AMST UN3930: Topics in American Studies
Department of American Studies

Section 6: Life at the End of Life: Palliative Medicine and Service
Thursday 4:10PM-6:00PM, Hamilton 607
Fall 2017 Syllabus

1 Course Outline

This Seminar is designed to provide opportunities for readings and reflections on the experience of volunteer service work. At least one prior semester of volunteer work in a clinical setting relevant to the syllabus is recommended. The fieldwork component of the course is met by the student’s continued direct service work in that context, during the course itself.

Any service based learning course must have learning outcomes consistent with the benefit of these groups:
Student, University, Institution, Patients/Residents

This is the outline for service based around a volunteer program, which is, in this case, the At Your Service program at Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center, through which Columbia students experience what it means to be a long or short term patient or resident in a nursing home. The students provide assistance and support, whether emotional or recreational, or as the person consistently there for someone during chronic illness or at the end of their life.

At the core of this framework is the patient; however, it is important to think about the impact this will have on each other piece and also how important it is to each. Therefore these specific goals are centered on benefitting each person and group involved in the service.

1.1 Course Goals

Student
The students will learn how to critically reflect on their experiences at the health care center in the context of questions raised in the texts read in the seminar.
Shared experiences and reflections on texts and interactions at TCC will enhance the critical reflection of all students engaged in the course.
Students will develop skills necessary to critically reflect on the significance of emotional care as a medical practitioner, as well as form a deeper understanding of the role of palliative care and comfort care in the life cycle of care.

Columbia University
Students will develop an understanding of their role in their communities and Columbia University’s role in New York City.
Students will continue to explore values of social justice and social responsibility as they investigate controversial societal, medical, and ethical issues in end of life care.
Students will use their experiences to better understand the complex interpersonal and societal questions raised in the core curricula of the undergraduate colleges in the context of the contemporary world.
Pre-medical students will have an option for credit based on skills and direct patient experience as an emotional caregiver, further enriching the university’s pre-medical program.
Students will learn to provide more specific and patient-centered care in ArchCare, the Continuing Care Community of the Archdiocese of New York.

Students will participate in the At Your Service volunteer program, supplementing social and recreational interactions at TCC.

Patients/Residents
Students will use their reflections to better inform their care of patients and residents.
Students will continue to form lasting and consistent relationships with patients that provide additional support and give them an additional advocate within the medical system.
Students will develop an understanding of the importance of volunteer attentiveness as an essential component of holistic care.
Students will develop a better understanding of psychological suffering and be able to provide better emotional care to patients.

1.2 Texts
Readings will be assigned and students will be given access to PDFs of these readings. Assigned books will be placed on reserve. Students are required to read

1.3 Requisites
Students taking this course must be current volunteers in the TCC At Your Service program. Students will qualify for this course if they have completed at least one semester of volunteering at TCC or complete an interview and are approved by the instructor. Students must also be in good standing with the volunteer program. Students who are found to be missing shifts will be subject to review by the TCC Program Coordinator and student coordinators and may lose a significant portion of their grade if found to not be fulfilling the requirements of the At Your Service Program.

2 Instructor Information

**Course Co-Chairs:**
Bob Pollack, Ph.D., Professor of Biological Sciences, Director of University Seminars and Director and Founder of RCSS

Craig D. Blinderman, M.D., M.A., Director of Adult Palliative Care Service and Associate Professor of Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center

**Office:** Seminars Office, Faculty House (2nd floor)
**Phone:** (212) 854 - 2409
**Email:** pollack@columbia.edu
**Office Hours:** Tues and Thurs, 2-4; send an email ahead if possible
**Additional Participating Faculty, Instructors, and Collaborators**
Rita Charon, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center, Executive Director in Program in Narrative Medicine
Anthony Lechich, M.D., Chief Medical Officer, Mary Manning Walsh Residency
David Madigan, Ph.D., Vice President, Arts and Sciences
Melissa Martin, M.D, M.P.H., C.M.D., Medical Director, Terence Cardinal Cooke Hospital
Cynthia Peabody, M.Div., Palliative Care Chaplain at Chilton Medical Center, Pompton Plains, NJ
Marya Pollack, M.D., M.P.H., Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Columbia University
Robert Remez, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology, Barnard College
Steven Simring, M.D., Psychiatrist
Ashley Shaw, Harvard University Medical School student
Tess Cersonsky, Yale University Research Associate

