

READING AND WRITING ELECTIVE

The overall goal of this elective is to encourage medical students to discover how reflective reading and writing about patient-doctor relationships and structural inequities in medical care can deepen and expand awareness of oneself, patients, colleagues, attendings and the healthcare system. Discussions also center on how such awareness can translate into transformative action to move healthcare in more compassionate and just directions.

Format: Readings are done on-site or before class. Students examine personal thoughts and feelings in reaction to each piece. They also note structural elements (use of imagery, language, metaphor, voice) that made the work effective for them, as well as literary devices they disliked. Half the session is devoted to reading the selected work and discussion. The remaining time is focused on 1 doing a free-write exercise, which can be shared or not as students wish and time permits. Students are also encouraged to practice different forms of writing out of class, and to share these experiments as they wish at the start of each class. In the interests of time, this sharing is limited to 1-2 students per session.

WEEK 1: Introduction. Close Reading and Creative Writing (didactic article, Rita Charon). Exploration of a theoretical model for understanding the value of reflective literary processes in the medical student journey; **Reflective Writing Workshop** – a really good handout for nuts and bolts of reflective writing.

WEEK 2: Skits and Plays as a Path for Engagement with Literature. A Good Story (based on excerpt from Michael Crichton's *Travels*). The focus is on using dramatic structure to engage readers and audience; the value of this form for representing multiple points of view; and experimenting with literally embodying the "voice" of another.

WEEK 3 The Short Short Story Form: The Blood of Strangers Huyler. Learning how to tell a powerful story succinctly; interviewing patients/parents; processing potential medical error.

WEEK 4: First Person Poetry: Anatomy Lesson Jack Coulehan. Using poetry to express profound personal feelings and insights and grapple with big picture questions. The distinction between author and narrator. **Walking the Dog** John Wright. Using humor to explore difficult patient-doctor relationships.

WEEK 5: Second Person Essay: How to Tell a Mother Her Child Is Dead. Naomi Rosenberg. The compelling power of the second person voice, making it difficult for the reader to distance from difficult material.

WEEK 6: First Person Essay: Medicine Mortality Reflexive Verbs. Robin Schoenthaler. The importance of language in the patient-student doctor relationship and in cross-cultural encounters; the role of mentoring; using the essay form to describe one's journey in medical training.

WEEK 7: Formal Poetry (the Sonnet): Campo Ten plus One (Raphael Campo) How formal poetic structures can be reimaged in more contemporary forms relevant to medical care. (Students can see some of these poems as racist, whereas in fact they are the opposite – condemning

racism and injustice. A good time to note the difference between authorial and narrator voices).

WEEK 8: Dealing with Racist Patients. Racism in Medicine Nwando Olayiwola. How creative/reflective writing can be used to examine and push back against racism directed toward physicians of color.

WEEK 9: “Loving” Your Patients: Emotions in Medicine .The Second Sentence. Jonathan Kole. How a storytelling approach can be used to explore little examined dimensions of the patient-doctor relationship.

WEEK 10: Wrap-up and Final Thoughts. Sharing personal writing; reflecting on the class; what was learned; how they changed or grew over the last 10 weeks.