Greetings from the Medical Humanities Program! Spring is always a busy time, and we’ve had another terrific term that we are excited to share with you. The Medical Humanities Retreat, as always, was a highlight, with Drs. Lydell & Raquel Lettsome focusing on the theme of “Making Room for the Poor.”

This newsletter features a class named, “The Human Person, Disability and Society” taught by Dr. Jason Whitt, and don’t miss the column about how Medical Humanities matters to our DeBakey Scholars. We’ve started our own lending library here in the Medical Humanities office, thanks to Sue Mock, who wants to make sure that our students have access to all the latest and greatest books that faculty and our affiliated physicians are discussing.

Plus, we’ve had so many guest speakers and great events to tell you about that we can’t fit them all in, but want to give you a glimpse into a select few. And finally, we’re making preparations for another lovely graduation luncheon in the atrium of the BSB for this year’s Seniors! It’s hard to contain our gratitude for all of the ways in which the Medical Humanities Program continues to shape our lives together here at Baylor and beyond … but we hope the words and images in this newsletter give you a way to celebrate another wonderful academic year along with us.

Many thanks to Maggie O’Brien for her work in putting this semester’s newsletter together!

With medicine in mind and healthcare at heart,

Lauren Barron, MD

Be sure to check out the new Medical Humanities Magazine!
 Attempting to summarize or describe “The Human Person, Disability, and Society” to those who have not taken Dr. Jason Whitt’s course is a dauntingly difficult task – yet by the same hand, is necessary, powerful and revelatory. Entering the class, I had an incredibly limited idea of what I would walk away with, and most of that included information that could be found in a basic course curriculum. I was hilariously mistaken. This class has influenced my character at its core, and provided a platform from which I and many other students have been able to enjoy wondrous personal growth.

Disability & Society at its core explores the concept of disabilities by asking a few central questions: What does it mean to be human? Does our definition of humanity include or exclude people with disabilities who may not have will and agency? What does it mean within our society and others to have a disability? To have the context we need to explore these questions, the class focuses our initial studies in a few key arenas. First, the history of disability: laws and political movements, societal and institutional perspectives and how they have evolved over time, and how some major religions have regarded disability.

Additionally, we have conversations about societal viewpoints and current models of disability that inform and shape how we view disability. Finally, we immerse ourselves in the literature of the culture so we can produce in-depth analysis of how our views of disability shape our entire understanding of what it means to be human and to live a good life. All of this is accomplished in a class that is carried very heavily by discussions and essays that both fully engage students and encourage deep critical thinking and meaningful reflection. The result is a powerful expansion of our moral imagination and pertinent language with which to discuss these concepts, which thereby allows us to question what hasn’t previously been questioned, and perceive what previously may have been hidden – consequentially empowering us to partake in these areas of serious discussion.

The coursework is interesting, but that doesn’t begin to describe how transformative it has been to have these conversations. They have utterly shattered the foundation of my worldview, and have provided for me a new lens through which to observe the world. I wake up in the morning searching in new places to find what I value, because I have realized that what I truly treasure has shifted. I live my days aware of more subtle tendencies among my friends and myself, because now I am aware of how a culture has conditioned me to think – and how that conflicts with how I elect to think. At the most basic level, I use this new lens to look at people in a way I hadn’t before, because the values that I look for in other people are no longer rooted in the same sources they had been. This class teaches more than a curriculum; it trains and sharpens us in virtues – such as presence, patience and attention – making us both better students and better future health care providers.

“I wake up in the morning searching in new places to find what I value, because I have realized that what I truly treasure has shifted.”
Dr. Whitt has established Disability & Society in such a way that the class has now become a staple experience in my undergraduate education. Not many formative classes similar in nature exist in the undergraduate or graduate levels of medical education, and the Medical Humanities Program at Baylor is unique and profound in its dedication to provide outlets for students to explore crucial ideas that will impact the future of our society. They are equipping future physicians, nurses, physical therapists, counselors, and even lawmakers, with the tools we need to evaluate and reshape how we care for each other as human beings. The kind of education and exposure that classes like Disability & Society offer is fundamental in shaping the trajectory of our culture’s future.

Medical Humanities Retreat
Omar Sahibzada

The 18th Annual Medical Humanities Retreat was held February 10th & 11th at Baylor’s Truett Seminary. This year, the Retreat had the privilege of hosting two keynote speakers: Dr. Lydell Lettsome, and his wife, Dr. Raquel Lettsome. Dr. Lydell Lettsome spoke on the topic of “Making Room for the Poor” and connected the ideas of how we can address caring for the impoverished to the relevance of the guiding words of scripture, especially in today’s charged political climate. Through creative sports analogies, Dr. Lettsome reiterated the idea that while ministry can promote a “team mentality” that embodies unity, this team attitude may also be subject to being corrupted and polarized by political influences and agendas.

