



Professional Enrichment Course

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Office of Medical Education

PEC Registrar – Denise Downs d downs@pitt.edu 412-648-8749

Course Name: Being a Physician

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| Enrollment Period: | Fall 2021 |
| Course Dates: | November 9, 16, and 23 (1-3PM) |
| Student Max: | 10 |
| Class Year: | MS1, MS2 |
| Course Director: | Ritu Thamman, MD and Gaetan Sgro, MD |
| Course Administrator: | |
| Location: | Scaife Hall 502 / 503 |
| Registration: | Via Amp Up – Registration open date will be announced via email |
| Course Description: | This PEC will employ various narrative medicine techniques including close reading, reflective writing, artistic expression, and prompted reflection to explore themes of professional identity formation, resilience, wholeness, and purpose. Students will meet once a week for 3 weeks in small groups consisting of no more than five students per faculty member. Individual session descriptions follow. |
| Objectives: | |
| Pre-Requisites: | None |
| Requirements: | None |
| Texts: | None |

Being a Physician

A Mini-Elective

Course Directors: Ritu Thamman, MD, Gaetan Sgro, MD

Sessions: the class will meet for 3 two-hour evening sessions at a location to be determined

Pre-requisites: none

Capacity: 10 MS-1 and MS-2 students



Hopper, Edward. *The Lighthouse at Two Lights*. 1929. Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York.

Course description: This mini-elective will employ various narrative medicine techniques including close reading, reflective writing, artistic expression, and prompted reflection to explore themes of professional identity formation, resilience, wholeness, and purpose. Students will meet via ZOOM or TEAMS (info TBA) for 3 weeks in small groups consisting of no more than five students per faculty member. Individual session descriptions follow.

SESSION I – ON BEING

This session will address themes of self-awareness and self-esteem, states of being, transformation, professional identity formation, and maintaining integrity.

Introduction – 5-minute centering exercise

Artistic exercise – Who are you?

Students will create mixed-media artwork that expresses their sense of self. Each student will have the opportunity to present their artwork to the group.

Narrative exercise – “How to Be a Medical Student.”



Girl _ The New
Yorker.pdf

Students will read and respond to Jamaica Kincaid’s short story, “Girl.” Following the discussion, students will each write instructions for “How to Be a Medical Student.”

Discussion – Maintaining integrity

- 1. What threats to your integrity/sense of self have you experienced, or do you expect?*
- 2. How will you face them?*

SESSION II – LIVING WITH LOSS

This session will address the inevitability of loss, not only of loved ones but of the parts of ourselves that we hold most dear. We will explore ways to acknowledge and honor our losses and define strategies for moving beyond grief.

Introduction – 5-minute centering exercise

Writing exercise – Honoring the stories of loss

In pairs, students will interview each other about “a loss you’ve suffered” and produce written, first-person accounts to share with the group.

Discussion – Moving from grief to mourning.

The theologian Serene Jones draws a distinction between grief and mourning:

To move from grief to mourning is to move from a place of sheer loss to a place of acknowledging the loss, and in mourning the permanence of the loss, it can’t be fixed, but also, it creates a space, in mourning, for you to make sacred the pain so that the rest of your life is transformed by it.”

1. *What does this idea mean to you?*
2. *What are ways you’ve been able to move from grief to mourning?*

Ceremony – Our losses have names

Each student will identify one loss they’d like to acknowledge. In turn, each student stands and names their loss. A bell rings after each statement.

SESSION III – EMBRACING THE CALL

The final session will explore the unique attributes that led us to medicine, the significance of a calling, the commitment to service, and the importance of community.

Introduction – 5-minute centering exercise

Showcase – What makes you unique?

Students will bring an object of meaning from home, taking turns describing how each represents their individuality.

Discussion – What unites us?

Rachel Naomi Remen often remarks on the uniqueness of physicians as helpers, pointing out that it is not a natural human instinct, upon hearing sirens, to want to run towards them.

1. *What called you here?*
2. *What unites us?*
3. *What parts of ourselves would we not want to surrender to a group identity?*

Discussion – A way of life

The poet Wendell Berry said this of marriage:

Because the condition of marriage is worldly and its meaning communal, no one party to it can be solely in charge. What you alone think it ought to be, it is not going to be. Where you alone think you want it to go, it is not going to go. It is going where the two of you — and marriage, time, life, history, and the world — will take it. You do not know the road; you have committed your life to a way.

1. *Talk about commitment in the context of a career in medicine.*

Writing exercise – My own solemn vow

Students will draft their own mission statement and write them on a piece of art paper. Each student will read their statements to the group. A bell will ring after each student reads.

Final reflection – A community of healers.

Students will commit to supporting each other through the journey of medical school and beyond and will mark their commitment with a group photo to be Tweeted for posterity.

See below for inspiration:

