Table of Contents

1. About JeffMD Humanities Selectives
2. Visualizing Anatomy
3. Mindfulness and Compassion for Self and Others
4. Dance and Wellness with Koresh Dance Company
4. The Empathy Project with Lantern Theater Company
4. Race and Medicine: Why It Matters
5. Graphic Medicine with University of the Arts
5. The Healer’s Art
6. History of Medicine
6. Introduction to Creative Writing
6. Medical Cineforum
7. The Language of Music: Improvisation in Sound
8. The Art of Observation at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
9. TimeSlips
9. Frontiers of Medical Ethics
10. Asano Humanities & Health Certificate
11. Why the Humanities in Medicine
12. Creative Collaborations Fuse Medicine and the Arts
About JeffMD

Humanities Selectives

The **JeffMD Humanities Selectives** are courses that provide opportunities to strengthen key skills of providing care through engagement in the arts and humanities. Skills include:

- close observation
- emotional awareness and empathy
- team and interpersonal communication (including listening)
- understanding the perspectives of patients and colleagues
- comfort with ambiguity and making mistakes
- understanding social and historical dimensions of health
- self-care and burnout prevention

The Humanities Selectives are immersive, arts-based experiences and participation-oriented seminars that promote support and bonding between classmates and offer creative respite within the medical school curriculum. In many cases, these courses are developed by professional artists in collaboration with medical educators and reflect unique syntheses of medicine and the arts and humanities.

All Sidney Kimmel Medical College students are expected to complete two Humanities Selectives during Phase One of the JeffMD curriculum. Check Blackboard for current offerings.

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Visualizing Anatomy

Visualizing Anatomy expands and improves anatomy education with the help of creative inquiry-based, hands-on exercises in drawing, painting and sculpture. With a focus on training students in deeper visual perception, based on the five perceptions outlined by Betty Edwards in *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, the program includes seven sessions that are tightly coordinated with the anatomy curriculum, directly supplementing both dissection and case-based lessons. Using art as a learning tool, the program aims to strengthen students’ visual-spatial thinking while helping them to successfully interpret histological images and scans.

**Instructors:** Visual artist Julia Clift and Elizabeth Spudich, PhD, Assistant Professor of Anatomy, Sidney Kimmel Medical College
Mindfulness and Compassion for Self and Others

Mindfulness and compassion training has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, fatigue and burnout, and to improve to concentration and resilience in medical students and physicians. This course offers an introduction to key mindfulness and compassion practices to support personal and professional growth. Students will work through experiential practices to develop self-awareness and learn effective intra- and inter-personal communication skills.

**Instructor:** Aleezé Moss, PhD, Associate Director, Myrna Brind Center for Mindfulness, Marcus Institute of Integrative Health, Jefferson Health

Dance and Wellness with Koresh Dance Company

Dance and Wellness is a collaboration between Koresh Dance Company and Sidney Kimmel Medical College. Through concept exploration, observation and the viewing of and participation in performance, students are guided to develop greater internal and external physical awareness and understanding of self and others. The course combines modern dance instruction with reflection, class discussion and movement analysis.

**Instructors:** Teresa VanDenend Sorge, EdM, Outreach Director, Koresh Dance Company, and Joanna Chan, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Sidney Kimmel Medical College
The Empathy Project with Lantern Theater Company

The Empathy Project, a collaboration between Jefferson and Philadelphia’s Lantern Theater Company, seeks to foster empathy and tolerance for ambiguity in medical students using the tools and techniques of the theatrical form. Through improvisation and playwriting exercises, adaptation and collaboration, students are challenged to engage with characters possessing a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints, while simultaneously working with an awareness of the audiences for the stories they tell.

Instructor: Craig Getting, Education Director, Lantern Theater Company

Race and Medicine: Why It Matters

Race and Medicine explores the historical foundations of race and racism in the United States and the influence of science and medicine in creating racial inferiority mythology and stereotypes. Students in the course will gain an understanding of structural racism using a structural competency framework. Race will be examined as a social determinant of health (SDH) and racism as a driver of other social determinants of health. Narrowing the focus on the practice of clinical medicine, students will critically review
the literature to examine the clinical relevance of race. The concepts discussed will be built upon to discuss the physician’s role in pursuit of health and social justice.

**Instructor:** Traci R. Trice, MD, Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Assistant Dean for Diversity and Student Diversity Programs, Office of Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives, Sidney Kimmel Medical College

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**Graphic Medicine with University of the Arts**

In recent years, artists and health professionals have turned to graphic stories to depict and discuss issues related to medical care and practice, including changing cultural perceptions of healthcare; patient/carer/provider experiences; difficult subjects such as grief and loss, mental illness, burnout and bias; and helping other sufferers or carers. This course will provide students with hands-on experience and conceptual insights related to the many facets of graphic storytelling through exercises, demonstrations and lectures. Students will be exposed to the varied approaches to creativity in graphic medicine, such as comics, cartoons and graphic novels, and will create original works.

