

**Spring Semester 2022**  
**HCB 599**  
**Special Research Projects (Capstone Course – IN-PERSON)**

**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 13-15 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 high 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. The paper must draw on good scholarship, but can also incorporate a personal narrative(s) and cases as you might desire.

### ***Things to Do:***

*Decide on a topic of deep interest. Anything related to the MA program will work. Select a topic that floats your boat, 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.

*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 alternative wordings might be as good or better?*

*What constituency might benefit from this paper?*

*Run a literature review though [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com) on your Big Question, and if you wish, consult a reference librarian. Use 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 10 great articles focused on your Big Question, above what you may have read in classes.*

Complete an alphabetized annotated bibliography that includes these 10 journal articles on your Big Question. In your annotated bibliography, *just write one or at most two sentences that summarize the main thesis of each article, and reference it accurately. You should include the most useful articles that we may have read in classes as a separate list (10 + 6=16 or so total).* This will later be your reference list at the end of your paper.

*What is your thesis and how do you plan on supporting it?*

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

*Try to write up a flexible outline using your headings and subheadings. Word these carefully.*

*Select a faculty mentor and email with a request for mentorship once you feel secure with your topic.*

**Course Schedule**---we will meet together in person in HSC, Level 3, Room 067 for scheduled sessions, although we will have a Zoom option for any student who feels ill.

**Week 1 (Monday January 24) Class Meets 067 Introduction and Big Questions Format (Why?)**

6-7:30 pm. Selecting topics: (1) something you feel is important and (2) can be of value to some identifiable constituency of readers, and (3) that you feel called to work on. What is your topic, potentially?

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

**Week 2 (Monday January 31) No Class (but work on your literature review and bibliography)**

**Week 3 (February 7) Class Meets 067**

Deep discussion of your topics. Students will have already started a literature review on their topic via [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com) and [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) "PubMed," etc. BIG QUESTION and a THESIS STATEMENT for class, printed out on paper, handed in, and ready to discuss.

**Week 4 (February 14) No Class**  
**Research time.**

**Week 5 (February 21) No Class**

**Due Date February 21:** 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 16 articles for mentor Zoom meeting and suggestions. **Set up a Zoom meeting #1 with your mentor this week to be held before Feb. 28.**

**Week 6 (February 28) Class Meets 067**

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

**Week 7 (March 7) No Class**

**Research time**

Set up a Zoom meeting #2 time with your mentor convened by March 21

**March 14 Spring Break**

**Week 8 (March 21) No Class**

**Research time, complete Zoom meetings #2 with mentors.**

**Week 9 (March 28) Class Meets 067**

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

**Week 10 (April 4) 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 20-minute polished PowerPoint presentations with 20 minutes for discussion.**

**Week 11 (April 11) No Class**

**Writing time**

**Week 12 (April 18) No Class**

**Week 13 (April 25)**

**Writing time**

**FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 8 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 14<sup>th</sup> and report this to Dr. Post for record keeping.* The following are good possibilities.

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

[Michelle.Ballan@stonybrook.edu](mailto:Michelle.Ballan@stonybrook.edu)

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

Maria Basile, MD

[Clinical.integration@gmail.com](mailto:Clinical.integration@gmail.com)

Narrative Medicine, Clinical Ethics, Access/Justice

Linda Bily, MA – Affiliated Faculty

[Linda.Bily@Stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:Linda.Bily@Stonybrookmedicine.edu)

Cancer Clinical Ethics and Advocacy; Healing Arts

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

[Richard.Bronson@Stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:Richard.Bronson@Stonybrookmedicine.edu)

Reproductive Medicine; Poetry; Narrative in Medicine; Medical Education

Dr. John Coulehan, MD – Professor Emeritus

[John.Coulehan@Stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:John.Coulehan@Stonybrookmedicine.edu)

Literature and Medicine; Clinical Ethics; Professional Virtues; Poetry

Dr. Brooke M. Ellison, PhD – Assistant Professor

[Brooke.Ellison@Stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:Brooke.Ellison@Stonybrookmedicine.edu)

Sociology of Medicine; Medical Ethics; Stem Cell Policy

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

[Phyllis.Migdal@Stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:Phyllis.Migdal@Stonybrookmedicine.edu)

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

Stephen G. Post

[Stephen.Post@Stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto: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](mailto:Jeffrey.Trilling@StonyBrookMedicine.edu)

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

# Writing Your Research Paper

## 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.
- (5) 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.

# 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](mailto: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](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. Until/unless the [latest COVID guidance](#) is explicitly amended by SBU, during Spring 2022 "disruptive behavior" will include refusal to wear a mask during classes.