

Human Gross Anatomy and Embryology: Two-Part Creative Project

Objectives

Participation in these activities is designed to accomplish the following:

- 1) Provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their initial expectations, thoughts, and concerns about gross anatomy through the use of creative media such as poetry, essay and art; and, upon completion of the course, to engage in retrospective reflection and personal assessment
- 2) Demonstrate how creative reflection and expression can help develop empathy toward and understanding of the (patient)-cadaver and themselves.
- 3) Improve faculty understanding of the anatomy experience from the perspective of students so that course adjustments can be made that enhance student learning as well as professional and personal growth.

Assignment 1 should be completed by December 12th. Using one of the creative modes below, or another of their own imagining; students should reflect on initial expectations, impressions, and reactions to anatomy.

Assignment 2 should be completed by May 15th. Using one of the creative modes below, or another of their own imagining; students should retrospectively reflect on their anatomy experience by depicting an important transformative event.

Examples of creative projects. The completed assignment should be no longer than one page (if written).

- 1) Critical incident essay – using personal, non-technical language, write an essay about some aspect of your experience in anatomy
- 2) Point of view writing – write a poem or essay from a cadaver’s point of view, using the first person (“I”).
- 3) Cadaver “interview”– imagine you are able to conduct a brief interview with a cadaver about his or her experiences in anatomy lab
- 4) Draw a picture – make a sketch/painting of your cadaver or of yourself in the anatomy lab. Provide a brief written explanation of what you wanted to capture in your work.
- 5) Skit – create a role-play about an encounter between your dissection team and the cadaver(s).

Students will be invited to submit either or both of their projects to *Plexus*. They will also be asked to consent to the possible use of their project in an exhibit for students, faculty, and donor families. Finally, students will be asked to consent to the possible use of their work as anonymous group data to be presented at professional conferences and/or published in professional journals.

ANATOMY ARTS PROJECTS CODING SHEET

PROJECT ID #: _____

TITLE OF PROJECT:

TYPE OF ART

Representational
Abstract

MOVEMENT

Yes/No

MEDIUM

Drawing/Sketch
Painting (oil, watercolor)
Photograph
Collage
Sculpture
Computer-generated
Other (specify)

STONE

Serious
Humorous
Sad
Angry
Caring/loving/compassionate
Can't tell

CONTENT

What does project portray? (descriptive)
Student
Cadaver
Dissection (tools, act)
Human body
 Anatomical detail (yes/no)
 Inside/Outside
 Dead/Alive
Parts of body
Not relevant

EMOTIONS

How does project make you feel?
Awe
Fear/Anxiety
Sadness
Revulsion/Disgust
Joy/Happiness
Detachment
Guilt/Shame
Gratitude/Thankfulness
Other (specify)

THEMES

What is main point of piece? (interpretive)
Death
Spirituality
Desensitization/loss of humanity
Awesomeness of human body
Interconnectedness
Other
Can't tell

ANATOMY PROJECT: PRELIMINARY CODING SHEET

Name of Project: _____

Name of Coder: _____

THE STUDENT

Becoming a Doctor
Developing a Different Perspective
Self-Evaluation

THE CADAVER

Cadaver as a Tool for Learning
Cadaver as Person
Cadaver as Self
Cadaver as Teacher
Cadaver as Patient
Cadaver as Friend
Cadaver as Art, a Marvel
Student-Cadaver Relationship
Family of Cadaver

DEATH AND DYING

Mortality
Family/friends
Resolution/lack of resolution

SPIRITUALITY

Reference to soul and body
Spiritual comfort/lack
Sacrilege

TONE

Humorous
Ironic
Sad
Angry
Reflective
Caring/loving/compassionate
Instructive
Frank/open/sincere
Doubtful/uncertain

EMOTIONS

Gratitude/thankfulness
Guilt/shame
Revulsion/disgust
Fear/anxiety
Sadness
Concern
Joy of discovery
Awe

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Isolation of affect
Repression
Rationalization
Minimization/compartmentalization
Desensitization
Sublimation/compassion/connection
Humor

VOICE

1st pers. sing ("I")
1st pers. pl. ("we")
2nd pers. ("you")
3rd pers p. ("they")
3rd pers. sing

INTERPRETATION

(Identity, Integrity, Complexity)

ANATOMY PROJECT: PRELIMINARY CODING CATEGORIES

THE STUDENT

Becoming a Doctor – effect of anatomy on person of student; shifting identity

Developing a Different Perspective – shift in how sees others, self

Self-Evaluation – perceptions of personal/professional competence/incompetence

THE CADAVER

Cadaver as a Tool for Learning - cadaver provides a way to learn about anatomy, medicine (more objective than category of **Cadaver as Teacher**)

Cadaver as Person – imagining aspects of the life of the cadaver

Cadaver as Self – imagining life of the cadaver from the 1st person point of view

Cadaver as Teacher – acknowledging the role of the cadaver as a source of learning, encouragement

Cadaver as Patient – viewing the cadaver as the student's first patient

Cadaver as Friend – viewing the cadaver as a friend, a buddy of the student

Cadaver as Art, a Marvel – appreciation for the beauty of the body; a sense of awe and wonder

Student-Cadaver Relationship – are they in relationship?; how is this relationship defined?; what are its characteristics, its parameters?

