

Reflective Reading and Writing for Medical Students

This course is available to UC Irvine students for transcript notation only

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to reflective reading and writing that links these skills with professional development and patient care. In Week 1, an introductory presentation orients student to the theoretical and empirical work on therapeutic and health-promoting aspects of reflective reading and writing. Each subsequent week (2-9) consists of in-class readings by medical student and physician-authors focusing on the socialization experience of medical students; professionalism; and the doctor-patient relationship. These readings will also provide models for different writing approaches. In addition, most sessions will include an in-class writing assignment examining such features as voice and point of view, parallel charting, free writing, and write-it-thrice techniques. Students will come prepared to discuss readings and participate in writing exercises and class discussion that link writing to their ongoing patient care experiences. A final session (Week 10) will summarize the course and present student writing projects. The course is open to second year and fourth year UC Irvine School of Medicine students in good standing.

Department: Family Medicine

Prerequisites: Students must have approval of Elective Director prior to enrollment. Literature in Medicine Elective desirable.

Restrictions: UC Irvine students only

Elective Director: Johanna Shapiro, M.D. , UC Irvine Medical Center, Dept. of Family Medicine, Bldg. 200, Suite 512, Rt. 81, Orange, CA 92868-3298; 714-456-5171

Instructing Faculty: Johanna Shapiro, Ph.D.

Course Website: None

Who to Report to First Day: Dr. Johanna Shapiro

Location to Report on First Day: 2nd years - Bldg E, campus; 4th years, UCIMC TBA

Time to Report on First Day: 2nd year, Wednesdays TBA, 12:15-1:15 p.m.; 4th year, Thursdays TBA; 12:15-1:15 p.m.

Site Coordinator: Diane Lugo, UC Irvine Medical Center, Department of Family Medicine, Building 63, Suite 835, Orange, CA; 714-456-8265 or dlugo@uci.edu

Site: UC Irvine School of Medicine or UC Irvine Medical Center

Periods Available: To be determined by the Elective Director

Duration: 10 Sessions

Number of Students: 8-12 students

Scheduling Coordinator: UC Irvine students please email comsched@uci.edu or call 714-456-5176 to make a scheduling appointment.

Course Objectives: After participation in this elective, the student will . . .

- Understand and be able to explain theoretical and empirical evidence for the therapeutic value of reflective reading and writing
- Become familiar with and practice various reflective writing techniques
- Understand and be able to explain how to use reflective reading and writing as: a) methods of observing and paying attention to patients b) tools to reduce frustration, anger, helplessness, and burn out c) ways of developing increased empathy for the patient's perspective d) means of developing additional insights into patients.

The achievement of these objectives will make students more:

- Knowledgeable, in that through reading, their understanding of the psychosocial effects of illness will be deepened; and through writing exercises, their written skills will be improved (iii)
- Skillful, because in the course of the elective they will both identify and process (through reading, writing and discussion) ethical and professional issues (vii)
- Altruistic, because the process of reflective reading writing requires personal honesty and integrity (i); promotes compassion and respect for patients (ii) and colleagues/residents/attendings (v); and encourages increased cultural sensitivity and awareness (iii).
- Dutiful, in that reading and writing about various aspects of patient and collegial interactions necessarily assumes commitment to patient care and the well-being of patients and colleagues (ii); while processing one's own emotional state on a personal and professional level clarifies commitments to community (iii) and to self and family (iv)

Key Topics:

- The relationship between reflective reading, reflective writing and healing
- Socialization into medicine: pluses and minuses
- Cultivating aspects of professionalism: altruism, integrity, empathy, and compassion
- Doctor-patient relationships: the emotional balance between steadiness and tenderness

- Reflective writing techniques: Point-of-view writing, parallel charting, free writing, write-it-thrice techniques

Competencies: This course provides learners with increased knowledge about reading and writing as tools for healing and for professional development. Learners will improve their ability to tolerate clinical situations of complexity, ambiguity and multiple meanings, express themselves in written form, utilize both logical and creative reflection processes, and identify and understand differing perspectives.

Attitudes & Commitments: This course will enhance learner self-awareness and understanding; improve empathy; develop attitudes of honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect; and promote a commitment to the well-being of self, patients, and colleagues.

Educational Activities: Students will be required to complete readings by physician-authors, and about the process of writing. Students will also participate in writing assignments linked to their clinical experiences and clerkships, as well as in-class writing exercises. Finally, students will complete a longer writing project, the nature of which will be determined by student and faculty.

What Students Should do to Prepare for the Rotation: Background in any form of personal or creative writing is helpful but not essential. Students should be interested in exploring reading and writing as tools for professional development, and should be willing to participate in class reading, writing exercises, and writing assignments.

Clinical Responsibilities of the Student: This is not a clinical rotation

Patient Care Responsibilities: This is not a clinical rotation

Call Schedule of the Student: This is not a clinical rotation

Procedures to be Learned by the Student: This is not a clinical rotation

Percentage of Time Student will Participate in Ambulatory Setting: This is not a clinical rotation.

Conference/Lecture/Small Group Sessions: The elective will consist of 10 small group sessions.

Course Hours Weekly Summary: Ten small group sessions will be offered on a monthly basis October-May.

Content Theme Integration:

- Communication
- Diversity

- Ethics

Required Readings:

- Writing Down the Bones, Natalie Goldberg
- Opening Up, James Pennebaker
- Various first person narratives about the illness experience and the doctor-patient relationship

Official Grading Policy: Evaluation is based on attendance; completion of reading and writing assignments; and participation in class discussion. The elective will be offered for transcript notation only. No grades will be assigned.