Creating a Humanities Research Track for Medical Students

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Co-Director, Scholarly Inquiry-Humanities
Medical & Health Humanities at Jefferson

Co-curricular Humanities & Health Certificate (All disciplines)

Public programs

Patient wellness

Scholarly Concentration (Medicine)

Extracurricular activities & student organizations

Staff wellness

Humanities Selectives (Medicine)

Service/community outreach
JeffMD Humanities Selectives

Required: Complete two in Years 1-2 of Medical School

Above: Visualizing Anatomy, co-taught by anatomy faculty and a visual artist
JeffMD Humanities Selectives

- The Empathy Project with Lantern Theater Company
- The Art of Observation at PAFA
- Creative Writing: Fiction & Creative Writing: Poetry
- The Language of Music: Improvisation in Sound
- Medical Cineforum
- History of Medicine
- Mindfulness & Compassion for Self & Other
- Cultural Humility & Cultural Competency
Scholarly Inquiry - Humanities

Required: Choose a four-year research track (Humanities, Public Health, Med Ed, etc.)
Year 1-2 research project + Year 4 capstone project
Medical Humanities as Research

Creative Practice
- Visual arts
  - Photography, drawing & painting
- Performing arts
  - Theater, music
- Creative writing
  - Poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction

Qualitative Methods
- Interviews
- Photo Elicitation
- Content analysis

Quantitative Methods
- Surveys
- Psychometrics
Student Research Topics

• Theater of Witness: The Patient Experience of Dementia Told through Testimonial Performance
• Examining Medical Student Maintenance of Personal Identity through Film
• Utilizing Dance Therapy to Alleviate Symptoms of Chemotherapy in Geriatric Patients
• The Healing Power of Live Music
• Impact of Visual Art on the Patient Experience
• Narratives of Women Recovering from Opioid Dependency and of their Healthcare Providers
• Burnt: A Work of Fiction Exploring the Psychological and Social Complexity of Working in Medicine
From Here to There: Picture Stories of Refugee Women’s Lives - Content Analysis (C. Christianson, Class of 2020)

• Student (C.C.) led content analysis of photo elicitation project with refugee women in South Philadelphia

• Photo project undertaken by Mural Arts Philadelphia’s Southeast by Southeast cultural hub/storefront

• 15 refugee women participants made 100+ photos

• Institution-affiliated team identified five themes in images, e.g., cultural identity
Medical Humanities as Research Track

Challenges

• Defining humanities in medical context
  • “Relevance” expectation
• Legitimating non-quantitative methods
• Identifying appropriate deliverables and defending their acceptance
• Equivalence between tracks
  • “I’m writing poetry, do I need to complete CITI training?”
• Skill level required for research
• Advising capacity
• Curriculum hours
• Academic goals in tension with benefits of humanities experience
Medical Humanities as Research Track

Benefits for Students

• Restores part of “cut off” self
• Ambiguity of “medical humanities research” fertile ground for exploration
• Respite from alienating, anonymizing academic experience
• Reconnect with reasons for pursuing medicine
• Transform personal passions into concrete project
• Cohort solidarity/support
• **Agency** to realize something under their control