**Instructor:** Christian “Patch” Patchell, Instructor, University of the Arts Continuing Studies

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**The Healer’s Art**

The Healer’s Art, developed by humanistic physician Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, uses a discovery model where participants have a chance to reflect on and share their personal experiences in a small group setting facilitated by a medical college faculty member, practicing physician or advanced resident. The course addresses topics not usually discussed in the medical curriculum: maintaining wholeness; dealing with grief and learning from loss; embracing mystery and awe in medicine and in life; and the concept of medicine as service and how that can give meaning to the experiences of medical students and future physicians.

**Instructors:** Birgit Rakel, MD, Assistant Professor and Director, Integrative Women’s Health Program, Jefferson Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine, and Don Friedman, MD
History of Medicine

“History is congealed memory,” said President John F. Kennedy, and yet, history of medicine is often a forgotten part of medical education. Awareness of the past provides an important roadmap for where we come from, so that we can more wisely choose where to go next. This course explores a series of biographies linked to the development of Western Medicine from its Greco-Roman roots to its foundational disciplines: anatomy, physiology, pathology, clinico-pathological correlation and physical diagnosis.

Instructor: Salvatore Mangione, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Sidney Kimmel Medical College

Introduction to Creative Writing

The Introduction to Creative Writing Seminar focuses on the narratives found in medicine. One of the most important things that writing does for both writer and reader is to allow the story that lies between the care provider and the patient to live on its own terms, independent of the people involved. This, in turn, creates a separate space for reflection, deeper observation and empathy. Writing and sharing stories also fosters a sense of trust and community among seminar participants. Introduction to Creative Writing is offered in both fiction and poetry sections.

Instructor: Katherine Hubbard, MA, Writing Lecturer, Jefferson College of Humanities & Sciences

Medical Cineforum

Movies have a powerful influence on popular culture, and doctors are among the professionals most frequently portrayed. Cinematic depictions of physicians can tell us a lot about how the public sees us, and in turn can help us improve the patient-physician relationship. The goal of this program is to explore key themes in the portrayal of doctors in cinema and, by doing so, to engage students in critical thinking and discussion of the physician’s persona. Movies often provide clues to ways of being doctors—clues that can be inspiring or disturbing, but always thought-provoking.

Instructor: Salvatore Mangione, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Sidney Kimmel Medical College
The Language of Music: Improvisation in Sound

Led by professional percussionist Josh Robinson, participants explore the power of musical expression, build community, gain tools for coping with stress and are granted permission to improvise and succeed without the pressure of being perfect in a fun and safe space. Improvisation requires the ability to adapt and trust oneself in the unknown from moment to moment. Playing in a group setting requires non-verbal communication, teamwork and being present.

Instructor: Josh Robinson, Josh Robinson Drums
The Art of Observation at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Research suggests that medical students’ clinical skills can be enhanced by using visual artworks to train for better observation and decision making. The Art of Observation course takes place at the historic Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where students interact with artworks from a variety of time periods in exercises that address implicit bias, emotional intelligence, observational skills, tolerance for ambiguity, and avoiding faulty heuristics through close looking and talking about art.

Instructor: Monica Zimmerman, MA, Director of Education, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and PAFA staff
TimeSlips

TimeSlips is a program in which students and elders connect through creativity. Throughout the semester, students will regularly visit a local senior living facility to collaborate on projects based in improvisational storytelling and creative engagement, facilitated by a professional teaching artist. Created by MacArthur Fellow Anne Basting, TimeSlips harnesses the power of imagination to change the way the world understands aging and improve quality of life in elder care.

Instructor: Jacob Winterstein, poet and teaching artist, with JeffMD Humanities Thread Directors and staff

Frontiers of Medical Ethics

Frontiers of Medical Ethics uses a case-based approach to help students gain a deeper understanding of medical ethics and provide a philosophical framework for discussing complex ethical issues. The course begins with an introduction to general principles of biomedical ethics, followed by applying principles to specific cases presented by guest faculty. Faculty present situations they have encountered in professional settings and participate in an open dialogue with students about ethically relevant factors to consider in determining a response.

Instructors: Frontiers of Medical Ethics was created by Benjamin Richter, SKMC Class of 2020, and is facilitated by Martin Morris and Amanda Walker, SKMC Class of 2021, with the participation of guest faculty and supervision from the JeffMD Humanities Thread Directors.
The Asano Humanities & Health Certificate is an annual program of Jefferson Humanities & Health, a division of the Office of Student Life and Engagement. Each academic year, JHH programs explore a thought-provoking theme from a broad range of perspectives through visiting speakers, hands-on workshops, free tickets to community performances and exhibitions, and other events. Program events promote understanding of the social contexts of health and wellness, the life experiences of diverse individuals and communities, and self-care for health professionals. Students are invited to complete the Asano Humanities & Health Certificate by attending eight JHH events and completing a reflection portfolio of four response essays. Students who complete the certificate are recognized during a Spring semester celebration. Learn more and view the program calendar at Jefferson.edu/Humanities.
Why the Humanities in Medicine

Salvatore Mangione, MD
Associate Professor, Sidney Kimmel Medical College

Medicine today finds itself in a paradox. It has undoubtedly enjoyed many successes—and yet, it is also the profession with the highest suicide rate, a burnout rate greater than 50%, rampant depression, dwindling empathy, a negative view in the eyes of the public, and a disturbing tendency for physicians to quit. This conundrum has prompted a search for a more balanced way to train healing physicians who can maintain their ideals and better cope with the challenges of medical practice. It has also led to a revisiting of the relationship between medicine and the humanities.

