

The Narrative Perspective and Reflective Writing: An Elective in Medical Humanities 2017/18

[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) 2017-18 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 in addition as an assignment in BB.
- 6) All narratives prepared for a session should be posted to BB as a journal 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 7/27/2017 Nancy Richner Staircase: All Faculty	Independent Topic: Art and Medicine	Prompt to follow for in session
Session: 2 8/3/2017 Penny Stern Staircase: Alice Fornari	<i>Close Reading and the Care of Patients</i> by Michael Grosso <i>Introduction to Poetry</i> by Billy Collins	“Write about your name” (in session) “Why are you here and what do you hope to get out of this course?” (in session)
Session: 3 8/10/2017 Elizabeth Fiorino Staircase: Alice Fornari	<i>Where I’m From</i> by George Ella Lyon	Where are you from?
Session: 4 9/7/2016 Mike Grosso Staircase: Alice Fornari	<i>I Need a New Stethoscope</i> by Jenni Levy	Write about something that connects you to work
Session: 5 9/14/2017 Barbara DeVoe Staircase: Alice Fornari	<i>Post Operative Check</i> by Shara Yurkiewicz	Write about something you learned from watching
Session: 6 9/28/2017 Debbie McElligott Staircase: Barbara DeVoe	Excerpt from <i>The Things They Carried</i> by Tim O’Brien	What do you carry with you?
Session: 7 10/5/2017 Bruce Hirsch Staircase: Debbie McElligott	<i>Girl</i> by Jamaica Kincaid	Write to you younger self about the journey upon which you are embarking
Session: 8 10/12/2017 David Marcus Staircase: Bruce Hirsch	<i>In Line at the Hospital Coffee Stand</i> by Tabor Flickinger	Write about a time you had to compartmentalize a patient
Session: 9 10/19/2017 Michael Grosso Staircase: David Marcus	<i>My Voice</i> by Rafael Campo	Write about a time someone shared their voice with you
Session: 10 11/16/2017 Maria LaBarca & Tom Kwiatkowski	Music in Medicine	Prompt in session

Staircase: Michael Grosso		
Session: 11 11/21/2017 Barbara Hirsch Staircase: Alice Fornari	<i>Designed to Fly</i> by Ellen Waterson	Write about a time when you had to trust
Session: 12 *Bonus Session 12/21/2017 Lisa DeTora Staircase: Barbara Hirsch	Ted Talk: Sayantani Das Gupta: For Narrative Humility (view in session)	Prompt in session
Session: 13 1/4/2018 Elizabeth Berger Staircase: Alice Fornari	<i>Extremes</i> - Netflix (watch in session)	Prompt in session
Session: 14 1/11/2018 Rebecca Dougherty Staircase: Elizabeth Berger	<i>The Second Sentence</i> by Jonathan Koler	Describe a patient you've met who sticks in your memory. What do you love most about this person?
Session: 15 1/8/2018 Lisa DeTora Staircase: Rebecca Dougherty	<i>Graphic Novel - TBD</i> (read in session)	Prompt in session Review of peer narratives process
Session: 16 1/25/2018 Bob Dicker Staircase: Lisa DeTora	Book Selection: <i>Ordinary People</i>	Prompt to follow in session
Session: 17 2/1/2018 Penny Sern Staircase: Bob Dicker	What the Doctor Said by Raymond Carver	Write about a time you wished you said more to a patient
Session: 18 2/8/2018 Barbara Hirsch Staircase: Penny Stern	<i>Missing Piece</i> by Ray Bingham	Peer review of draft narrative Write about a time you were able to fill a need
Session: 19 2/15/2018 David Marcus Staircase: Alice Fornari	<i>The Thread</i> by William Stafford	Write about your thread Peer review of draft narrative
Session: 20 2/22/2018 Laura A. Smith Susan Caulfield	Special Session: <i>Comics in Medicine</i>	In Session Activity

Staircase: Alice Fornari		
Session: 21 3/1/2018 Bruce Hirsch Staircase: Susan Caulfield	<i>Magic by Shel Silverstein</i> & <i>Locks by Neil Gaiman</i>	Share a time where you made magic & Write about a change of perspective that has changed since your training began
Session: 22 3/8/2018 Nancy Farber Staircase: Bruce Hirsch	<i>Oh the Places You'll Go</i> by Dr. Seuss	What are you waiting for or where do you have to go?
Session: 23 3/22/2018 Barbara DeVoe Staircase: Nancy Farber	Code Blue by Stephen Leslie	Write about a time when a patient's or family's perspective differed from your own.
Session: 24 3/29/2018 Maria LaBarca & Tom Kwiatkowski <i>Plus all available faculty</i> <i>for final session</i> <i>evaluation</i>	<i>Music in Medicine: Happy Feet: That's when the</i> <i>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

Description

This elective entitled **The Narrative Perspective and Reflective Writing: An Elective in Medical Humanities** is a longitudinal elective from July 2017 until March 2018. 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. By capping the number of students at 12, the resulting 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):

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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 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.