

HUMANITIES, ETHICS, AND PALLIATIVE CARE AREA OF CONCENTRATION

Just as medical science draws from a number of sciences to understand and address disease and disability, the interdisciplinary field of medical humanities draws from the humanities to enable physicians to provide more humane, sensitive care to diverse patients. Moreover, while the medical sciences provide many tools to diagnose, treat, or prevent medical conditions, the medical humanities provide intellectual and emotional resources for physicians when they face health care issues that seem to have “no good solution,” perhaps because of limited knowledge or resources, or because of a clash of values or cultures between their patients and what medicine can offer.

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, in collaboration with the center for bioethics and health law (CBHL), offers an Area of Concentration (AOC) in Humanities, Ethics, and Palliative Care to enhance students’ education in medical science and its clinical application. Students work with a mentor to tailor the content of their AOC to fulfill their interests and to apply what they learn within clinical contexts. Students typically join the AOC in their first or second year and are strongly encouraged to complete their Scholarly Project as part of the AOC. Many students choose the AOC to pursue interests in the humanities and social sciences that they may miss from their college studies.

COMPONENTS

Local Activities in Humanities, Ethics, and Palliative Care:

The Center for Bioethics and Health Law (CBHL) sponsors Medical Ethics Update, an annual day-long conference on a specific current topic in medical ethics, as well as CBHL Colloquia and department-based grand rounds by Visiting Professors in Bioethics. Students may also join the C. F. Reynolds Medical History Society and attend its lecture series, or the Literature and Medicine Reading Group or MedHeads Group, which are medical student organized activities. In addition, each year AoC relevant talks are offered across the University by the Cultural, Gender, or Global Studies Programs; by the Center for Health Equity (in Pitt Public Health); in the Schools of Law, Medicine, and other health sciences; and by local art museums and organizations, theater, or community organizations. Many of these activities are listed on the Events calendar at the CBHL website (<http://www.bioethics.pitt.edu>). In addition, first and second year students may want to explore School of Medicine Mini-Electives such as Art and Medicine, Drawing for Seeing and Understanding: The Human Figure, or Medicine and Literature, and others found at www.omed.pitt.edu/curriculum/mini-electives.php.

National Activities:

Since 2010, PRIME (the Project to Rebalance and Integrate Medical Education) has held annual conferences focused on the integration of art, ethics, history, and literature in medical education. In addition, various states and universities host medical humanities organizations and networks that sponsor resources and meetings. These include New York University (<http://medhum.med.nyu.edu>), the Florida Bioethics Network (<http://fbn.med.miami.edu>), and the Pennsylvania Medical Humanities Consortium. Internationally, the UK Arts & Research Council sponsors the International Health Humanities Network (<http://www.healthhumanities.org>) that, in turn, sponsors medical humanities research and meetings.

The American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (www.asbh.org) brings together bioethicists, clinicians, economists, historians, lawyers, philosophers, and theologians, as well as artists and creative writers. The diverse group is united by interest in the cultural context of medicine and the ethical and social issues surrounding health care. Student members are encouraged to submit papers for the annual national meeting that usually occurs in the fall. There is a prize for the best student paper. The Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (<http://appe.indiana.edu>) advances research and practice in all areas of professional ethics, including medicine, as well as examination of applied or practical ethical issues. The annual spring meeting features a Bioethics Track of programming. The organization welcomes student and early career members, and also offers paper prizes in each of those career categories.

Graduate Courses:

A variety of courses pertinent to the AOC are offered at the graduate level in various schools of the University. In addition to these recent offerings, AOC students may petition to have a particular course serve as part of their AOC. Examples of graduate courses include:

- Bioethics
- Bioethics and Law
- Elder Law
- Ethics and Aging
- Feminist Theory
- Gender, Ethics and the Body
- Gender, Ethnicity, Race, and Religion
- Health Law and Ethics
- Historical and Sociological Perspectives on Public Health
- History of Medicine
- Moral Theory
- New Reproductive Practices
- Philosophy of Medicine
- Philosophy of Psychiatry
- Philosophy of Science
- Psychoanalysis & Cultural Identity
- Queer Theory
- Readings in Contemporary Fiction
- Research Ethics and Responsible Conduct of Research
- Rhetoric of Science
- Special Topics in Bioethics
- Special Topics in Medical Anthropology
- Theoretical Foundations of Applied Ethics
- Theories of Gender and Sexuality
- Writing Structures and Techniques

Third and Fourth Year Electives in Humanities, Ethics, and Palliative Care:

Recent offerings have included: Cultural Competency, Ethical Issues in Clinical Practice, History of Medicine, Narrative and the Experience of Illness, Palliative/Hospice Care.

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION AND CONTINUATION IN THE AOC

Students will be admitted based upon their interest and background as demonstrated in the AOC application. Applications are available on Navigator. For additional information, students may contact AOC Director Lisa S. Parker (lisap@pitt.edu; Center for Bioethics and Health Law; Barco Law Building, Room 519; University of Pittsburgh; 3900 Forbes Avenue; Pittsburgh, PA 15260; 412-648-7007) or Amber E. Barnato (amber.barnato@pitt.edu; Center for Research on Health Care; 230 McKee Place, Suite 600.13, Pittsburgh, PA 15213; 412-692-4875). Continued membership in the AOC depends on the student's timely completion of AOC milestones and quarterly meetings or communication with the chosen mentor and AOC director.

