

Spring Semester 2024
HCB 599
Special Research Projects (Capstone Course)

Mondays, 6 pm
HSC, Level 3, Room 067
Instructor of Record: Stephen G. Post, PhD (with Center Faculty Mentors)

Course Description

The MA in Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics requires a Capstone Course in which students produce a research paper of 13 pages plus references. This is a significant endeavor that will require effort from the start of the semester. Though the paper does not need to be published, it should be of the highest quality. An impressive final product can always be submitted to a journal, and presented as a writing sample in future graduate or professional school applications.

Course Schedule---we will meet together in person in HSC, Level 3, Room 067 for scheduled sessions.

Week 1 (Monday January 22) **FIRST Class Meets 067 Introduction and Big Questions Format**

6-7:30 pm. Selecting topics can get started at a preliminary level. Try to tell us what you might be writing about, and why are choosing it. Bring some good ideas.

7:30 - 8 pm. Discuss possible faculty mentors.

***Decide on a topic of deep interest.** Anything related to the MA program will work. Select a topic that excites you, maybe one that allows you to benefit some identifiable constituency, and that you feel you can handle.*

Students select a topic drawing on methods of philosophical & ethical analysis, clinical ethics, literature, history, public policy, law, narrative medicine, religious studies, social sciences, etc. For example, a student focusing on literature might do analysis and research on the primary writings of a figure such as William Carlos Williams, Anton Chekov, John Stone, etc., and draw on existing secondary scholarship. It would be possible to delve deeply into the narrative medicine movement, drawing on the work of key physician contributors such as Rita Charon, Kathryn Montgomery Hunter, Howard Brody, and John L. “Jack” Coulehan. A student might wish to explore a literary tradition that addresses a major bioethical concern, such as anti-aging. Or a student might wish to work in the history of medicine, so long as it focuses on some aspect of medical ethics or healthcare policy. A student might want to investigate “compassionate” care or other features of a healing clinical relationship, including humility, or empathy, or attentive listening, and altruism, or how clinicians can best respond to the dynamic of hope in patients and their families. Images of the “good” clinician with regard to virtues and character are relevant. Papers might also focus on analysis of a clinical case in bioethics, drawing on moral traditions and healthcare law. Questions of healthcare justice and rationing, fertility and reproduction, genetics, pediatric care (including NICU decisions), organ procurement and transplant, definitions of death and

their implications, disability ethics, death and dying, psychiatry and mental illness, aging and dementia, surgery, cancer care, and personhood are all valid.

It is possible to weave a personal narrative into this paper, and certain significant cases.

Week 2 (Monday January 29) No Class. Work on your topic, and send SGP the following by end of week:

Prepare a carefully worded clear Big Question. Each paper should begin with a thoughtful and carefully crafted Big Question.

Why are you asking this question precisely as you do?

What several alternative wordings might be as good or better, or not quite as good?

What is your purpose? What constituency, if any, might benefit from this paper?

*Begin a **scoping review** through www.scholar.google.com on your Big Question, and if you wish, consult a reference librarian. Use other such venues as Pub Med, and/or Google Scholar, which includes more philosophical/humanistic literature, and perhaps other venues more to your liking. Experiment with word combinations during the search. Find at **least 8 of the best articles focused on your Big Question**, above what you may have read in classes. In general, limit your searches to the last five years.*

*Begin an alphabetized annotated bibliography of these 8 journal articles on your Big Question. In your annotated bibliography, just write a couple of sentences that summarize the main thesis of each article, and reference it accurately. This will later be your reference list at the end of your paper. **Hand this in via email by February 5 (to SGP and your mentor) for feedback.***

Week 3 (February 5) Class Meets 067

Discussion of your topics. Students present on the preliminary findings in your scoping review. You can be using any data bases, such as www.scholar.google.com and www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov “PubMed,” etc.

Bring written out a refined BIG QUESTION and a THESIS STATEMENT for class. Be ready to discuss.

Be sure that your thesis follows your Big Question as the second paragraph of the paper. Have a third paragraph that serves as a road map explaining how your will proceed to support your thesis.

Try to write a preliminary outline using headings and subheadings.

Who is your faculty mentor and have they agreed to work with you?

**Week 4 (February 12) No Class
Research time.**

Week 5 (February 19) Set up private meetings with your mentors. No Class.

