

PROPOSAL FOR AN INTEGRATED, LONGITUDINAL, REQUIRED MEDICAL HUMANITIES CURRICULUM
(coordinated with but separate from the bioethics curriculum and course requirements)

Medical Humanities is a well-established interdisciplinary field whose mission lies at the intersection of human experience and medical practice. It engages aspects of science, literature, the arts, religion and spirituality, history, philosophy and ethics. It focuses on what the experience of illness and the practice of medicine mean to individual patients and providers within particular historical, cultural, and societal contexts. The study of medical humanities develops skills of critical thinking, perspective-taking, communication and relationship-building for the purpose of enhancing humanistic care for all patients regardless of gender, race, age, and class.

A comprehensive integrated, longitudinal, required curriculum in MH is proposed below. It would consist of brief “seed talks” by faculty to introduce a theme, followed by small group discussion and exercises. Required readings and assignments would also be provided.

Year 1: Introduction to Medical Humanities (8 hr total)

1. Medicine in Historical Perspective – 2 hrs
2. Introduction to the Patient-Doctor/Medical Student Relationship: A Humanities Perspective
(A 6 hour course coordinated with CFI to address the following topics from an arts/humanities perspective)
 - a. The Medical Student-Patient Relationship
 - b. Doctors and Patients
 - c. Cadaver as First Patient (coordinated with anatomy)
 - d. Taking a History
 - e. The Physical Exam
 - f. Practicing Medicine across Cultures
 - g. Digital Narrative Medicine (ongoing storytelling project)

Year 2: Special Topics in the Humanities and Arts (8 hr total)

1. Visual Thinking Strategies (refining ways of seeing through art) (2 hr)
2. Clinical Improvisation (how to respond to unexpected and sensitive pt. revelations using techniques of improvisational theater and dance) (2 hr)
3. Perspective-Taking and Empathy (hearing the voice of the patient through point-of-view writing and literature) (2 hr)
4. History of Medicine: Going Deeper (2 hr)

Year 3: Deepening Understanding of the Doctor-Patient Relationship (8 hr total)

An intercession course addressing the following (2 hr each):

1. Verbal and Nonverbal Communication
2. Kindness, Respect, and Empathy
3. Difficult Doctor-Patient Encounters (noncompliance)
4. Death and Dying (breaking bad news)

Year 4: Capstone Course: Art of Medicine (8 hr total)

An intercession course coordinated with CFIV and addressing the following:

1. Communication Skills in Real Time
2. Equanimity (balancing emotional distance and emotional connection with patients)

3. Working with Difficult People (patients, family members, colleagues)
4. Medical Errors and Mistakes
5. Intraprofessional Teams
6. Professionalism
7. Work-Life Balance
8. Finding Meaning in Medicine