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Workshop Presentation:

“Illness Narratives, HIV/AIDS, and Serial Drama”

Narratives of illness constitute a significant sub-genre of both fictional and non-fictional writing, encompassing such works as Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* and Jill Bolte Taylor's 2008 *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*. In the 21st century, media representations are increasingly important, with television now the leading source of information worldwide about health, disease, and epidemics like HIV/AIDS.

Taking this body of work as its context, this workshop examines representations of illness in television soap operas, a popular format employed globally to both educate and entertain. I use my own work on HIV/AIDS to situate soap operas within general media coverage of the epidemic, assess their specific “cultural work,” and contrast them with other forms of media coverage. Exploring variations on the form, I look closely at three very different TV soaps: *General Hospital* (U.S.A.), *Soul City* (S. Africa), and *Verbotene Liebe* (Germany).

Paula A. Treichler teaches social medicine, cultural and media studies, and feminist theory in the Institute of Communications Research and the Department of Media and Cinema Studies, the Gender and Women's Studies Program, and the College of Medicine, at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is also affiliated with the Campus Honors Program, the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, the Center for Writing Studies, and the Center for African Studies. She holds a BA from Antioch College (which included a year in India studying philosophy at Madras Christian College) and a PhD in linguistics and psycholinguistics from the University of Rochester.

Her book on the HIV/AIDS epidemic, *How To Have Theory in an Epidemic: Cultural Chronicles of AIDS*, was published by Duke University Press in 1999. Among her other books are *A Feminist Dictionary* with Cheris Kramarae (Pandora 1985), *For Alma Mater: Theory and Practice in Feminist Scholarship*, co-edited with Cheris Kramarae and Beth Stafford (University of Illinois Press 1985), *Language, Gender, and Professional Writing: Theoretical Approaches and Guidelines for Nonsexist Language* with Francine Wattman Frank (Modern Language Association, 1989), *Cultural Studies* with Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Routledge 1992), *The Visible Woman: Imaging Technologies, Gender, and Science* with Lisa Cartwright and Constance Penley (New York University Press 1998), and *Medicine's Moving Pictures*, co-edited with Leslie Reagan and Nancy Tomes (University of Rochester Press, 2007). Her work has appeared in such journals as *October*, *Science*, *Art Forum*, *Journal of Communication*, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, and *Transition*, and in many edited anthologies. She is presently completing *How To Use a Condom: The Trojan Story*, a cultural history of condoms in the U.S. since 1873.

Professor Treichler has held invited faculty appointments at the University of Cincinnati (English Dept), the University of Iowa (Communications and Film), the University of California at Santa Barbara (Women's Studies), Tulane University (NEH Seminar on Cultural Studies), and, as a Senior Fellow in the Society for the Humanities, Cornell University (feminist theory). She regularly gives lectures, workshops, and seminars at academic institutions across and outside the United States including Canada, the UK, Germany, Brazil, and Mexico; in 2004 she spent three weeks on a learning, lecture, and seminar tour in South Africa, and in 2005 spent three weeks giving talks and seminars in Australia. She has served on the UIUC campus budget oversight committee, the Advisory Board of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities, the Modern Language Association's Commission on the Status of Women in the Profession, and as the medical school's Women's Liaison Officer to the Association of American Medical Colleges. She co-founded what is now the Feminist Scholarship Division of the International Communications Association. In 1995 she was honored for research, teaching, and service with the University of Illinois College of Medicine's college-wide Faculty Member of the Year Award, in 2000 she received the first Faculty Advisor Award from the Medical Scholars Program Advisory Council, and in 2004 received the UIUC Campus-wide Award for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Teaching. Her scholarship in communications and cultural studies was honored at the annual meeting of the National Communications Association in 1999 and celebrated at the UIUC Gender & Women's Studies Program's 25th Gala Anniversary. In 2000-01 she took the position as Director of the Institute of Communications Research in the College of Communications at UIUC and served until she officially retired from the university in fall 2004. She continues to teach at UIUC, advise and supervise doctoral students, and do research. From 2001-2008 she served on the Board of Trustees of Antioch University and now serves on the Antioch College Alumni Board of Directors. She was born and grew up in Yellow Springs, Ohio.