

The Narrative Perspective and Reflective Writing: An Elective in Medical Humanities

[E] verybody has a secret world inside of them. All of the people of the world, I mean everybody. No matter how dull and boring they are on the outside, inside them they've all got unimaginable, magnificent, wonderful, stupid, amazing worlds. Not just one world. Hundreds of them. Thousands maybe.

-Neil Gaiman

Course Director

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Overall Goal of the Experience:

The goal of this elective is to help students develop their capacities for continuous reflection and improvement by creating a community of practice. Students will honor patients' stories by seeking to understand their perspectives about the impact of illness on their lives. They will practice effective communication skills by building and sharing coherent narratives. By working to locate themselves within their own stories and those of others, students will learn to more effectively process their clinical experiences and practice reflection as a skill for meaning-making and self-understanding throughout their professional careers and influence professional identity formation. For more information about the importance of including Narrative Medicine as part of the training for medical professionals, please see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3992707/pdf/nihms-572162.pdf>

Objectives

Students will:

- 1) Synthesize clinical experiences into coherent narratives by creating written reflections
- 2) Cultivate compassion, empathy, and respect for diverse social and cultural perspectives while sharing patient stories
- 3) Collaborate and communicate effectively as part of a supportive peer group
- 4) Practice written reflection as a sustainable method to promote personal and professional development to support professional identity formation as clinicians
- 5) Build resilience through shared storytelling and reflection with peers and faculty

Logistics

- 1) Emails of students and faculty are also posted on the BB course site.
- 2) The calendar of session dates, in which sessions are offered, is posted with assigned faculty on BB.
- 3) Syllabus is posted on Blackboard (BB) with the weekly assignments will be emailed monthly as a reminder.
- 4) The student must use the current syllabus to prepare for a session.
- 5) All narratives prepared for a session should be posted to BB as a blog entry or kept in an ongoing word document or in a journal (hardcopy) your choice; as all are ok.
- 6) Attendance will be reported in a Google spread sheet located on your Google drive. Be prepared to record dates of attendance at a session and indicate participation. This will be the only record of your participation.

- a. This is an honor-based system and all attendance will be tracked by the curriculum support office in December and March in the academic year. A report will go to students by January, mid-year, to inform of current status.
- 7) Session Restrictions:
 - a. All OSLER events are face to face and count as one session
 - b. Highly suggest at least ONE Art Museum session for your own learning to experience art of observation
 - c. Any accommodations must be approved by course director.
- 8) All assignments for a session you are attending must be completed in order to pass this course; in addition to meeting satisfactory attendance and participation, with a minimum attendance at 20 sessions of the offered sessions.
 - a. If you decide to take the offer to plan an actual session for the elective course or help Lisa Martin plan an OSLER event you will receive double hours, so 2 hours of planning and 2 hours of execution.
 - b. Attendance beyond 20 sessions is at the discretion of the student and is encouraged but not required. All attendance issues must be discussed with the Course Director.

A Few Words on Creating a Safe Space

This SOM elective course focuses on introspection. The work you share will be personal, for *you* and will be the subject of your study during our time together. Vulnerability is a vital part of the process, because through it we are able to identify with the universal human qualities in one another's experiences. But it takes tremendous courage to be vulnerable in front of others, especially your peers. You are strong, intelligent people who will not always agree with one another. As long as you commit to responding with respect and compassion – especially when you disagree – then our classroom will be a safe space for everyone to share.

Conditions for Success

This course is more likely to succeed if we adhere to the tenets below.

1. Write something for each week based on the artifact. It's okay if you stray from the assigned prompt. If you do not connect with prompt write on how you feel/emotions.
2. Set aside your computers and phones for the duration of class each week and commit to being fully present with one another.
3. Be respectful, non-judgmental and remain open minded. No interrupting or disparaging the contributions of others.
4. Confidentiality is important – everything said in the room stays in the room.
5. There is no right or wrong answers.
6. We are all peers, undertaking this journey together.
7. We all have something to teach one another.

Reading and Writing Assignments by Session:

Date/Faculty	Assignment	Prompt
Session: 1 6/25/2019 Barbara Hirsch Michael Grosso Alice Fornari	Prior to session: watch Sayantani DasGupta- <i>Narrative Humility (access on Youtube)</i> <i>Narrative Humility: Art of Medicine</i> Vol 371 March 22, 2008 Tell the story of your name	In session discussion Prompt in session
Session: 2 7/9/2019 Susan Caulfield	<i>Comics in Medicine</i> *Only Face to Face*	Prompt in session
Session: 3 7/16/2019 Nancy Richner	<i>Independent Topic: Art and Medicine</i> Meet at Hofstra University Museum of Art (South Campus) *Only Face to Face*	Prompt to follow for in session Hofstra South Campus
Session: 4 7/23/2019 Lisa DeTora Elizabeth Berger	<i>Tiny Feast</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 5 7/30/2019 Barbara Hirsch	<i>Where I'm From by George Ella Lyon</i>	
Session: 6 8/6/2019 Barbara DeVoe	Excerpt from <i>The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien</i> <i>My Voice by Rafael Campo</i>	What do you carry with you? Write about a time that someone shared their voice with you
Session: 7 8/13/2019 Alice Fornari	<i>A Mother in the House by Kathy Stepien, MD</i> <i>In line at the Hospital Coffee Stand by Tabor Flickinger</i>	What comes to mind when you hear #metoo Write about a time you had to compartmentalize a patient
Session: 8 8/20/2019 Mike Grosso Elizabeth Berger	<i>Things that go beyond explanation</i>	In session
Session: 9 8/27/2019 Deborah McElligott	<i>The Third Thing Exercise</i> *(Face to Face Preferred but will have ZOOM too)	In session, Prepare a "third thing" story and bring in the object representing your professional identity as a medical student and/or future physician <i>Bring in an item which...</i> <i>...you identify with</i> <i>...you would take with you to a desert island</i> <i>...has special meaning to you</i> <i>...keeps you centered</i> <i>...describes you</i> <i>...defines where you are going</i>

