

IPE Elective: Moral Moments in Medicine: Pandemics, Race, Social Justice

Course Directors:

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Summary: This interprofessional elective will bring the resources of the medical humanities and ethics to bear on the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism. All students will participate in one of several monthly evening small groups led by two faculty. Some will focus on historical and contemporary narratives related to epidemics. Others will be more experiential; for example, students could complete a scholarly or creative project with oral history, documentary photography, or another form of artistic expression. Hours can also be earned through Trent Center events, such as our bioethics interest group, medical humanities lectures, and book clubs/film discussions related to the course themes. Medical students who complete at least 20 elective hour credits from these activities will receive a special designation on their transcript; for other health professional students, please contact your program for details of credit.

Schedule: The elective takes place from September 2020 to June 30, 2021. Students will earn the equivalent of 20 hours of credits by participating in a monthly humanities small group (12 hours of credit for 8 sessions) and other humanities/ethics options sponsored by the Trent Center.

- I. **Humanities Small Groups (12 hours total):** Each student in the elective will choose one of several themed “seminars” that will meet monthly (weekday evenings) over the course of the year. These would be co-led by faculty from two different professions to promote interprofessional education. Themes are subject to modification based on student interest, but currently the following groups are planned:
- a. Voices in Pandemic: Stories of Resistance and Social Justice
 - b. Plague Literature, Past and Present
 - c. Documenting Pandemic through Photography
 - d. Epidemics, Disparities, and History
 - e. Covid Stories: Narrative medicine in the midst of Epidemic
 - f. Artistic Connections in Times of Trial

See small group descriptions at the end of this document.

- II. **Elective Options:** Remaining credits may be earned through several options (some open to individuals not formally enrolled in the class, and not requiring ongoing commitment).
- a. *Completion of a creative piece* related to the themes of pandemics, race, or social justice (maximum of 10 hours credit)
 - b. *Book club:* (5 hours) Reading and discussion of a narrative or history related to pandemics or race in medicine. Details to be announced; will likely take place after winter break
 - c. *Pandemic movie nights* (3 hours): Share a movie experience and explore connections to COVID-19. Many possibilities, of varying sophistication.
 - d. *Theology, Medicine, and Culture* seminars (1.5 hour each, if topic relevant to pandemic)
 - e. *Walks through Social History* (2-3 hours each): Covid-permitting, walks to areas in Durham country exploring how history has shaped health disparities. These will likely take place in spring.
 - f. *Re-Imagining the World Together: Why Friendship Matters for Our Future* (2 hours each; co-sponsored with Kenan Institute): a series of dialogues sponsored by Kenan and open to medical

- students, each featuring two speakers discussing their friendship in the context of promoting social change.
- g. *Humanities in Medicine Lectures* (1 hr each): Invited speakers, both internal and external to Duke, if related to disparities, disease, and/or social justice.
 - h. Other possibilities may arise over the course of the year.

Monthly Small Group Descriptors (all meetings after 5 pm—time to be determined within group)

Voices in Pandemic: Stories of Resistance and Social Justice (Mantri—Tuesdays)

How do stories change the way we remember social narratives? How does fiction work as a form of resistance? Is there an ethical way to accomplish Emily Dickinson's admonition to "tell the truth but tell it slant"? In this section, we will look at short texts that focus on times of social and medical crisis, and discuss the ways we can use fiction and creative non-fiction to nudge the needle toward equity. Some potential texts include works by Audre Lorde, Randy Shilts, AJ Cronin, Octavia Butler; students will also be encouraged to propose texts.

Plague Literature, Past and Present (Quaranta—Wednesdays)

From Homer to Stephen King, plagues loom large in the creative imagination. In this section, we will look at how literature and film has depicted plagues and epidemics, from the Ancient World to the 21st century, with an emphasis on what lessons we might glean for our own coronavirus response.

Documenting Pandemic through Photography (Moses- Thursdays)

In this section we will consider how photography can be used to examine historical and current events relevant to pandemics. There is a rich trove of photographic images that will be examined in an effort to gain insights into the similarities and differences of various pandemics over the decades. An emphasis will be placed on how individuals have experienced and responded to the challenge of pandemics. We will look for visual clues to answer various questions such as, has there been resistance to mask-wearing during other pandemics? We will also endeavor to create collaborative documentary projects using photographs to examine how contemporary society is coping with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Epidemics, Disparities, and History (Baker-Thursdays)

How a society confronts an epidemic tells us much about its priorities, beliefs, and social tensions. Each month we will take a close look at some of the most famous infectious disease outbreaks of the past two centuries, ranging from smallpox and yellow fever to the 1918 influenza, polio, and HIV. In each case, we'll ask what groups bore the greatest losses, and why? How do epidemics raise questions of who belongs to a society, and who is the "other"? How did racism play out through institutions, policies, and even scientific knowledge? How did racist assumptions intersect with other categories such as gender, class, and sexual orientation? We'll examine these questions through a variety of engaging sources, including first-hand accounts, pictures and film clips, with the ultimate goal of better understanding the still unfolding history of COVID-19.

Covid Stories: Narrative medicine in the midst of Epidemic (Jooste-Thursdays)

In these Small Group seminars, you will read the stories of people who have been affected by COVID, either themselves, or as family members, friends, colleagues, or healthcare workers. Through reading and discussing their stories which highlight various aspects of illness such as isolation, loneliness, the physical experience of illness and complex decision-making, and learning to use the power of imagination, you will experience how Narrative Medicine develops us as providers by increasing our capacity for empathy, curiosity, humanism and resilience.