



University
of
Pittsburgh

School
of
Medicine

Office
of
Medical
Education

www.omed.pitt.edu

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Medicine and Literature Mini-Elective Spring 2009

<u>Course Dates:</u>	March 30, April 6, 13, 20 Mondays, 1:00-3:00 PM
<u>Maximum Students:</u>	8
<u>Class Year:</u>	MS1
<u>Course Director:</u>	Robin Maier, MD
<u>Contact Information:</u>	Robin Maier, MD 412-648-8714 rmmaier@yahoo.com
<u>Registration:</u>	Betsy Nero, Office of Medical Education betsy@medschool.pitt.edu

Description:

Every text, every word we read or hear carries meaning because of all the other contexts and situations in which we've heard those same words before. This richly interconnected web of stories, words, phrases, and texts is the way our culture helps us to interpret and "imagine" our particular experiences in the world around us. This course will use many different kinds of culturally relevant literature (drama, poetry, children's literature, popular fiction, classics) to help us explore the ways our culture imagines and interprets the experience of medicine. Our goal is to understand better how our own words in the office may echo the "divine healer", the "mad scientist," the "charlatan" or other mythological healers in our patients' ears—so that we can consciously communicate more effectively with patients.

There will be four class meetings for two hours each. Each session will be conducted in a small group discussion format.

Students are expected to complete readings prior to the course sessions (20 – 80 pages of fiction, poetry or drama), reflect in writing on the week's readings (approximately 1 page each week except the first class meeting) and come prepared for vigorous discussion. For the final class session, students will be given the opportunity to suggest other culturally relevant texts for the class to consider.

We will read selections from Moliere, Dr. Seuss, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Gwendolyn Brooks, Jane Austen, J.R.R. Tolkien, the Bible, Mother Goose and more.

Objectives:

- To gain an appreciation for the various parts physicians play in the literature of our culture.
- To learn to use the tools and systems of literary criticism to analyze literature, and then in turn to analyze the "text" of a clinical medical encounter.
- To gain an appreciation for the complex ways in which our own words and actions may be interpreted and misinterpreted within the clinical setting by patients who listen to us with ears and minds which have been prepared for the encounter by the literature, myths and stories of our culture.

Course Outline

Medicine and Literature

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Robin Maier, MD
rmmaier@yahoo.com

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Location:

All sessions
Scaife Hall, Room 460A&B

Requirements:

- Actively participate in all four course sessions.
- Complete reading assignments before each session, (20 – 80 pages of fiction, poetry or drama).
- Reflect in writing on the week's readings (approx. 1 page each week except the first class meeting) and come prepared for vigorous discussion.