



The Narrative Perspective and Reflective Writing: An Elective in Medical Humanities 2018/19

[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 reflections as a skill for meaning-making and self-understanding throughout their careers. 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 sustainable method to promote personal and professional development and to prevent burnout

Logistics

- 1) Emails of students and faculty are also posted on the BB course site.
- 2) The excel calendar of session dates, in which sessions are offered, is posted with assigned faculty on BB.
- 3) 2018-19 Syllabus is posted on Blackboard (BB) with the readings.
- 4) The student must use the current syllabus to prepare for a session.
- 5) Weekly assigned reading (s) and prompt are included in the syllabus.
- 6) All narratives prepared for a session should be posted to BB as a blog entry and printed to share in the session with peers and faculty facilitators.
- 7) Attendance will be recorded by the student on 145 using the duty hours feature. Record date of attendance at a session. This will be the only record of participation.



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 from the heart each week. It’s okay if you stray from the assigned prompt. Bring a written copy of the writing to class.
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:

Date/Faculty	Assignment	Prompt
Session: 1 7/17/2018 Alice Fornari Elizabeth Berger	Prior to session: watch Sayantani DasGupta- Narrative Humility (access on Youtube)	Prompt to follow in session
Session: 2 7/24/2018 Mike Grosso Nancy Richner (All Faculty Encouraged)	Independent Topic: Art and Medicine Meet at Hofstra Art Museum (South Campus)	Prompt to follow for in session Hofstra South Campus
Session: 3 7/31/2018 Alice Fornari Debra McElligott	<i>Designed to Fly</i> by Ellen Waterson	Write about a time when you had to trust
Session: 4 8/7/2018 Bob Dicker Alice Fornari	<i>I Need a New Stethoscope</i> by Jenni Levy	Write about something that connects you to work



Session: 5 8/14/2018 Susan Caulfield Liz Fiorino	Where I'm From by George Ella Lyon	Write about where you are from.
Session: 6 8/21/2018 Alice Fornari Lisa DeTora	Excerpt from <i>The Things They Carried</i> by Tim O'Brien <i>My Voice</i> by Rafael Campo	What do you carry with you? Write about a time that someone shared their voice with you
Session: 7 8/28/2018 Bruce Hirsch Penny Stern	<i>Girl</i> by Jamaica Kincaid <i>A Mother in the House</i> by Kathy Stepien, MD	Write to you younger self about the journey upon which you are embarking What comes to mind when you hear #metoo
Session: 8 9/4/2018 David Marcus Alice Fornari	<i>In Line at the Hospital Coffee Stand</i> by Tabor Flickinger <i>What the Doctor Said</i> by Raymond Carver	Write about a time you had to compartmentalize a patient Write about a time you wish you had said more to a patient
Session: 9 9/11/2018 Barbara Hirsch Penelope Hsu	<i>The Heroism of Incremental Care</i> by Atul Gawand, MD	Prompt in session
Session: 10 9/25/2018 Kimberly Andron Rebecca Dougherty	<i>Post Operative Check</i> by Shara Yurkiewicz	Write about something you learned from watching
Session: 11 10/9/2018 Barbara Devoe Bob Dicker (All Faculty Encouraged)	<i>BOOK – To Be Announced</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 12 10/16/2018 Bruce Hirsch Penny Stern	<i>Magic</i> by Shel Silverstein	Share a time when you observed magic or made something magic happen
Session: 13 11/13/2018 Kelly Fiore Mike Grosso	<i>Tiny Feast</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 14 12/4/2018 Kelly Fiore Penelope Hsu	<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?
Session: 15 1/15/2019 David Marcus Susan Caulfield	<i>Comics in Medicine – In session</i>	Prompt in session



Session: 16 1/22/2019 Barbara Hirsch Lisa DeTora	<i>Graphic Novel – TBD - In session</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 17 2/5/2019 Debra McElligott Kimberly Andron	Missing Piece by ray Bingham	Write about a time you were able to fill a need
Session: 18 2/12/2019 Elizabeth Berger Penny Stern	Extremist – Netflix (watch in session)	Prompt in session
Session: 19 2/19/2019 Nancy Richner Barbara Devoe	<i>Art Session – location TBD</i>	
Session: 20 2/26/2019 Tom Kwiatkowski Maria LaBarca	Music in Medicine: <i>Happy Feet: That's when the music starts...</i> & Bring a music of choice to share with peers	Describe a time (personal or professional) when the voice of music impacted one's spirit and maybe healing too
Session: 21 3/5/2019 Alice Fornari Rebecca Dougherty	<i>The Thread by William Stafford</i> & <i>Locks by Neil Gaiman</i>	Write about your thread & Write about a change of perspective that has changed since your training began
Session: 22 3/12/2019 Susan Malster Alice Fornari All Faculty Welcome	<i>BOOK – In Shock by Rana Awdish</i>	Prompt in session
Session: 23 3/19/2019 Barbara Hirsch Penny Stern	Code Blue by Stephen Leslie	Write about a time when a patient's or family's perspective differed from your own.
Session 24: 3/26/2019 All Faculty Encouraged Alice Fornari	<i>Curiosity and What Equality Really Means</i> <i>Atul Gawande (New Yorker)</i>	Prompt in session

Description

This elective entitled **The Narrative Perspective and Reflective Writing: An Elective in Medical Humanities** is a longitudinal elective from July 2018 until March 2019. 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.

There will be 24 scheduled meeting sessions during this 8 month period from July 2017 through March 2018. Students can consider connecting remotely for classroom sessions while away on rotations or interviews. For each meeting session, there will be an assigned reading paired with a writing prompt. Students will be expected to complete the reading ahead of time and bring to class a finished piece of writing that draws on their own experiences in the clinical setting. For some sessions students will



prepare their written thoughts in 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. **All assignments must be completed and turned in on time in order to pass this course, in addition to satisfactory attendance and participation, with a minimum attendance at 15 sessions of the 24 sessions. Attendance beyond 15 sessions is at the discretion of the student and is encourage but not required.**

A description of the team structure including supervisory structure:

The weekly sessions will be taught by a team of faculty members, selected for their interest in medical humanities and visual arts, who 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. When necessary, based on number of students who attend, the group will be split into 2 groups with one assigned faculty to each group. The context used to prepare for the session is the same.

Faculty (listed alphabetically):

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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 24 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 24 classroom meetings during the 8 month period between July 2017 and March 2018 each 2.0 hours in duration. The sessions will take place on *Thursday evening 6:30-8:30pm at the CLI*. Students can request to connect remotely for classroom sessions while away on rotations or interviews. Independent reading and writing should take approximately 1 hour of student time prior to each session. **Each student must print out their written reflection from Blackboard in the journal or blog feature and bring this reflection to class in hard copy and not use any electronic devices during the session. If students select to join by phone they will be required to participate and share their reflective writing to the prompt.**

Method of Assessment:

The course is pass/fail. All assignments must be completed and turned in on time in order 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 15 session minimum is not met. A pre/post survey using the Massalch Burnout Inventory (MBI) is required by each student. In addition students will be required to participate in an exit interview and a SOM 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.