TCC Project Coordinator, Fieldwork Advisor: Tom McDonald, tmcdonald@archcare.org, (212) 360 – 1099
Teaching Assistant: Jenny Davis, jld2203@barnard.edu, (413) 548 – 0880
Office hours by appointment.

3 Method of Instruction

Service-based learning at Terence Cardinal Cooke Health Care Center is split into two parts: volunteer time at Terence Cardinal Cooke and seminar discussion at Columbia.

3.1 Volunteering at TCC

Students volunteer at TCC in the At Your Service program during two 2-hour shifts per week (4 hours total). One shift is spent on TCC’s Sub-Acute Rehabilitation Center and one shift is spent visiting an individual long-term resident.

Volunteer tasks include, but are not limited to:
1. Serving as an advocate for the long-term companion, keeping in mind their individual needs
2. Participating in therapeutic recreation events
3. Transporting patients between unit, OT/PT, lounge
4. Answering call bells
5. Addressing or relaying any requests or concerns of patients and/or their loved ones, especially during discharge
6. Planning activities to do with long-term companion

3.2 Seminar at Columbia

At Columbia, students meet weekly to discuss readings and their experiences at TCC with Columbia faculty. This seminar discussion will take one hour and 50 minutes each week, for a total course time about 6 hours per week including the time spent volunteering. Reflection sessions will add an additional 6 hours over the course of the semester.

These classes will provide the students with the ability to discuss the readings and their experiences as part of a larger group, with a focus on sharing experiences amongst each other and with the instructors.

1. Each class will begin with 20 minutes of discussion of student volunteer experiences in the past week or a free writing exercise.
2. The rest of class will continue according to the instructor’s plan.

3.3 Readings
The readings for the course are split into groups based on the impact groups: the student, Columbia University, the institution at which service is being done, and the patient. Students are required to read *Being Mortal* by Atul Gawande as a pre-reading for the course. Required readings are in **BOLD**; other readings are suggested. Suggested readings should be utilized whenever possible but are not required.

