



Hiram College 2018 Summer Seminar
Medicine, Mono-narratives, and the Asymptote of Understanding Others

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My objectives

Frame session: A session of inquiry

Context setting

- *Mo*
- *Katherine Brooks, JAMA*
- *Paul Bloom, NYT*

Competency as mythical thinking: the asymptote of understanding others

What does one need to...

An exercise

A story

A close reading

Mo

Katherine Brooks: A Silent Curriculum

...the white one is more likely to get medications, and the black one is more likely to be discharged as drug-seeking...

...scrub nurses make fun of a Latino gunshot survivor for crying out in pain...

...some cultures have lower thresholds for pain...

...I wouldn't change a black woman addict's behavior...

...poor immigrants can't turn me down...

...my privilege is as powerful as my stethoscope...

...and most of this from admired mentors.

Paul Bloom: Imagining the Life of Others

Remembrance of Things Past

Marcel Proust

*Proust's narrator says that the only true voyage of discovery is not to visit other lands
but...*

*“...to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a
hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds.”*

Paul Bloom: Imagining the Life of Others

Can it be done?

Need we simply try harder?

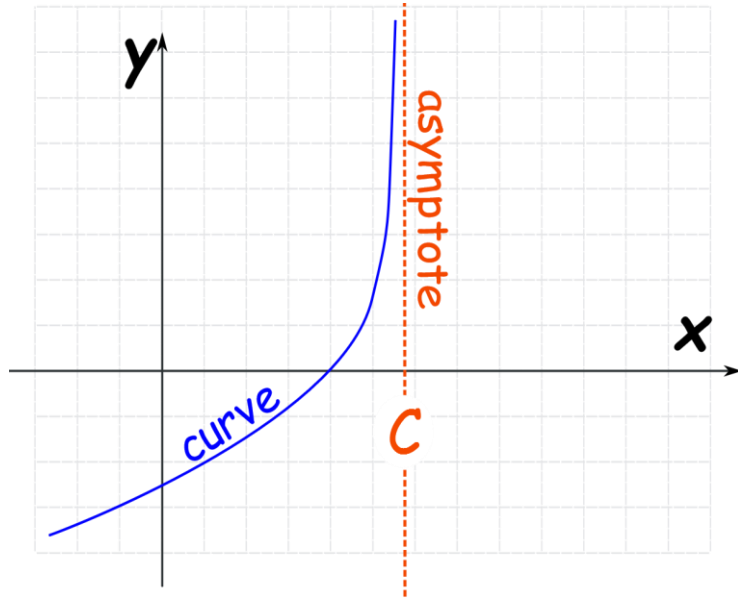
Must we have the experience?

So what is required?

So what is required?

