Narrative Medicine Course Outline

Maurice Mierau

This course teaches narrative medicine by engaging you as a reader, writer, and medical professional with narrative materials drawn from various literary genres, much of which has medical themes. Positive health outcomes depend on communication, empathy, and collaboration, all skills that are integral to narrative medicine. The course consists of eight two-hour sessions, and is designed for those who have not previously studied narrative medicine; each class will consist of close reading and writing exercises, sharing of reflective writing, and discussion of the reading and writing. No reading or writing outside class will be required.

Learning Objectives

- Develop close reading, listening and observation skills
- Practice reflective and creative writing skills
- Learn how narrative medicine and ethical considerations related to its practice happen in the context of literature, and, by analogy, in clinical practice.

Course plan (classes 2 hours each w. 15 minute break)

Week 1
- Overview of course plan
- Short introductory discussion of narrative-based medicine
- Close reading
- Reflective writing in response to close reading
- Share writing

Week 2
- Review of Rita Charon framework for analyzing narrative forms
- Format and protocol for sharing reflective writing and giving feedback
- Reflective writing exercise
- Share writing

Week 3
- Review of close reading methods
- Reflective writing exercise
- Share responses

Week 4
- Listening exercise (poetry)
- Reflective writing exercise
- Share responses

Week 5
- Journaling as part of narrative medicine
- Do 5 short writing exercises
- Share exercise results/writing

Week 6
- Close reading on treatment of time
- Reflective writing exercise
- Share writing

Week 7
- Close reading on selection of incident
- Reflective writing exercise
- Share writing

Week 8

- Reflective writing that builds narrative
- Sharing of narratives/discoveries
- Summary discussion of course content