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| 1    | 9/7  | Patient Approaching death and dying | • *Being Mortal*
|      |      | Prof. Bob Pollack Dr. Craig Blinderman | • “What is Palliative Care?” (9 pgs)
|      |      | | • *On Death and Dying*  
|      |      | |   o On the Fear of Death (9 pgs)
|      |      | |   o Attitudes Towards Death and Dying (24 pgs)
|      |      | |   Acceptance (24 pgs)
|      |      | TBD | **TCC Volunteer Orientation, 10AM-3PM (MAKEUP – TBD)** |
| 2    | 9/14 | Student Internalizing patient pain | • Groopman, *The Anatomy of Hope* – Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 (131 pgs)
| 3    | 9/21 | Patient & Student Cultural and religious differences | • Ofri, *What Doctors Feel*, “The Doctor Can’t See You Now” (p. 16-22)
|      |      | Cynthia Peabody | • “Race, Gender, and Partnership in the Patient-Physician Relationship” (7 pgs)
|      |      | | • “Spirituality, religion, and healing in palliative care” (23 pgs)
|      |      | | • “Spiritual Pain among Patients with Advanced Cancer in Palliative Care” (8 pgs)
| 4    | 9/28 | University Mortality is not a solvable problem | • “In Dreams Begin Responsibilities,” Delmore Schwartz (7 pgs)
|      |      | Prof. Bob Pollack and Dr. Melissa Martin | • “Where in this world is the human soul?,” Pollack 2014 (7 pgs)
|      |      | | • Ofri, *What Doctors Feel*, “Can we Build a Better Doctor” (p. 29-59)
|      |      | | • The Origin of Species, “Recapitulation and Conclusion” (24 pgs)
| 5    | 10/5 | Institution/Patient Psychiatric issues in the elderly and patients at the end of life | • “Care of the Psychiatric Patient in the Nursing Home: Challenges and Opportunities” (20 pgs)
|      |      | Dr. Steve Simring | • “Depression in Long-Term Care” (6 pgs)
|      |      | | • “Depression in older nursing home residents” (13 pgs)
|      |      | | “The effects of caregiver emotional stress on the depressive symptomatology of the care recipient” (9 pgs)
| Week 6: 10/12 | Institution: Institutional aspects of palliative care  
Dr. Tony Lechich | • Ofri, *What Doctors Feel*  
  - “Drowning” (p. 143-169)  
  - “Scared Witless” (p. 64-94)  
  - “Under the Microscope” (p. 173-201)  
  - “Palliative Care for the Seriously Ill” (9 pgs)  
  - “The Current and Potential Role of Palliative Care for the Medicare Population” (8 pgs)  
  - “More Doctors Steer Clear of Medicare” (6 pgs) |
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| Week 7: 10/19 | Student: Maintaining volunteer motives while earning credit  
Jenny Davis | • Volunteers: A Social Profile, “Motives” (27 pgs)  
  • Volunteering and Adult Learning” (7 pgs)  
  • Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment” (36 pgs) |
| Week 8: 10/26 | University/Institution: Narrative Medicine  
Dr. Rita Charon | • “What is Narrative Medicine?” (62 pgs)  
  • “Narrative Medicine and Contemplative Care at the End of Life” (16 pgs) |
| Week 9: 11/2 | Institution: Autonomy, Advance Care Planning and Decision Making  
Dr. Craig Blinderman | • “Personhood, Personal Identity, and Advanced Directives” (18 pgs)  
  • MOLST (Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment): Form and Checklist (4 and 6 pgs)  
  • “The ethics of surrogate decision making” (3 pgs)  
  • The art of choosing—Sheena Iyengar TED talk |
| Week 10: 11/9 | Patient & Student: Difficulties in Patient Interactions  
Dr. Robert Remez | • “Behavioral Problems Among Patients in Skilled Nursing Facilities” (4 pgs)  
  • “Emotional Intelligence and patient-centered care” (7 pgs)  
  • “Social Issues of the Alzheimer's Patient and Family” (5 pgs) |
| Week 11: 11/16 | Student: The ethics of palliative care and moral dilemmas at the end of life  
Dr. Craig Blinderman | • “The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine” (7 pgs)  
  • “Ethics as first philosophy”—Emmanuel Levinas  
  • “Palliative Options of Last Resort” (6 pgs)  
  • The ethical debate of physician aid in dying and euthanasia:  
    https://www.health.ny.gov/regulations/task_force/reports_publications/when_death_is_sought/chap5.htm |
| Week 12: 11/30 | University: The role of service  
VP David Madigan | TBD |
| Week 13: 12/7 | Patient, Faculty: All participating faculty | • “The ’Empty Vessel’ Physician: Physicians’ Instrumentality Makes Them Seem Personally Empty” (10 pgs)  
  • Ofri, *What Doctors Feel, “A Daily Dose of Death”* (p. 98-121) |
3.4 Reflection Sessions

Students volunteering with TCC attend 1-hour, bi-weekly group reflection sessions, for a total of 7 during the semester. These sessions are led by the volunteer coordinators and seek to engage students in discussion of articles, often from the *New York Times* or other newspaper sources, in a peer environment. The volunteer coordinators are chosen by the Project Coordinator at TCC and the current coordinators; coordinators are given training in leading reflection sessions.

Student participation in reflection sessions is essential to involvement in the *At Your Service* program and therefore is included in the course. However, the reflection sessions have much more of an informal peer focus than the seminar.