Report the name of your faculty mentor to SG Post, and already have shared an outline with your mentor as well as your annotated bibliography of 10 articles for mentor Zoom meeting and suggestions. Set up a half hour Zoom meeting with your mentor this week to be held before Feb. 23.

Week 6 (February 26) No Class

Week 7 (March 4) Class Meets 067

Topic Discussions on Progress: In Person Class in HSC, Level 3, Room 067

March 11 Spring Break

Week 8 (March 18) Class Meets 067

MA students (not MD/MA) will meet as a full group to present (15 minutes) with PP (8) slides max) on their theses and argumentations, followed by 10 minutes of discussion. Faculty mentors must be invited.

Week 9 (March 25) Class Meets 067

MA students (not MD/MA) will meet as a full group to present (15 minutes) with PP (8) slides max) on their theses and argumentations, followed by 10 minutes of discussion. Faculty mentors must be invited.

Week 10 (April 1) Class Meets 067

MD/MA Student Presentations

Today medical students in the MA program will present their polished drafts of papers for feedback from all MA students and involved faculty. Med students will make 15-minute polished PowerPoint presentations with 10 minutes for discussion.

Week 11 (April 8) No Class

Writing time

Week 12 (April 15) No Class (unless needed)

Working dinner at Domo Sushi

Week 13 (April 22)

Writing time

FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 6 TO MENTOR AND SGPost

Grading:

Papers will be graded by the faculty mentor only. The overall course facilitator (SGPost) will not interfere with this process. The course facilitator, however, will be responsible for the assessment of class participation (10 % of total grade based on class presentations and participation).

Approach

Faculty Mentors

Selecting a Faculty Mentor

Within the first three weeks of the course, each student should select a Center faculty member as a mentor for this research paper. This involves a process of elective affinity, and for this reason we are inviting faculty members into this course to talk with students about some of their *general* interest areas. The student should set up an initial meeting with the faculty member to establish rapport and consent to mentor, and to explore faculty suggestions for core research references. *Please have a faculty mentor in place by February 20th and report this to Dr. Post for record keeping.* The following are good possibilities, but there are others as well.

Michelle Ballan, PhD, MSW, MS Professor School of Social Welfare

Michelle.Ballan@stonybrook.edu

Justice and Access to Care for Individuals with Disabilities; Disability and Bioethics

Maria Basile, MD

Maria.Basile@StonyBrookMedicine.edu

Narrative Medicine, Clinical Ethics, Access/Justice, Professional Identity Formation

Dr. Richard A. Bronson, MD - Professor of Obstetrics/Gynecology and Pathology

Richard.Bronson@Stonybrookmedicine.edu

Reproductive Medicine; Poetry; Narrative in Medicine; Medical Education

Dr. Brooke M. Ellison, PhD – Assistant Professor

Brooke.Ellison@Stonybrookmedicine.edu

Sociology of Medicine; Medical Ethics; Stem Cell Policy

Dr. Phyllis Migdal, MD, MA – Assistant Clinical Professor

Phyllis.Migdal@Stonybrookmedicine.edu

Clinical Ethics, Bioethics, Human Subjects Research, Cognitive Bias, Physician-Patient Relationship

Stephen G. Post

Stephen.Post@Stonybrookmedicine.edu

Compassionate Care; Bioethics; Dementia and Aging; Altruism in Healthcare; Clinical Ethics, Religion & Medicine, Film & Bioethics

Dr. Jeffrey Trilling, MD – Professor

Jeffrey.Trilling@StonyBrookMedicine.edu

Physician-Patient Relationship, Compassionate Care, Clinical Ethics, Family Medicine, Humanities

And any adjunct faculty in the MA program

Grading:

Papers will be graded by the faculty mentor only. The overall course facilitator (SGPost) will not interfere with this process. The course facilitator, however, will be responsible for the assessment of class participation/presentations (20 % of total grade based on class presentations and participation).

Things to Think About When Writing a Research Paper

DO A SCOPING REVIEW FIRST

1. Introduction

A successful thesis-driven piece of scholarship will always begin with a very clear big question replete with careful definition of terms. Why are you asking this question? Then state your answer to the question in a clear thesis statement. You will need to work on this and revise as needed, but do not ever lose sight of your thesis statement. You do not want to veer off course, because the rest of the paper is an argument supporting your thesis. Every sentence in your paper ought to be connected to your thesis in some way. It might help introduce your audience to the nuances of the topic you are discussing so that they will understand how your thesis differs from claims made by others.

