its face; however, you are encouraged to add interactivity to the text by using hyperlinks. You can link to articles that you quote in the essay, and/or interviews, videos, images, and/or audio files directly related to your analysis. Interactive elements within the text are an excellent way to assemble and save sources related to your writing so that you can revisit them for other projects. Must contain complete parenthetical citations and a works cited list.