

Asano Humanities & Health Certificate

2019-2020

Reflection Examples

Three Words: Pick three words that describe your experience of an Asano event and describe what inspired the choices. What other parts of your life (personal or professional) relate to the words you chose?

Brigitte Anderson

Event: Dean Concert Series: David's Harp

The 3 words I choose to describe my experience are curiosity, understanding, and acceptance.

When I learned about this Concert Series, I was extremely curious to hear what a blend of Ottoman court music, Sephardic pizmonim, Ladino folk songs, Turkish fasıl music, and Greek rebetiko would sound like. Of all of the aforementioned genres listed, I had never heard any of them and wanted to know how these sounds and instruments would make me think and feel.

I was also excited to attend the event in order to gain a greater understanding of not only these types of music but also the cultures that underlie them. There is so much that music can tell the listener about a culture from the instruments played to the stories told. In order to truly understand any culture, it is necessary to explore it from a variety of perspectives: academically, through history and anthropology, as well as artistically through music, art, and dance. The arts is unique in its ability to combine academia with the human experience in a way that captivates its audience, even audiences completely unfamiliar with the culture at hand.

The last word is acceptance because I was particularly inspired by David's Harp's focus on peace and friendship. As xenophobia reaches perilous levels in today's world, it is necessary that we participate in events like these. They help us learn about people from other parts of the world so that we can find commonalities amongst us and learn to appreciate the differences between us. Our world is diverse, and as citizens of the world, we have a responsibility to learn about this diversity.

As a medical student, it is important to expose oneself to as many cultures as possible.

This is a vital step when preparing to practice in today's highly interconnected world. Because

doctors care for patients from any and all backgrounds, understanding a patient's culture can help foster the doctor-patient relationship. Cultural norms can have large impacts upon not only how a patient interacts with a doctor but also how patients react to presented treatment options. As a physician, I want to strive to remain curious, understanding, and accepting of my patient's thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Part of being a physician is being a lifelong learner, and I think this idea extends beyond just medicine. We must strive to remain aware in our world in order to provide patients with the highest quality, human centered care.

Brianna Kunes
Event: Tangles in Time

Attending “Tangles in Time” was a reflexive decision; I did not even think about it. The moment I saw that the ideas surrounding memory, communication, and caregiving were going to be explored this semester, I became very eager to attend this play. For three years, I have worked in geriatrics as a certified nursing assistant in a long-term care facility. Typically, I work on Memory Lane, a locked unit for patients with dementia. Therefore, I have extensive experience with the patient stories like those that I expected to see presented in the play. “Tangles in Time” beautifully wove elements of illness together to paint a picture of each patient when the patient’s voice was not available to present themselves. There are three words that describe my experience at “Tangles in Time”: emotional, perspective, and sorrow.

First, I chose to describe “Tangles in Time” as emotional for very personal reasons. During every scene, the play displayed raw, unapologetic emotion. However, the presentation of Mary Ann touched me the most. My late grandmother’s name is Mary Ann, and I saw so much of my own grandmother in the woman on the screen. At the end of her life, I found myself the primary caregiver of a 58-year-old woman dying of pancreatic cancer. Just like the Mary Ann in the play, my Mary Ann was unable to communicate or form coherent sentences as her health declined. Feeling such a connection and sense of empathy for the man in front of me so early in the production had me crying the entire time.

Further, “Tangles in Time” gave me a refreshing perspective for this upcoming week of medical school classes. Lately, I have found myself feeling quite hopeless in the midst of endless studying and effort. I am incredibly far from my family, boyfriend, and best friends for the first time in my life. This play reminded me of the reasons I chose to come here and become a

physician. At one point, a woman on stage said that she is honored and grateful that people trust her to care for them in their most vulnerable moments. Those were the exact words I gave to Dr. Motley during my medical school interview a mere eight months ago. Such a simple line was a powerful reminder of why I am sacrificing so much.

Finally, I left “Tangles in Time” with a sense of sorrow. I wept for all we have forgotten, the languages, the music, the stories, the average lives and names of others that are lost to history. I know that the caregivers on stage grieve for the lovers, parents, and grandparents they once knew, but I appreciated the stories of grief surrounding a loss of culture, time, and communication as well. “Tangles in Time” was a wonderful first experience for me in the Asano program, and I am so excited to go to more events.