Session: 10 9/17/2019 David Marcus	<i>Post Operative Check</i> by Shara Yurkiewicz <i>Why Doctors Hate Computers? (New Yorker)</i> by Atul Gawande	Write about something you learned from watching.
Session:11 9/24/2019 Penny Stern	<i>Girl</i> by Jamaica Kincaid	Write to you younger self about the journey upon which you are embarking
Session: 12 10/15/2019 Bruce Hirsch	<i>Hidden Dying of Doctors: What the Humanities Can Teach Medicine, and Why We All Need Medicine to Learn It.</i> Los Angeles Review of Books <i>*Face to Face Only*</i>	Prompt in Session
Session: 13 *Special OSLER event* THURSDAY 10/17/2019 Cardio/Oncology Barbara Padilla	<i>*Face to Face Only*</i>	
Session: 14 *Special OSLER event* WEDNESDAY 11/13/2019 Stumped with Will Lautzenheizer	<i>*Face to Face only*</i>	
Session: 15 11/19/2019 David Marcus	<i>Magic- Shel Silverstein</i> <i>Designed to Fly</i> by Ellen Waterson	Share a time when you observed magic or made something magic happen Write about a time when you had to trust
Session: 16 *Special OSLER event* WEDNESDAY 12/4/2019 Humor as a way of Coping and Preventing Burnout with Elyse Miller	<i>*Face to Face Only*</i>	
Session: 17 12/17/2019 Elizabeth Berger	<i>Extremis-Netflix (watch in session)</i>	Prompt in Session
Session: 18 1/7/2020 Penny Stern	<i>Missing Piece</i> by Ray Bingham	Write about a time you were able to fill a need (in session)

Session: 19 1/14/2020 Lisa DeTora	<i>Graphic Novel -Text TBA</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 20 1/21/2020 Penny Stern	Code Blue by Stephen Leslie	Write about a time when a patient's or family's perspective differed from your own. (in session)
Session: 21 1/28/2020 Alice Fornari David Marcus	<i>Basch Unbound—The House of God and Fiction as Resistance at 40</i> <i>The Thread</i> by William Strafford	Discuss in session Write about your thread
Session:22 2/4/2020 Bruce Hirsch	<i>This is Why</i> <i>The Second Sentence</i> by Jonathan Kole	Prompt in session Describe a patient you've met who sticks in your memory. What do you love most about this person?(in session)
Session: 23 2/11/2020 Nancy Richner	<i>Hofstra University Museum of Art Session at Campus Art Museum (South Campus)</i> <i>*Face to Face Only*</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 24 2/18/2020 Robert Dicker	<i>Death of Ivan Ilyich</i>	Prompt in Session
Session 25: 2/25/2020 Rebecca Dougherty	<i>"A View from the Edge-Creating a Culture of Caring" New England Journal of Medicine</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 26 3/3/2020 Penny Stern	<i>Locks</i> by Neil Gaiman	Write about a change in perspective that has changed since your training began (in session)
Session: 27 3/10/2020 Robert Dicker	<i>What the Doctor Said</i> by Raymond Carver <i>The use of force (from: Doctor Stories)</i> <i>William Carlos Williams</i>	Write about a time you wish you had said more to a patient (in session)
Session: 28 3/17/2020 Barbara Hirsch	<i>Plague and Contagion</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 29 3/24/2020 Bruce Hirsch Alice Fornari	<i>Lockdown Poem</i> by Richard Hendrick	Prompt in session

Session: 30 3/31/2020 Alice Fornari	<i>Music and Medicine</i> Please bring a music of choice piece to the session and share via your personal APP of choice with peers <i>Happy Feet by Micah Milgram</i>	What emotions arise in you when you listen to music? How do you feel when your emotions are positive/negative/neutral; What does it take to listen to others and be open-minded? How does music heal a patient during illness?
Session: 31 4/7/2020 Lisa De Tora	<i>Watch "After Forever," Episode 2 on Amazon Prime</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 32 4/14/2020 Dr. Grosso	<i>Outpatient</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 33 4/21/2020 Dr. Grosso	<i>Anyuta</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 34 4/28/2020 Alice Fornari	<i>Curiosity and What Equality Really Means by Atul Gawande</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 35 4/29/2020 Alice Fornari	<i>Narrateur: Reflections on Caring (Zucker SOM literary journal) 2020 Launch</i> https://medicine.hofstra.edu/about/narrateur/index.html	

