MCS Selective
Art and Diagnostic Observation in Medicine

Following the lead of the Icahn School of Medicine’s course entitled The Pulse of Art, this selective “harnesses the power of significant works of art to increase the observation skills and empathic responses of medical students.” Courses on art, observation, diagnostic accuracy and empathic physician-patient communication are ongoing at many medical schools, including Yale, Harvard, Lerner/Cleveland Clinic, and Mt. Sinai. This selective draws on art-based principles of observation in order to enhance visual diagnostic skills in physicians and medical practitioners. In the past this course at SBSOM has attracted speakers the leading figures nationally in this field: Dr. Sal Mangione MD (Jefferson SOM), art historian Bobbi Coller PhD (Icahn SOM) and ophthalmologist Dr. Vincent deLuise, MD (Yale and Cornell SOMs).

Co-Instructors

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<th>Gina Polizzo, MS4</th>
<th>Stephen G. Post</th>
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Syllabus

**Detailed Description:**
At first glance, there seems to be a chasm between the realms of art and medicine. The polarization of these crafts has deprived physicians of tools that are critical to advancing patient care. However, this divisiveness has not always existed: the great masters of the Renaissance were attuned to the inherent relationship between art and science. Accurate depictions of physical space and human anatomy fostered significant breakthroughs in physics, anatomy, and mathematics.

As the field of medicine grows more streamlined, physicians are spending less time with their patients. Though efficiency is paramount, without a corresponding refinement of physician training, patients are suffering harm secondary to misdiagnosis. This epidemic is so prevalent, that the World Health Organization (WHO) cites medical error as the #3 cause of death in the country second only to heart failure and cancer. More specifically, “medical error” can be subdivided into more precise categories, including technological errors, medication errors, and diagnostic errors. Interestingly, diagnostic error in the sense of both misdiagnosis or delay in diagnosis, makes up a significant portion (~35%) of the umbrella term “medical error,” which has claimed so many patient lives.

In order to adapt thoughtfully with the times, it is critical that physicians hone their skills in particular areas of medical practice, so that accurate diagnoses are not thwarted by the technological advances of modern medicine (i.e. “conveyor belt medicine”). One of the most useful tools in the diagnostic arsenal is the power of the gaze. The practice of art observation will help students sharpen their visual acuity as well as visual literacy; in short, we will seek to enhance students’ ability to perceive visual information accurately, and to describe what they see. This will aim to make students adept diagnosticians, and thus
more efficient and precise in their medical practice. Active observation is a skill that is trainable, and it is one that is immensely useful when our time with patients is limited.

These fundamental skills have been rather neglected thus far in the medical education system, save for a few pioneering institutions such as Yale, Brown, Harvard and Mt. Sinai. Unfortunately, it is quite common for physicians to unconsciously project what they believe the patient should look like in order to meet an anticipated diagnosis at the expense of observing how the patient actually presents in reality. This is also a common error of the novice artist, who cannot exact the textures, colors, and shades of his subject.

Visual learning results from the integration of higher cognitive, perceptive and motor functions. This interdisciplinary course will seek to offer students an encounter with art fundamentals with the aim of training their gaze and enhancing their diagnostic proficiency as this level of observation practice translates to medicine.

**Educational Objectives**

At the conclusion of this course you will have the ability to:

1. Be more observant of your patients through discussing visual arts renditions of the illness experience.
2. Approach differential diagnostic with a more inductive and individualized philosophy and skill set.
3. Engage in the increasingly popular use of art and observation courses at major medical school across the US.

**Topics and Dates**

08/18/20 Week One

1:00-3:00, Room TBD

*An Introduction to Art Principles and Observation in Medicine*

Instructor: Gina M. Polizzo, MS4

During this session, we will explore basic art elements and principles such as form/shape, line, color theory, and texture in order to equip students with the language necessary to formulate accurate descriptions of the art they observe. We will then work through dissecting and interpreting a number of art pieces, with a focus on human expression. Subsequently, these skills will be translated to a guided interpretation of subtleties of human expression in patients, an exercise which uses these critical art observation skills to build empathy in physicians.

**Articles to Read:**


**Optional Reading:**
08/25/20 Week Two

1:00-3:00 Art Observation Jeopardy

Typically, this class session is spent at the Paul W. Zuccari Gallery engaging in an exercise where teams take turns blindfolding one another, and other members work to explain the work of art to the blindfolded member in order to strengthen communication skills. Members rotate through these roles in order to gain perspective both as the recipient of information as well as the communicator. This works to simulate the experience of patient sign-out and transfer. The more accurate descriptions enable providers to envision the patient and anticipate necessary care.

Unfortunately, we will not have that opportunity this year. Instead, we will enjoy a game of virtual Art Observation Jeopardy with a variety of categories, one of which will cover terms we learned in our previous lesson (shape, form, hue, saturation) to strengthen our descriptive vocabulary.

Articles to Read:

09/15/20 Week Three
1:00-3:00pm, Zoom Conference Call ID will be emailed out prior to class

Guest Instructor: TBD

TBA,

Articles to Read:
   https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0161642017317086?token=01F3B3217AF9123D0017430BB7B919412AE4A2DAFF5B59EAAB6F200C26EDB8448765CC9FC7CA30248B0A919943BBCB6A

10/06/20 Week Four

1:00-3:00 Room, TBD

Guest Instructor: Cadence Trapini MS4

At this session, students will be applying their honed observational skills in the practice of creating a piece of art based on still life, led by artist MS4 Cadence Trapini. Students will begin to integrate their sharpened sense of perception with the execution of a work of art in order to solidify the interdisciplinary

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principles of the course. The students will then write a brief 1-page reflection on the course and submit their artwork as their final project.

**Evaluation**

The course is now P/F. Attendance via ZOOM is required for each class. Participation in class lessons, and a reflection *no more than* 1 page in length, double spaced Times New Roman will be required at the end of the course.

**Number of Students**

Minimum 6
Maximum 12