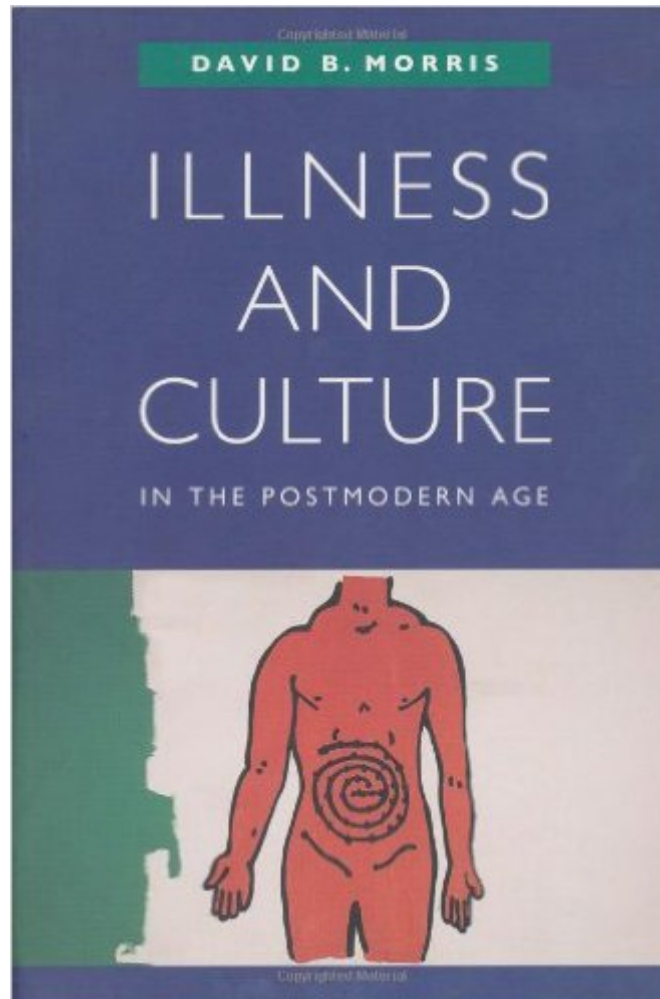


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# Illness And Culture In The Postmodern Age



## Synopsis

We become ill in ways our parents and grandparents did not, with diseases unheard of and treatments undreamed of by them. Illness has changed in the postmodern era—roughly the period since World War II—as dramatically as technology, transportation, and the texture of everyday life. Exploring these changes, David B. Morris tells the fascinating story, or stories, of what goes into making the postmodern experience of illness different, perhaps unique. Even as he decries the overuse and misuse of the term "postmodern," Morris shows how brightly ideas of illness, health, and postmodernism illuminate one another in late-twentieth-century culture. Modern medicine traditionally separates disease—an objectively verified disorder—from illness—a patient's subjective experience. Postmodern medicine, Morris says, can make no such clean distinction; instead, it demands a biocultural model, situating illness at the crossroads of biology and culture. Maladies such as chronic fatigue syndrome and post-traumatic stress disorder signal our awareness that there are biocultural ways of being sick. The biocultural vision of illness not only blurs old boundaries but also offers a new and infinitely promising arena for investigating both biology and culture. In many ways *Illness and Culture in the Postmodern Age* leads us to understand our experience of the world differently.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Illness and Culture in the Postmodern Age*  
Reviewer: Veronica S. Albin from Houston, TX USA  
I used *Illness and Culture in the Postmodern Age* for the first time this semester as a text book for Spanish

307 (The Language and Culture of Medicine and Health Care) at Rice University in Houston, TX. Most of the students enrolled in this advanced Spanish course are juniors and seniors headed for the top medical schools in the country. My students' response to the book was overwhelmingly positive. Their one complaint about it was that sometimes Morris required pages and pages to make a point and that by the time the point was made, the reader was fairly tired. Nonetheless, they unanimously labeled it as one of the most provocative books they had ever read, and that by having read it, they were now able to see the negative side of the biomedical model and the positive side of a biocultural model. Illness and Culture proved to be so rich in topics that all 35 students found not one but several topics that were of personal interest to them. Student athletes, for example, most of them headed to Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, or to Sports Medicine, found the section on how the American fixation on sports and exercise backfired and instead of improving health, brought more medical problems to our society (ACL tears, stress fractures, tennis elbow, heat stroke, etc.) Students who have an interest in art were fascinated by the connections Morris establishes to the experience of illness. Those interested in literature found the sections on narrative outstanding. The chapter on suffering truly moved students in light of the recent events of September 11 and got them thinking about the suffering of others, not just our own.

In this self-important, boringly long, intellectually dishonest solipistic monologue, Morris manages to parade a litany of postmodern politically correct sacred cows. However, his central thesis that western medicine distinguishes disease as objective and illness as subjective is patently wrong as recourse to any medical dictionary will reveal. This is just the first of his outright disinformation, exaggerations, and many false strawmen that he creates in nothing less than a frontal assault on western medicine that is full of ill-will and a transparent invitation for postmodern gurus to take over as self-appointed high priests of a deconstructed medicine. Morris kindly allows a small role for a properly humbled and subservient science and the remaining carcass of medicine as we know it. This is an anti-science, anti-medicine, anti-western, anti-rational diatribe that is supposedly an argument for a new biocultural theory to supplant western medicine. It is rambling, tangential, and plays fast and loose with facts. It is another chapter in the effort of postmodernists to construct a worldview in which the mantra is "culture uber alles," not by any rational argument but by simple repetitive assertion intermixed with false strawmen in an effort to deceptively prop up their nihilism while viciously deconstructing anything that gets in the way of their imperialistic jihad against anything that is western or caucasian (or at least male caucasian). This book confirms my worst fears about postmodernism. It will appeal to that cadre of perpetual toddlers who masquerade as

quasi-intellectuals but are intent on destroying culture by declaring everything as culture and political, and thus returning us to the primeval jungle.

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