

Narrative Medicine

Web Catalog Description:

All patient care begins with a story. But how well trained are we to listen and respond to stories in a meaningful way? In this selective, we will borrow from the world of literature to develop our skills of close reading and reflective writing. In doing so, we will seek to hear our patients' stories, understand the perspectives of our colleagues, and gain insight into ourselves.

Description of the Course

Narrative medicine can be defined as the "set of skills required to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by the stories one hears.*" Two aspects of narrative practice, close reading and reflective writing, are strategies which can assist us in understanding our patients while also helping us comprehend our own experience in taking care of them. During this selective, you will learn techniques for close listening and interpretation of stories, both written and verbal. You will also practice the skill of reflective writing. Taking the time to reflect on our own experience caring for patients is an essential part of providing meaningful, humanistic healthcare and has been shown to improve resiliency and mitigate burnout among those in the health care professions. After completing this selective, you will have the skills to listen more closely to patients, to better understand their stories, and to reflect on your own experiences in the process.

*The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine, Charon et. Al, Oxford University Press, 2016

Instructor

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Educational Objectives:

At the conclusion of this selective you will have the ability to:

- 1 Closely read and respond to stories
- 2 Reflect on your own experiences through writing
- 3 Respond to the writing of others

Sessions:

Week 1: Narrative History: What is narrative medicine and how does it work?

Week 2: Close reading and reflective writing: short pieces

Week 3: Close reading and reflective writing: *When Breath Becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi

Week 4: Close reading and reflective writing: student-selected pieces

Responsibilities for Successful completion:

To complete the selective, a student must:

1. Attend the four sessions
2. Complete required readings before the sessions and select pieces of writing for group reflection
3. Complete writing reflections before and during the sessions
4. Participate in and facilitate group discussion