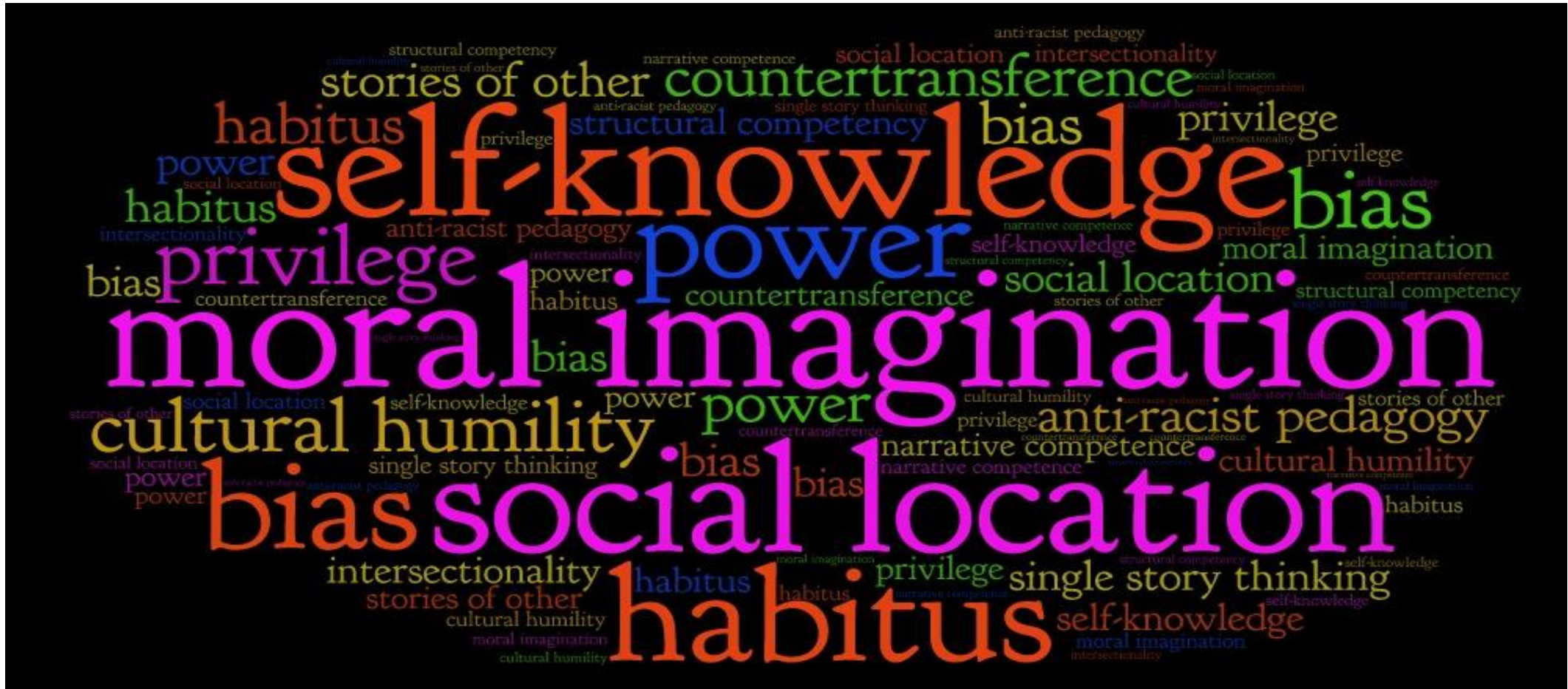
Humility

The asymptote of competency

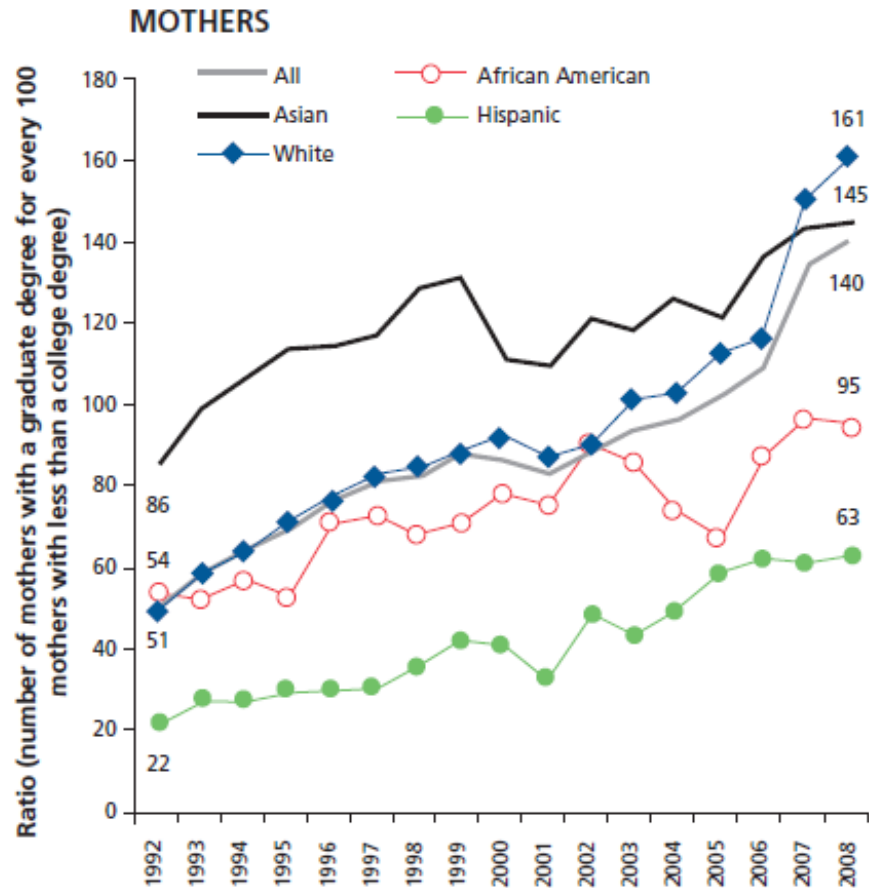


In analytic geometry, an **asymptote** of a curve is a line such that the distance between the curve and the line approaches zero as one or both of the x or y coordinates tends to infinity. The word asymptote is derived from the Greek *asumptōtos* which means "not falling together."

So *what* is required?



Social Location of Medical Students: Parental Education



AAMC Analysis in Brief. 9(10), August 2010

Medical Student Parental Income 2016

Parents' annual combined gross income	Percent 2014	Percent 2015	Percent 2016
Less than \$25,000	6.7	6.0	6.4
\$25,000 to 49,999	8.4	8.1	8.5
\$50,000 to 74,999	11.2	11.1	10.8
\$75,000 to 99,999	10	9.2	9.6
\$100,000 to 149,999	19.3	19.6	18.6
\$150,000 to 199,999	12.4	12.2	11.9
\$200,000 to 249,999	10.3	11.2	11.2
\$250,000 to 299,999	5.0	5.1	5.5
\$300,000 to 399,999	6.3	6.9	6.7
\$400,000 to 499,999	3.7	3.8	3.9
\$500,000 or more	6.6	6.7	7.0
<i>Number of respondents</i>	12,400	11,158	10,885
<i>Median parental income among respondents</i>	\$120,000	\$125,000	\$125,000

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of the largely unconscious, internalized social structures, perspectives and dispositions that one acquires through past experiences and that determine behavior

Habitus internalizes objective differences in social location (e.g., social class, privilege, power) into subjective values and worldviews, and these views in turn serve to guide individual action

Can also be applied to the complexities of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, national origin

One classifies the world in terms of one's own habitus

Habitus is taught in medical education

Structural Competency

“...emphasizes recognition of the complex ways that matters such as rising income inequalities, decaying infrastructure, poor food distribution networks,” among other social and economic structures, lead to poor health.

--Jonathan Metzl

Anti-Racist Pedagogy