A good paper usually includes a paragraph that discusses in brief why the question and thesis are important. Is the thesis important for solving a major problem? Is it innovative? Who might be impacted by your paper? What is your audience?

A paragraph might describe how you are planning to structure the paper, and some mention of key sources. It is a good idea to ask about every topic or point in your paper, “how will adding this information help my reader understand my thesis?” If you cannot answer this question, then the information is probably better left out.

The outline and headings (i.e., the organization of the paper) should be designed to move your thesis forward in a constructive way. Outline your thoughts before you begin to write.

2. Main Body

Be certain to use headings well. Headings are a roadmap for the reader. They are like signposts on the highway. They should not be complex or long, so choose a few effective words. Subheadings can sometimes also be quite helpful. **Headings** should be in bold, and *subheadings* should be in italics.

Develop your ideas and use transitions to link the major strands of your exposition. Remember, though your interlocutors may be able to follow certain moves you make because they are familiar with the literature the public will not. Make sure that an intelligent person who is not an expert in your topic could easily follow your argument. If you jump around without an indication of why, it will be extremely difficult for your reader to follow you.

When agreeing or disagreeing with an author don't merely state that you agree or disagree but make a case for why you do. Clearly identify the views of the author whom you will be discussing. Highlight important distinctions and concepts of which the author makes use. It is essential to use citations when doing this. This will indicate to your interlocutors precisely the point at which you disagree, while introducing the public to an important aspect of the conversation you are engaging in and of which they may not be aware.

If you plan to disagree with an author's position then raise at least one objection that you would advance against the view as you understand it. While the public may be interested in simply learning alternative views on the matter, your interlocutors will want to know why your position differs from those already accepted. If you plan to agree with the author's position, then be sure to explain why it is important that you agree. Others may have raised objections to the position with which you agree. Explain these objections and then explain how it is that the position you endorse overcomes them. Once again, proper citation is essential to this aspect of your paper.

When in doubt, break up long sentences and split up long paragraphs. Semi-colons are hard to use well, so avoid them unless you are sure of your grammar, and avoid page-long paragraphs that beg to be broken up into two or three.

Be care to select quoted phrases, sentences, or segments of several lines with scholarly precision. Only quote the material that makes your point best, and always reference it. There is no need to quote excessively, and you should help the reader understand what you want them to get from a block quote, rather than leave it dangling at the end of a paragraph. We will talk about quotes and style in class. Block quotes are okay if used wisely, but they should rarely, if ever, exceed five to ten lines.

So often, a student really gets clear on their thesis in the final and concluding paragraph of the paper. Therefore, it can be very useful to try placing that final paragraph up at the front of the paper as you go through drafts, and incorporate it into the thesis section. Then write a second conclusion in a later draft.

Conclusions

Conclude with a summary of your paper. Also, be sure to point to another Big Question (or two) that your paper has not answered, but that seems now to be the next one you would want to see answer in your topic area (and why).

Style

- (1) Your citations should be in the standardized APA format.
- (2) When in doubt, break up long sentences and split up long paragraphs. Semi-colons are hard to use well, so avoid them unless you are sure of your grammar. Avoid page-long paragraphs that beg to be broken up into two or three.
- (3) Be certain to use headings well. Headings are a roadmap for the reader. They are like signposts on the highway. They should not be complex or long, so choose a few effective words. Subheadings can sometimes also be quite helpful. **Headings** should be in bold, and *subheadings* should be in italics.
- (4) Be care to select quoted phrases, sentences, or segments of several lines with scholarly precision. Only quote the material that makes your point best, and always reference it. There is no need to quote excessively, and you should help the reader understand what you want them to get from a block quote, rather than leave it dangling at the end of a paragraph. We will talk about quotes and style in class. Block quotes are okay if used wisely, but they should rarely, if ever, exceed five to ten lines.
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Student Accessibility Support Center Statement

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact the Student Accessibility Support Center, Stony Brook Union Suite 107, (631) 632-6748, or at sasc@stonybrook.edu. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and the Student Accessibility Support Center. For procedures and information go to the following website: <https://ehs.stonybrook.edu//programs/fire-safety/emergency-evacuation/evacuation-guide-disabilities> and search Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.

Academic Integrity Statement

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty is required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty please refer to the academic judiciary website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/index.html

Critical Incident Management

Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. Further information about most academic matters can be found in the Undergraduate Bulletin, the Undergraduate Class Schedule, and the Faculty-Employee Handbook.