Family/Relatives of Cadaver – concerns, imaginings students have about family

DEATH AND DYING

Mortality – thoughts about death and dying, spirituality, soul vs. flesh

Family, friends – references to deaths or serious illnesses of family members and/or friends

Resolution/lack of resolution – acceptance of death increased/decreased by experience with anatomy

SPIRITUALITY –

Soul and Flesh – references to soul and flesh

Spiritual Comfort/lack of spiritual comfort - religious/spiritual comfort in response to anatomy experience or lack thereof

Sacrilege - view that one is committing a sacrilegious act

EMOTIONS

Gratitude/thankfulness – expressions of appreciation for opportunity to learn from cadaver

Guilt/shame – perception that dissection is shameful, a violation

Revulsion/disgust – in response to dissection; (similar to Dr. Thai's category of repulsion)

Fear/anxiety – regarding self-presentation; about dissection itself; about death (similar to Dr. Thai's category of fear) *more primal*

Sadness – expressing sadness at impermanence of life; at violation of cadaver; at loss in general

Concern – distress at others' mistreatment of cadaver; *more altruistic*

Joy of discovery – appreciation for the knowledge acquired in anatomy

Awe – expression of awe at miraculousness of the human body

DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Isolation of affect – assertion that there is no place for feelings or emotion in anatomy (or medicine) (this may be the same as the emotional category **detachment**)

Repression – tone is devoid of feeling; assertion that feeling is inappropriate, unprofessional in medical study; assuming posture of a “tough guy” (this may be the same as the category **Isolation of affect**)

Rationalization – focus should be on learning anatomy, an interesting and useful science; anatomy is about objective learning

Minimalization/Compartmentalization – useless to think beyond the activity of dissection, i.e., imagining the cadaver as a person with a life

Desensitization – progressive diminution of negative emotions/responses to anatomy as a result of repeated exposure

Sublimation/compassion/connection – love/appreciation for the person who donated their body; feelings of emotional closeness toward cadaver (may be the same as the emotional category **gratitude/thankfulness**)

Humor – giving the cadaver a nickname; making jokes about the cadaver

VOICE

1st person – student, cadaver, other (using “I” to refer to self, cadaver, someone else); **1st person plural (we)** – students as a group

2nd person – cadaver, fellow students, other (using “you” to refer to cadaver, others)

3rd person – more objective perspective (using he, she, they to refer to self, cadaver, fellow students, others)

TONE

Humorous - funny

Ironic - sarcastic, bitter, sardonic

Sad - sorrow, pity, compassion

Angry - rage

Reflection - thoughtful, contemplative; *self-directed*

Instructive - conveying knowledge (about the human body)

Frank/Open/Sincere - similar to Dr. Thai's "integrity" - *self-directed*

Doubting/Uncertain - confusion about the experience of anatomy; questioning its value

Concern

INTERPRETATION

In this section, the reviewer may write a brief interpretation of the project. In contradistinction to the "content" categories above, this is an opportunity to make subjective comments about the meaning of the project. Consider dimensions suggested by Dr. Thai such as the following:

Identity - how is the identity of the student affected by anatomy, as expressed through this project?

Integrity - is the integrity of the self compromised, fragmented, as a result of the anatomy experience; does the student's sense of self seem fragile, lacking in unity?

Complexity - does the project raise questions about the complexity of the anatomy experience? Does it suggest that the student is in a state of confusion because of the inability to adequately process the combination of emotional and intellectual stress?

Other

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: ANATOMY CREATIVE PROJECTS

For Students Who Did Not Participate in the Creative Project Option

1. What made you decide not to participate in the creative project option?
2. Did you see any of the creative projects done by other students?
3. If yes, what was your reaction?
4. Would you make the same choice if you were taking the anatomy course again?
5. How stressful did you find the anatomy class to be? (1-5, 5=very stressful)
6. How stressful have you found the following:
 - a. exams
 - b. other courses
 - c. medical school overall
 - d. adjusting to new classmates, new environment

For Students Who Completed the Creative Projects Option

1. What made you decide to participate in the creative project option? (If more than one reason, rank order most important to least important)
2. Did you complete only one or both projects?
3. (If completed only one project) Was it the first or the second project?
4. (If completed only one project) What made you decide to do only that one project?
5. (If completed both projects) What medium did you choose for your first project? What medium did you choose for the final project?
6. (If different types) Why did you choose different media for the first and second submissions? (If the same) What made you decide to repeat the same medium for the project both times?
7. (If completed both projects) Were there any differences you noticed between the two projects?
8. What, if anything, did your project help you learn about any of the following
 - a. Self-awareness
 - b. the doctor-patient relationship
 - c. empathy
 - d. spirituality
 - e. death/mortality
 - f. the medical profession
 - g. anatomy
 - h. the human body
9. Did your project reduce anatomy-related stress for you in any way? If so, how?
10. Was there any way in which doing the project changed your attitude toward
 - a. the medical profession
 - b. anatomy
11. How stressful did you find the anatomy class to be? (1-5, 5=very stressful)

12. How stressful have you found the following:

- a. exams
- b. other course
- c. medical school overall
- d. adjusting to new classmates, new environment