

**Spring Semester 2019**

**HCB 599**

**Special Research Projects (Capstone Course)**

**Room 067**

**Mondays, 6 – 8:00 pm**

**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 at least 20 pages with references. This is a significant endeavor that will require considerable effort from the very start of the semester. Though the paper does not need to be published, it should be of publishable quality, and we hope that some students will eventually pursue publication. Graduate Studies requires this of all students, and an impressive final product can always be presented as a writing sample in future job and graduate or professional school applications. Here the focus must be on current scholarship, rather than on personal experience.

**Course Schedule**---we will meet together as a full class on only 6 occasions

### **Week 1 (January 28)**

Initial discussion of your topics. This is an introduction to the course including the process by which students will be working with faculty on a topic of their own choosing, schedule for deliverables, emphasis on peer review and student responsibilities to one another, a conceptual model of an excellent research paper, and the significance of good research in service to humanity. We will also discuss writing of your paper. SGPost will speak a bit about the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics* Table of Contents.

### **Week 2 (February 4)**

Discussion of your topics. Students will have run an informal literature review via [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com) and [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov) “PubMed.” Try to review at least 10 articles starting with the most current ones. Also, review any relevant entries in *The Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (2004), which is on the table in my office. You can just come in and sit down anytime. The *Table of Contents* is attached herein.

### **Week 3 (February 11)**

**10 minute discussion by each student.** Come ready to receive and provide peer review. (5 pts.)

**Deadlines: February 18: You must report the name of your faculty mentor to SG Post for record keeping, and have emailed you mentor. Be sure to copy [Stephen.Post@stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:Stephen.Post@stonybrookmedicine.edu).**

### **Week 4 (February 18)**

No class.

Work independently.

### **Week 5 (February 25)**

No class.

Work independently. Meet at least once with your mentor, or schedule a significant phone call if you live far away.

### **Week 6 (March 4)**

No class.

Be sure that you have (1) gathered sources for your project including a list of at least 20 carefully selected items from the peer-review journal literature, and send these too your mentor for comment; (2) completed an outline with heading and subheadings; (3) completed a 7-page draft. **These three items will be sent to your mentor by March 4 and be certain to copy SGPost (5 pts.)**

### **Week 7 (March 11)**

**We will meet as a full group and all students will present in summary their 7-page drafts for discussion and progress review.**

### **Week 8 (March 25)**

No class.

Work independently.

### **Week 9 (April 1)**

No class.

Work independently.

### **Week 10 (April 8)**

No class.

**Complete a 21-page polished draft (the 21 pages includes references in alphabetical order by last name of author). Submit to Dr. Post and mentor by April 8.**

**Weeks 11, 12, 13 (April 15, 22, 29)** all students will formally present from a **penultimate draft** made available to their peers several days beforehand. **It should be emailed to the student's mentor and to SG Post at least several days before your scheduled presentation.** Students will make a **20-minute polished PowerPoint presentation without interruption, followed by 20 minutes of feedback.** **The student is expected to make**

improvements on this penultimate draft before submitting a final draft to the mentor by May 13 (cc Dr. Post). (10 pts.)

## FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 13 TO MENTOR AND SGPost

### Grading:

Papers will be graded by the faculty mentor only (80% of total grade). The overall course facilitator (SGPost) will not interfere with this process. The course facilitator, however, will be responsible for the assessment of class participation (20% of total grade). Class participation, diligence, and engagement with peer's drafts are important.

### Approach

*Step 1: Decide on a topic of deep interest. Anything related to the MA program will work, but the topic should be fresh and not one that you have worked on in other courses, although it can be related. Always select a topic that floats your boat, and that you feel you can handle.*

Students select a topic drawing on the research methods of the humanities (e.g., philosophical & ethical analysis, clinical ethics, literature, history, public policy, law, narrative medicine, religious studies, etc.). For example, a student focusing on literature must do in depth analysis and research on the primary writings of a figure such as William Carlos Williams, Anton Chekov, John Stone, etc., and draw on existing 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. As another example, 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. Or a student might want to investigate "compassionate" care or other features of a healing clinical relationship, including, for example, professional empathy and altruism and theories of 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, genethics, 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.

*Step 2: Run a literature review though [www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com) and also looks at Pub Med. Experiment with word combinations. Also, review relevant entries in *The Encyclopedia of Bioethics* (2004).*

*Step 3: Prepare a very precise Big Question, a thesis, and the beginnings of an outline. Select a faculty mentor and have emailed him or her with a request for mentorship well before February 12.*

## 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 12<sup>th</sup> and report this to Dr. Post for record keeping.* The following are good possibilities.

Julie Agris, PhD

[Julie.Agris@StonyBrookMedicine.edu](mailto:Julie.Agris@StonyBrookMedicine.edu)

Law & Medical Ethics, Classic Cases, Health Policy and Management

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

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

Robyn McKeefrey MA BSRN-C CCM CCE Risk Management Coordinator, Department of Risk Management

Email: [Robyn.McKeefrey@stonybrookmedicine.edu](mailto:Robyn.McKeefrey@stonybrookmedicine.edu)

Medical Law and Risk Management; Reproductive Ethics; Clinical Ethics

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. This is best placed in the first paragraph of the paper. 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 second 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 third paragraph usually describes 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 format (e.g. MLA, Chicago, APA) that your faculty mentor suggests. He or she will best know what standards suit the type of paper you are writing.
- (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.