The two fields have been diverging for more than 100 years, first as a result of the “two cultures” split between arts and sciences, and then because of medicine’s increasing skepticism of the humanities as being slippery, non-metric, hard to define, and essentially incompatible with an evidence-based approach. Yet given the aforementioned difficulties faced by today’s medicine, some educators have advocated a return to the humanistic roots of our craft. Accordingly, some medical schools have incorporated the humanities in their curriculum and a few have even attempted to broaden students’ undergraduate education by dropping the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) as a requirement for admission.

Research has demonstrated that medical students with a humanistic background perform academically as well as their more traditional counterparts. In fact, they may even have advantages in more personal domains. Physicians undoubtedly need skills, knowledge and technical competence, and yet there are also other personal qualities that undeniably constitute “a well-rounded doctor.” Among these are wisdom, empathy, tolerance for ambiguity, skilled observation and emotional resilience. In fact, empathy and tolerance for ambiguity are included within the ACGME competencies.

To test the hypothesis that medical students with higher exposure to the humanities would report higher levels of positive physician qualities (e.g., wisdom, empathy, self-efficacy, emotional appraisal, visual-spatial skills), while reporting lower levels of negative qualities that are detrimental to physicians’ well-being (e.g., intolerance of ambiguity, physical fatigue,
emotional exhaustion and cognitive weariness), we recently conducted a multicenter survey of five medical schools and found that exposure to the humanities is indeed associated with both important personal qualities and prevention of burnout. Of interest, the three personal qualities that in our study correlated most strongly with exposure to the humanities were tolerance of ambiguity, empathy and wisdom. This is intuitive considering that the humanities are not only a way to teach compassion and tolerance, but also represent the wisdom of those who came before us. In fact, wisdom might very well be the single trait that encompasses all of those other traits which define a well-rounded doctor: empathy, openness to possibilities, emotional resilience, mindfulness, humility, altruism, a knack for learning from life, plus a cathartic sense of humor.

If we wish to create wiser, more tolerant, empathetic and resilient physicians, we may want to reintegrate the humanities into medical education. That is what Jefferson is doing.

Creative Collaborations Fuse Medicine and the Arts

Megan Voeller
Director of Humanities, Office of Student Life & Engagement

Sculpting a proportional model of the liver with guidance from a visual artist. Crafting an emotional scene between two characters with input from a theater director. Analyzing body posture and its meaning with a dance educator.

These aren’t typical medical school experiences—but they are hallmarks of the JeffMD Humanities Selectives. These unique courses apply methods and practices from the arts and humanities to strengthen skills of observation, communication and empathy that are critical to person-centered care. In many cases, the Selectives represent unique syntheses of art and science, achieved through collaborations between medical and arts educators, professional artists and community organizations in Philadelphia.

SKMC Anatomy Thread Director Elizabeth Spudich and visual artist Julia Clift work together to teach Visualizing Anatomy, a course that employs arts-based exercises to promote anatomy learning objectives such as
reading grayscale, recognizing color variation and translating 3D shapes into two dimensions and vice versa. Their unusual partnership may be the only one of its kind—a sustained teaching collaboration between an artist and an anatomist integrated into a medical school curriculum. Over several years, Spudich and Clift have developed memorable, effective (and fun) exercises to train students in basic visual skills related to understanding anatomy, from molding organ shapes out of clay to painting layers of muscle directly onto skin.

In 2015, SKMC faculty member and pulmonologist Salvatore Mangione approached the Lantern Theater Company about creating a program for SKMC students to practice skills of listening and understanding the perspectives of others through theater techniques. Studies such as one published by Virginia Commonwealth University in 2007 had shown that medical residents trained by theater practitioners to observe and interpret emotions and body language scored higher on subsequent evaluations of their interactions with real patients. Educators from the Lantern, headquartered just steps from Jefferson’s Washington Square West campus, worked with Mangione to develop The Empathy Project. Each semester, up to a dozen Jefferson students work with Lantern actors and directors on improvisation skills and playwriting, developing and performing scenes crafted from the points of view of different characters over the course of an eight-week program.

During the 2018–2019 academic year, a new course reflects an emerging collaboration between SKMC faculty member and pathologist Joanna Chan and Philadelphia’s Koresh Dance Company. Chan, who danced professionally before becoming a physician and now serves on Koresh’s board of trustees, proposed the course to improve medical students’ body awareness. As critical thinkers, many highly skilled professionals—such as doctors—tend to live “above the neck” in the analytical space of their expertise. By contrast, dancers undergo extensive training to refine body awareness and learn to communicate complex ideas and feelings through movement. Students in this small seminar will work closely with a dance instructor to study movement by observing and practicing dance, then take their skills into the theater to watch and discuss a Koresh performance.

What unexpected collaborations will emerge next at Jefferson’s intersection of medicine and the arts? The only limit is our imagination.
Contact Us:

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