Description

This elective entitled The Narrative Perspective and Reflective Writing: An Elective in Medical Humanities is a longitudinal elective from July until March usually in the MS4 year but could be in any year of medical school. The purpose of this elective is to develop students' capacities for continuous reflection and self-assessment through the lens of medical humanities readings, visual arts and reflective writing. Faculty participating are diverse in interest and skills in the Health Humanities and are cultivated through the Health System and School of Medicine and form a community of practice among themselves, based on their common interests and participation in the elective.

<https://medicine.hofstra.edu/faculty/facdev/health-humanities.html>

There will be approximately 30 scheduled meeting sessions during this 10-month period in the academic year generally from July through March, with 20 required sessions based on the student's individual schedules. Students connect remotely using ZOOM link for classroom sessions. Zoom is accessible on the phone as well as a computer or IPAD and use of the camera feature is highly suggested. Audio can be by phone or computer generated. For each meeting session, there will be an assigned reading paired with a writing prompt. Students will be expected to complete assigned reading ahead of time and it will be reviewed in session again as well. Writing for the session can occur before session and then the student brings to class a piece of personal writing/response that draws on their own experiences in the clinical setting. For many sessions students will prepare their written thoughts in session as indicated on the syllabus. This is a preference of the faculty facilitator leading the session. Students will also be expected to read their writing aloud to peers and respond constructively to the work shared by others. Assigned readings can be paired with complementary or contrasting, music, artwork, videos or plays, to be considered during the classroom sessions as additional prompts for discussion and reflection. Course completion is dependent on required participation in a minimum of 20 sessions, discussion of the readings for the session and preparation of writing narrative for the session and final sharing with peers

and faculty in session; If you decide to take the offer to plan an actual session for the elective course or help Lisa Martin, Director of Medical Humanities at the SOM and plan an OSLER (<https://medicine.hofstra.edu/humanities/events.html>) event you will receive double hours, so 2 hours of planning and 2 hours of execution. Attendance beyond 20 sessions is at the discretion of the student and is encouraged but not required. All attendance issues must be discussed with the Course Director.

Faculty Structure

The weekly sessions will be taught by faculty members (1-2 pre-assigned) selected for their interest in medical humanities and visual arts and will teach the sessions on a rotating basis. The course director will be at many of the sessions and a back-up for all sessions. This group of self-selecting students and faculty members will create a safe space within which to reflect and share, optimizing the likelihood of creating an environment where students feel that they can write and speak from the heart, and remain respectful, non-judgmental, open-minded and supportive of one another.

Faculty (listed alphabetically):

Elizabeth Berger, Chaplain, MS, APBCC
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Nancy Richner, Art Museum Educator

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Penny Stern, MD

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The students' roles and responsibilities:

Students must complete the independent reading assignments and the reflective writing assignment prior to or during each classroom meeting and must be prepared to share their writing and respond constructively to the work shared by peers. The estimated time to complete the independent work is 1 hour per week. The classroom meetings will be 2.0 hours long. Missed session time that cannot be made up, will require independent course work arranged with the course director.

The schedule:

There will be 30+ classroom meetings during the 10-month period between July and March, each 2.0 hours in duration. The sessions will take place on *Tuesday evenings 6:30-8:30pm on ZOOM*. Students will connect remotely by *ZOOM* only for classroom sessions. Reading and Writing can occur independently before session for all assignments and all will be reviewed in session as well and then time will be allotted in sessions writing followed by sharing among all participants.

Method of Assessment:

The course is pass/fail. All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade. Attendance and active participation in class is also required. Missed sessions must be made up with additional independent assignments if the 20-session minimum is not met. A pre/post survey using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CDRS) is required by each student. In addition, students will be required to participate in an exit interview and a required SOM non-clinical elective evaluation form.

While the reading and writing assignments will consist of literary excerpts and poetry, during classroom sessions, these works will often be paired with appropriate music, art, videos and plays, as additional stimuli for generating reflection and discussion. As part of the program, students will draft a reflective narrative in any of the medical humanities formats introduced and consider publication in a professional journal or literary journal. Peer review of the initial draft of the narrative mid-course will occur and then students' writings will be finalized and submitted for the final session of the program, when it will be shared. **Students will be encouraged, but not required, to submit their work for publication.** See, <http://www.documentingmedicine.com/wpcontent/uploads/2011/10/Getting-Narratives-published.pdf>

Acknowledgement

This medical humanities elective with a focus on the use of narrative as a pedagogy is based on the elective which is successfully offered by the University Of Vermont College Of Medicine, and was designed by Tania Bertsch, MD and Aaron Hurwitz, MEd, who have graciously shared their

curriculum and syllabus. We will expand upon the Syllabus by integrating music, Ted Talks, Netflix, art, videos and plays among the works offered to prompt reflection.