

### Humoral Diary Assignment 140.105

The goal of this assignment is to try to think like a healer in antiquity or the early Middle Ages who relied upon the model of the 4 humors. It's a thought experiment – can you leave our 21<sup>st</sup> century ways of imagining the body behind?.

1. Diary of Non-Naturals and Weather. Carefully track and note moods, physical symptoms, and noteworthy events or variations in diet, sleep, and activities over a period of at least seven days. Include notes on the weather and meteorological phenomena. You are free to omit any personal details you wish. Record them in the following table:

	Mood(s)	Symptoms	Diet	Sleep	Activities	Weather
Day 1						
Day 2						
Day 3						
Day 4						
Day 5						
Day 6						
Day 7						

## 2. What Constitution Are You?

Consult the section below called “So What Constitution Are You?” and evaluate yourself. In your essay describe which complexion you think you are; be sure to include your reasons why.

## 3. Evaluate Your Experience.

In 1-2 double-spaced pages, discuss what constitution you think you are and analyze an event or events in the above diary using humoral theory – how did your body respond to its environment and the non-naturals? Why did it do so? Be sure to use specific examples. This is an exercise in trying out a different system of thought, so don't stress if you can't quite make your experience fit a humoral model – try, and then explain where it falls short. Play with the 4 humors model and see if it can explain some of your everyday life experiences. Need some help? You might find the excerpt from Galen's *On Food and Drink* helpful for more details. See in on the library e-reserves

Be sure to turn in the diary page with your 1-2 page essay. Uncomfortable talking about your body to your TA? Feel free to record someone else's body instead – a roommate or friend. The key point of the assignment is to try out humoral thinking for yourself. This system of medical thought endured for 2 millennia because it is flexible and accommodating – and can explain many common occurrences.

## So What Constitution Are You?

Humoral theory posits that we are all made up of 4 humors, which exist in varying ratios in our bodies. Usually one humor predominates in each of us. Staying healthy means achieving our own correct balance of humors, according to our bodily constitution or complexion. So the same environmental changes may have different consequences for different people because their constitutions are different. In order to interpret events in your humoral diary, you should try to figure out which type of complexion you have. What follows is a rough guide to the various constitutions, assembled by consulting a range of primary sources.

Phlegmatic: Phlegm is the cold and wet humor, slow-moving and liable to clog up bodily conduits. It is strongest in the body in winter. People with phlegmatic constitutions are calm, slow-moving, apt to put on weight, slow to anger. They can be a bit slow to catch on to concepts or ideas. Often they have quite pale skin colors, the sort who look as if they stay inside a great deal. They have soft skin, and their mouths water a good bit. They are rarely thirsty so do not drink much.,

nor do they have a big appetite. they can have trouble making decisions because they doubt themselves. They are quiet and can be timid. If you have an excess of phlegm, you may be excessively sleepy, feel dull-witted, heavy, gain weight, become forgetful, need to spit, have a runny nose, some indigestion, poor appetite, and smoother softer skin than usual.

Choleric: Choler is yellow bile, a dry warm humor that is acrid; it is strongest in summer. Choleric people tend to have yellow or orange toned faces, with brown or red hair, and to be quite to be thin. They are quick to anger but also quick to get over it, and known for quick mood changes. Sweet wines, smoking, pickles, and barbecued meats are not good for them because they provoke excess choler. They are often troubled with headaches. They can be haughty and proud and to not tolerate disagreement well. An excess of this humor will make you quick to lose your temper, thin, constipated, and give your skin a yellow tone.

Sanguine: Blood is a hot and wet humor, it is strongest in the spring. People with this complexion are even-tempered and optimistic, cheerful and well-liked. They have good facial complexions, with clear healthy skin and good color. They are courteous; courageous; find it easy to express themselves and tell jokes; and are loving and loyal friends, They tend to be quite hairy, often with blonde or light brown hair. Sometimes they are overly fond of sex, wearing themselves out in frequent encounters. If you have an excess of blood, your veins will stand out, you'll get red, your pulse will be thick and full, and you'll feel cheerful or light-hearted.

Melancholic: Black bile is a dry cold humor, which is strongest in the autumn. Melancholics are either an "angel of heaven, or a Fiend of Hell" as one 17th century book has it. They are either happy and peaceful, contemplating good things, or miserable, focused upon bad things. Melancholics are slow-moving, and often a bit depressive, but alcohol cheers them up a great deal and they can then be the life of the party. They fall asleep very easily. They are quick-witted but may not appreciate the intricacies of complex topics. Dark hair, a darker skin tone, rough skin, curly or wavy hair, and a solemn demeanor characterize the melancholic's appearance. They can be suspicious or even malicious. An excess of this humor can make you fearful, rough-skinned, make it difficult.