REQUIREMENTS

Requirements are designed to expose students to the breadth and depth of the medical humanities, to allow them to pursue their particular interests, and to help them become members of the local and national communities of those interested in the medical humanities. Students may focus within the AOC on particular interests, such as creative writing, gender issues, history, literature, or visual arts, effectively tailoring the requirements to create their own individualized tracks within the AOC. In response to the substantial interest in these two areas, special emphasis tracks in medical ethics and in palliative care have been established. The requirements for these are detailed here. As general requirements of the AOC, students

will:

- Select and meet with a mentor on a quarterly basis
- Attend at least five local AOC -related professional educational activities during each of three years
- Maintain membership in the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities for at least two years and attend one national meeting (or other meeting approved by the AOC directors)
- Complete (either as pass/fail, or with a letter grade) two graduate-level AOC -related courses (typically one during the first two years, and a second during the third or fourth year)
- Complete two AOC -related electives during the third and fourth years
- Apply AOC -relevant approaches within one clinical rotation, or complete the Scholarly Project in the AOC

Humanities Emphasis

Just as medical science draws from a number of sciences to understand and address disease and disability, the interdisciplinary field of medical humanities draws from the diverse domains of anthropology, cultural studies, ethics, film studies, history, law, literature, philosophy, religion, sociology, art, writing, and gender studies to equip physicians to provide more humane, sensitive care to diverse patients. Moreover, while the medical sciences provide many tools to diagnose, treat, or prevent medical conditions, the medical humanities provide intellectual and emotional resources for physicians when they face health care issues that seem to have “no good solution,” perhaps because of limited knowledge or resources, or because of a clash of values or cultures between their patients and what medicine can offer. Through this AoC emphasis, students gain an enriched appreciation of the social context in which biomedical interventions and debates take place. Students explore how medicine and culture interact to shape provider and patient identities, healthcare practices, and healthcare institutions. In addition, they gain critical analytical skills needed to participate in the broader public conversation about health care. Emphasis requirements:

- Select a mentor from among: Bromberg, Condee, Crossley, Document, Emanuel, ERLen, Fischer, Hall, Krier, Lyne, Musante, Parker, Paterson, Reeser, Russell
- Attend 15 (5/year) medical humanities or humanities-related activities locally
- Attend a meeting of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (or other approved ethics meeting)
- Complete 2 graduate-level courses in consultation with a mentor.
- Complete two electives in the third and fourth years:
 - Ethical Issues in Clinical Practice, History of Medicine, Palliative/Hospice Care, Cultural Competency, Narrative and the Experience of Illness
- Complete an ethics-related project in conjunction with a clinical rotation or a humanities-related Scholarly Project

Medical Ethics Emphasis

A major field of study within the medical humanities focuses on ethical issues as they arise in the clinical setting, as well as at institutional and social policy levels. This emphasis within the AoC enables students to explore these ethical issues, analyze empirical bioethical research, read classic texts in bioethics, and develop frameworks for thinking about the ethical issues and conflicts that arise in the practice of medicine. Emphasis requirements:

- Select a mentor from among: Arnold, Crossley, Meisel, Parker, Satkoske, White, Wicclair, Hall
- Attend 15 (5/year) ethics-related medical humanities activities locally
- Attend a meeting of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (or other approved ethics meeting)
- Complete graduate-level courses:
 - Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine or Theoretical Foundations of Applied Ethics

- Complete two electives in the third and fourth years:
 - Ethical Issues in Clinical Practice, History of Medicine, Palliative/Hospice Care, Cultural Competency, Narrative and the Experience of Illness
- Complete an ethics-related project in conjunction with a clinical rotation or an ethics-related Scholarly Project

Palliative Care Emphasis

Palliative care is a specialty focused on “the study and management of patients with active, progressive, far-advanced disease for whom the prognosis is limited and the focus of care is quality of life” (Oxford Textbook of Palliative Medicine, 1993). It integrates physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of patient care in order to help patients live as actively as possible until death and to help family members cope during their loved one's illness and in bereavement. Palliative care thus employs in the clinical setting approaches and topics taught under the headings of clinical ethics and medical humanities with an emphasis on end-of-life decision-making and the spiritual and value-based needs of patients. Emphasis requirements:

- Select a mentor from among: Arnold, Barnato, Claxton, Meisel, Reitschuler-Cross, Thurston, King, Teuteberg, Sands, Tamber, Schenker
- Attend 15 (5/year) palliative care or hospice related activities locally
- Attend a meeting of the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine (or other approved meeting)
- Complete graduate-level courses:
 - Bioethics or Ethics & Aging and Philosophy of Medicine or other approved elective
- Complete two electives in the third and fourth years:
 - Ethical Issues in Clinical Practice, History of Medicine, Palliative/Hospice Care, Cultural Competency, Narrative and the Experience of Illness
- Complete a project focused on palliative care in conjunction with a clinical rotation or a palliative care-related Scholarly Project

AOC DIRECTORS

Lisa S. Parker, PhD

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