



JeffMD

HUMANITIES

SELECTIVES



Thomas Jefferson  
University

HOME OF SIDNEY KIMMEL MEDICAL COLLEGE

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# 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
- understanding the perspectives of patients and colleagues
- tolerance for 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 Canvas for current offerings.

## Contact Us:

### JeffMD Humanities Thread Director

Megan Voeller, MA  
Megan.Voeller@jefferson.edu • 215-503-9050

### JeffMD Humanities Thread Education Coordinator

Marcie Mamura, MFA  
Marcie.Mamura@jefferson.edu • 215-955-8523



# 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 perceive subtle shifts in color, tone, and pattern in histology slides and diagnostic images.

**Instructors:** Visual artist Julia Clift, MFA, and Elizabeth Spudich, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medical Education, JeffMD Anatomy Thread Director



# Mindfulness and Compassion for Self and Others

Mindfulness and compassion training has been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, fatigue, and burnout and to improve 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

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

**Instructors:** Teresa VanDenend Sorge, EdM, MFA, Founding Director of Koresh Kids Dance Outreach, and Joanna Chan, MD, Associate Professor of Pathology, Sidney Kimmel Medical College



# Queer Community and Culture

Using Philadelphia as an example, Queer Community and Culture examines the history of LGBTQ+ identities and the current state of the community, with an emphasis on special health needs of queer people of color, trans folx and LGBTQ+ elders. How have our concepts of gender and sexuality changed and how did the queer community influence that change? Until recently, the traditional relationship of gender and sexual minorities with the medical community has often been uncomfortable and sometimes even confrontational. A clearer perspective on multiple sides facilitates communication and creates opportunities for healthcare relationships to be more productive.

**Instructor:** Bob Skiba, Curator, John J. Wilcox, Jr., LGBTQ+ Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center



## Racism and Medicine: Why It Matters

The Racism and Medicine course 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 will gain an understanding of structural racism using a structural competency framework. Racism will be examined as a social, structural, and political determinant of health. Students will

critically review the literature to challenge the current conception of the clinical relevance of race. The concepts discussed will be built upon to consider the physician's role in pursuit of health and social justice.

**Instructor:** Denine Crittendon, MPH, PhD(c), Instructor, Jefferson College of Population Health, Thomas Jefferson University

## Graphic Medicine

Graphic Medicine refers to the intersection of comics and medicine. Comics are largely narrative, and emphasize stories that attempt to clarify, translate, reveal, or otherwise express a perspective on medical experiences. This course teaches the fundamentals of making comics, emphasizing the hybrid nature of the form and its potential as a medium for self-expression. Through studio drawing time, exercises, demonstrations, readings, class discussions and critiques, students develop narrative skills, including empathy, communication, and interpretation/translation of concepts, which are useful to medical professionals as storytellers, clinicians and researchers.



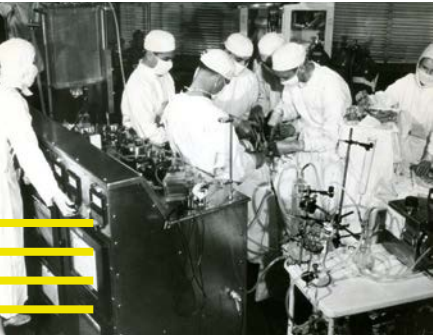
**Instructor:** Ian Sampson, MFA, artist/cartoonist and interdisciplinary educator

## 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:** Donald Friedman, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine, Sidney Kimmel Medical College, and facilitators from the Sidney Kimmel Medical College clinical faculty

# 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, clinicopathological correlation and physical diagnosis.

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

## Medical Memoir

Medical memoirs chronicle events surrounding a single person’s illness or injury, a general experience of participating in the world of medicine, or something in between. Narrative Medicine has been promoted for many years as a tool to develop empathy and professionalism. Reading and writing in the genre of memoir challenges us to question our lives and to try to make meaning of the often random and uncontrollable aspects of birth, wellness, illness and death. This course is an opportunity for learners to reflect on their lives in medicine so far and on the situations and people that have touched them within the profession, and to craft these reflections into compelling, relatable stories.