A way of examining the experiences of others that first gives up the idea of neutrality by explicitly stating that the goal of such an examination is to “move beyond our comfortable deeply rooted views of the world

--”*Unsettling the Academy,*” A.E. Wagner

The Query

What is the role/responsibility of the health humanities?

Privilege and Bias: An Exercise

Twenty-two statements, adapted from Peggy McIntosh's "invisible knapsack" work

Take your knapsack to each station, read the statement, and take a penny if you feel statement is true for you.

Don't interact with or be influenced by others.

Recitatif

Toni Morrison

Morrison's only published short story

Published in 1983, in *Confirmation: An Anthology of African American Women*

A story in five encounters, all narrated by Twyla

Close Reading

Using literature to promote reflection and discernment

“I believe it is our ethical obligation to fight against our tendency to project our preconceptions, that it is our ethical duty to attempt to hear what someone else is really saying.”

Jane Gallop

From Close Reading to Close Listening

“Ultimately, close reading is not just a way of reading but a way of listening. It can help us not just to read what is on the page, but to hear what a person really said. Close reading can train us to hear other people.”

Jane Gallop

Close Reading Exercise

Blankets

An excerpt from, *War Dances*, a short story from Sherman Alexie's collection entitled, *Blasphemy*

War Dances is a story in 16 numbered segments, from which this excerpt is the 4th.

We will read aloud and then discuss from a *close reading* perspective.

attending

One must read slowly and carefully

Process requires returning to a text to broaden/deepen understanding

Attention to

- What is being said
- What is not being said
- What narrative perspectives are taken
 - Voice
 - Tone
 - Imagery
 - Metaphor
 - Language

Discussion Questions

1. What words/phrases/images stood out for you, and why?
2. What is being said, and how is it being said?
3. What do we come to know? What do we not come to know?

Blankets
