

CREATIVE/EXPRESSIVE WRITING FOR MEDICAL STUDENTS

Andrew Tonkovich, MFA, UCI Writing Instructor;
Johanna Shapiro, Ph.D., Department of Family Medicine

COURSE OBJECTIVES: By the end of the course, students will have accomplished the following:

1. Become familiar with and practiced various creative/expressive writing techniques
2. Understand and be able to explain theoretical and empirical evidence for the therapeutic value of expressive writing
3. Understand and be able to explain how to use creative/expressive writing
 - a) As a method of observing and paying attention to patients
 - b) as a tool to reduce frustration, anger, helplessness, and burn-out
 - c) as a way of developing increased empathy for the patient's perspective
 - d) as a means of developing additional insights into patients

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides an introduction to creative and expressive writing that links these skills with professional development and patient care. In Week 1, an introductory presentation on expressive and creative writing by the writing instructor introduces students to fundamentals of writing; and a presentation by COM faculty orients students to the theoretical and empirical work on therapeutic and health-promoting aspects of expressive writing. Each subsequent week (2-5) consists of an in-class writing assignment examining such features as voice and point of view, detail and particulars, narrative development, and language. Weekly readings will be assigned. Students will come prepared to discuss readings and participate in writing exercises and class discussion.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY: Evaluation is based on attendance; completion of writing assignments; and participation in class discussion

GRADING POLICY: This elective will be offered for transcript notation only. No grades will be assigned.

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Writing Down the Bones Natalie Goldberg
The Triggering Town Richard Hugo
Poemcrazy Susan Woodbridge
Opening Up James Pennebaker