**Instructor:** Rosalind Kaplan, MD, MFA, internal medicine physician and author

## 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 percussionist, drum facilitator and teaching artist Josh Robinson, participants in this course explore the power of musical expression. Over four sessions, students will 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,  
Jefferson Humanities & Health  
Artist-in-Residence



# The Art of Observation at Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

The Art of Observation focuses on developing close observational skills for clinical practice through looking at works of art. Utilizing PAFA's collection, students in the course will develop visual literacy skills, which include the ability to analyze, interpret, and make meaning from images. The course uses the power of art to promote the analysis and communication necessary in addressing ambiguity in the medical field.

Exercises and discussion include topics such as emotional intelligence, implicit bias and socio-cultural issues in medicine.

**Instructor:** Lori Waselchuk, Assistant Director of Public Programs, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and PAFA Staff



# Beyond Disability: Storytelling Outside the Lines

A recent study demonstrated that medical professionals feel patients with disabilities have a poor quality of life. Does this affect or impact the care physicians provide their patients? A series of first-person narratives, video content, field trips, and selected readings will highlight the experiences of people with disabilities both within and outside of the medical system. Students will be asked to immerse themselves in reflective discussions and interactive experiences to demonstrate an understanding of the challenges and biases faced by people with disabilities as well as the disability community's activism and victories.

**Instructor:** Jane Tobias, DNP, CRNP, CPNP, Assistant Professor, Jefferson College of Nursing, and Wendy Ross, MD, FAAP, Director of the Jefferson Center for Autism and Neurodiversity

## Ethics at the Bedside

Ethics at the Bedside explores some of the major themes and problems in clinical bioethics. These include an overview of core ethical principles, the struggle to balance autonomy and beneficence, confidentiality, end-of-life care, the allocation of scarce resources, and ethical dilemmas that medical students may personally confront in their clinical years. The goal of the course is not only to expose students to these concepts but to help medical students develop their own skills for ethical reasoning.

**Instructor:** David Oxman, MD, FACP, Associate Professor of Medicine, Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care, Sidney Kimmel Medical College and Thomas Jefferson University Hospital



# Asano Humanities & Health Certificate

The Asano Humanities & Health Certificate program invites students to curate their own participation in a yearlong slate of programs. Each academic year, Jefferson Humanities & Health programs promote understanding of the social contexts of health and wellness, the lived experiences of diverse individuals and communities, and self-care for health professionals through the lens of a thought-provoking theme. Events include Jefferson Humanities Forum lectures by visiting speakers (pictured), creative workshops facilitated by teaching artists, reading groups, film screenings, free tickets to community performances, exhibitions and other activities. Students are invited to complete the Asano Certificate by attending eight events, selected from a calendar of more than 50 events throughout the year, and completing a reflection portfolio of four response essays. All students who complete the Asano program are recognized during a Spring semester celebration. Learn more and view the program calendar at [Jefferson.edu/Humanities](http://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

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also represent the wisdom of those who came before us. In fact, wisdom might very well be the single trait that encompasses all 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 Affairs*

Sculpting a proportional model of the liver with guidance from a visual artist and an anatomy professor. Narrating an emotional experience through memoir writing with feedback from a physician author. Analyzing body posture and its meaning with a dance educator and a doctor trained as a dancer.

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 Humanities Selectives represent unique syntheses of the humanities and medicine achieved through collaborations between Jefferson 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. 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 2018, SKMC faculty member and pathologist Joanna Chan teamed up with Philadelphia's Koresh Dance Company to create the *Dance and Wellness* course.

Chan, who danced professionally before becoming a physician and now serves on Koresh's board of trustees, proposed a course to improve medical students' body awareness. As critical thinkers, many highly skilled professionals—including 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 interactive class work closely with a dance instructor to study movement by observing and practicing dance, then take their honed descriptive skills into the theater to view and discuss a Koresh dance performance.



Our students are our most important collaborators. Since 2020, SKMC student input has fueled the development of new Humanities Selectives that explore topics related to identity, equity, and health justice. Queer Community and Culture offers participants a one-of-a-kind opportunity to delve into the archives of Philadelphia's William Way LGBT Community Center with archivist Bob Skiba. Through first-hand encounters with the city's queer history and conversations with LGBTQ+ community members today, students can improve the quality of their own inclusive care as future physicians.

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



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