Andrew Jordan

Event: Health Humanities Reading Group with Adam DePaul

Three Words: Relatable, Incomprehensible, Intertwined

I chose each of these words for their own reason, but each help me describe my experience of the reading group discussing *There There* by Tommy Orange. The novel is about some of the hardships and ethnic gymnastics of finding one's identity, and Orange explores some of these themes set in an indigenous community of Oakland California. During the reading group we read powerful passages out loud, discussed interesting and relevant topics to our lives, and heard from Adam DePaul, a professor at Temple University and Lenape Nation councilmember.

I chose the word **relatable** to describe the novel and reading group for two reasons. First, I think both the book and our discussion explored concepts of identity and belonging that everyone can relate to their own lives. For example, we discussed what communities we felt we belonged to as well as when in our lives we began to feel this way. Secondly, I chose the word **relatable** because as a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians myself, this novel and discussion hit home for me. In the past I have struggled and still struggle with some of the ideas of identity regarding heritage and ethnicity that were in the novel and came up in discussion. On the other hand, I also relate to the group discussion, because I have been a part of similar group discussions prior to medical school. These discussions also explored ideas indigenous identity and how all of these different social and cultural factors influence health care delivery and outcomes.

The second word I chose to describe my experience at this event is **incomprehensible**. I enjoyed the ability to discuss elements of both the novel and our current lives that truly are incomprehensible. For example, we each gave our unique accounts of who we are and how that has influenced our experience of health care or our perception of health care delivery from the

eyes of future professionals. In such discussion, I also learned the benefit to put ourselves in someone else's shoes. This enabled me to appreciate the idea of not being able to understand everything, but to try my best. As part of our discussion I came to the conclusion that I cannot understand everything about a patient, and that is okay. The patient's background and the nuances of their culture can influence their experience of health care in various ways. This idea of an impossibility to understand everything, but a goal to try, is essential in delivering equitable and just health care.

Finally, I chose the word **intertwined** to describe my experience of our discussion. I found that in applying concepts from the book to my life and listening to others', I observed an element of connectedness that went beyond the room. In acknowledging an intertwining nature of our experiences and our perceptions of health care, we opened up new discussion regarding the future of health care. The most enjoyable part of the session included approaching ideas and identifying areas of improvement in our health care system. From this group discussion, I learned from others and became more aware of my power to affect change as a future physician.

Emily Huang
Event: Humanism in Medicine Conference

Empathy. Mindfulness. Character.

“If you don’t understand their history, then you don’t know who they are.” The Keynote speaker of the Humanism in Medicine Conference, Dr. Pedro J. Greer Jr. said these words. These words were so important to me that I took out my phone to type them down. Dr. Greer’s speech and this conference reminded me so much of the reasons I went into medicine. After graduating from a liberal arts college, I knew I wanted to keep humanism and humanity intertwined in everything I did in my career. I did not want to lose that aspect of my life. The medical school puts on these events to remind us of the stories beyond the medications and diagnostic differentials. I feel appreciative that it is in fact the stories and human experiences I get to be a part of which draw me to medicine the most. If I had to choose three words to describe this Asano event, they would be: empathy, mindfulness, and character.

Empathy:

Dr. Greer encouraged all doctors to learn improv because it is where you can experience empathy. I tried an improv class once and it took me so much out of my comfort zone that I haven’t done it again since. However, I did notice how much I had to read the other individuals in the room and how it allowed me to play inside a part of my brain that I feel like I need to turn off during my pre-clinical years of medical school. I hope to revisit improv classes once again soon.

Mindfulness:

Another moving anecdote Dr. Greer shared was about how children of incarcerated individuals were taught mindfulness. I quickly jotted this note down as well

because when I worked as a student wellness advocate in college, we were very big on mindfulness. I remember some students in my school fought the idea of mindfulness by telling my wellness team that mindfulness is inaccessible to people who live with difficult circumstances such as those who live in low-income neighborhoods or areas with a high crime rate. The fact that Dr. Greer encouraged and reported success in teaching mindfulness to children of incarcerated individuals gave me hope that mindfulness could be an intervention for all.

Character:

Lastly, Dr. Greer recommended that medical education should include character building. This made me ponder because I liked the idea, but I didn't know how to implement it. One idea I had was perhaps that medical schools could teach more improv classes rather than having so many random HSS questions that we need to memorize. Although I enjoy the HSS topics and articles that are given to us to read, I wish they were more discussed rather than just making them as learning objectives for us to figure out and memorize on our own. This Asano event was fascinating and thought provoking and I was really glad Jefferson could offer an experience such as this.