Additionally, students volunteering with TCC complete monthly 300-word reflective responses. Completion of these short responses is included in participation in reflection sessions. Reflection sessions also will serve as an informal setting for continued discussion of seminar topics in the context of the session’s readings. Reflection session responses will be submitted on CourseWorks and will be reviewed by members of the teaching faculty, as an opportunity for students to receive feedback on their reflections throughout the semester before the final paper.

**The reflection sessions will be held Monday nights from 8-9 PM on the following dates: 9/11, 9/25, 10/9, 10/23, 11/13, 11/27, and 12/11. Students may miss one reflection session without it affecting their grade.**

3.5 Individual Instruction and Reflection

Students are encouraged to reach out to the course director, teaching assistant, or any of the course faculty regarding the material of the course and reflective papers. Additionally, former TCC Volunteer and Employee Ashley Shaw and Tess Cersonsky will be available for contact regarding any of the topics of the course at ashley_shaw@hms.harvard.edu and tess.cersonsky@gmail.com. An optional remote discussion session will also be set up with Ashley or Tess.

4 Method of Evaluation

Continued attendance at TCC shifts during the course is required. However the grade for the course will be determined by the academic component of the experience, that is, the student’s participation in the seminar, the reflection sessions, and their reflective paper.

4.1 Seminar Participation (50%)

Students are required to attend all seminar meetings. Seminars will meet weekly for the duration of the semester, for a total of 13 meetings. Students may miss two full class meetings during the entire semester, after which their seminar participation grade will be lowered by 5%.

The majority of the time in seminar will be spent discussing readings and experiences at TCC. These discussions are essential to the development of students’ reflective skills, and therefore the majority of this portion of the course grade will be determined by their participation in the discussion and preparation of readings. Some sessions may require more or less reading than others.
4.2 Participation in reflection sessions at TCC Volunteer Program (20%)

20% is given for attendance of reflection sessions and completion of short monthly prompts. This attendance will be monitored by the Project Coordinator; students are expected to attend each of seven reflection sessions over the course of the semester unless otherwise arranged with the Project Coordinator. Students are allowed one excused absence.

4.3 Reflective Paper (30%)

Students are expected to complete a reflective paper in addition to their TCC required reflections for the purpose of grading for the conclusion of this course. The reflective paper will be graded on the basis of the student’s acknowledgement of the personal effect the service has had on them, as well as the understanding of their service’s effect on the patient. Reflective papers will be graded by the course chair and additional instructors, and students will be encouraged to develop the ideas for their reflective papers throughout the semester. Students will be asked to reflect on a particular issue they have experienced throughout the semester at TCC, or their overall experience, and relate that to the reflective skills they have developed through the seminar.

Reflective papers will serve as the main evaluation of this course but are meant to encourage students to develop their understanding of the significant impact or meaning their service has had for themselves, the patient, the institution, and the university. Students are expected to engage in critical reflection, which specifically requires them to analyze and question their experiences within a broad context of issues and content knowledge.

Reflective papers will be due on the last day of finals, 12/22.

5 Class Policies

5.1 Class Ethics

Students are expected to uphold the highest ethical standards in this course. Cheating of any form will only diminish the student’s ability to reflect on their experiences. Students are also expected to be truthful and accurate in their reporting of shift times at TCC. Columbia University policies on academic conduct will be enforced in all assignments and participation.

5.2 Expectations of Students and Instructors

Students and instructors are expected to engage in continuous academic conversation surrounding subjective experiences and service based learning. Students can expect the instructors to provide academic enrichment to their experiences at TCC. The instructors will be available during office hours or by appointment to discuss any additional ideas or issues that arise.

5.3 Disability Accommodations

Any student requiring disability accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (DS). DS will determine the student’s need for disability services on a case-by-case basis. Any student with registered services or concerns should speak to the instructor in office hours or by appointment.
1  **Texts**


2  **Articles**


"Medical Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (MOLST)." New York State Department of Health, May 2013.