However, he referred back to the guiding power of Scripture as a solution to this problem. At the end of the day, he explained, we are all a part of “Team Jesus,” and our individual roles on this team culminate in being able to open our hearts and minds to committing “caring for the least of these.”

Dr. Lettsome supplemented these ideas with a discussion of healthcare economics, and how such concepts relate to making room for the poor. He spoke of how the current economic structure of the healthcare system disadvantages the poor, and how addressing such disparity within our system is, in its own right, making room for the poor. These unique ideas stuck out, and were popular with many students.

“I really appreciated the talk about economics. As students, we forget that we are going to have a voice, so we need to use it to advocate for our future patients from an economic standpoint,” junior Ashley Alston said. Following his talk, Dr. Lettsome stayed to sign and distribute copies of his book, *Stolen Money, Stolen Health*, for students.

For a second straight year, worship and music was led by Wes Cunningham, a local musician and filmmaker from Waco, and included a feature performance from the Medical Humanities Program’s own Dr. Lauren Barron.
On Saturday morning, Dr. Raquel Lettsome, a New Testament scholar, continued upon the theme of making room for the poor. She stressed the idea that it is insufficient to simply understand poverty or care for the poor on a situational basis, but rather part of the responsibility of making room for the poor entails fundamental, macro-level understandings of poverty. From a Scriptural perspective, she discussed the importance of understanding that metaphorically, our roles are the roles of sheep, and not a shepherd.

Supplementing the insightful presentations were small group reflection sessions, which allowed students the opportunity to discuss their ruminations with both their peers and discussion leaders, including various members of Baylor Medical Humanities staff and Waco medical professionals. A Q&A panel session also allowed students to interact with Baylor alumni now in medical school and graduate health professional programs, and to discuss the relevance of the medical humanities in both future life and educational experiences alike. Through its connections of medicine and spirituality, the Retreat provides students an opportunity to take a weekend to reflect and engage with ideas of spirituality in medicine, and to understand the vocation of medicine as a means of serving others to fulfill a higher purpose.
Blame it on genetics, but I have a natural gift of curiosity. Some might even call it nosy – but whatever. Overhearing conversations at our recent Doctor’s Breakfast, there was a considerable amount of discussion on must-read books. Amazed at the libraries these doctors had within their reach, it became clear to me that our students should have the same kind of access and opportunities. My mind started wandering (which it often does) and decided starting a library for our Medical Humanities students would be an awesome idea (and you’re welcome). I bought five books to start the collection, and plan on adding more in the future. Here is our list of books for you to checkout:

- *Attending*, by Ronald Epstein, M.D.
- *Modern Death*, by Haider Warraich
- *Being Mortal*, by Atul Gawande
- *The Finest Traditions of My Calling*, by Abraham M. Nussbaum, M.D.
- *When Breath Becomes Air*, by Paul Kalanith

Come by the office, sign the book out, and bring back when you’re done. It’s that simple!

Got a great idea for a book? Let me know.

Join the New Baylor Alumni Physician Network!

If you are a Baylor graduate and now in medical school or residency training, or a physician who is already long established in medical practice, please consider joining the new Baylor University Physician Network!

You can connect with us on Facebook, or contact Jon Sisk at the Baylor Alumni Network, where he can help you connect with your fellow Bears. We have already had an event in Houston, with plans for events in Dallas & San Antonio coming soon.
The Medical Humanities Program has rewarded five of its students with the Michael E. DeBakey, Selma DeBakey, and Lois DeBakey Endowed Scholarship Fund. The Michael E. DeBakey Medical Foundation has provided a $1 million endowment fund to the Medical Humanities Program at Baylor. Every year, this invested endowment produces the funds for this generous scholarship. Established in 2009, the scholarship is awarded to Junior and Senior Medical Humanities students who maintain at least a 3.75 science and overall GPA, awarding each student $10,000 of scholarship assistance payable during their Senior year.

This year’s recipients were announced at the Medical Humanities Retreat as Nicholas Bellacicco, John Davis, Paul Gaschen, Emily McCalley, and Sarah McWilliam. Each DeBakey Scholar is an excellent example of the influence Medical Humanities has had in shaping the minds of undergraduates on their way to becoming healthcare professionals. When asked to articulate their personal vision of how Medical Humanities accomplishes this, each DeBakey Scholar painted a clear, bright future for medical care.

For Junior University Scholar Emily McCalley, this vision centers on the capacity to ask and answer life’s most challenging questions. According to McCalley, “Wrestling with those questions and molding our worldviews leads us to translate our carefully considered values into practice: how we treat our patients and their families, how we see our own responsibilities as health care professionals, and which goods we prioritize in our decision-making.”

To Nick Bellacicco, these questions led him to “self-examination and reflection” which allowed him to “see the connection between the art and science of medicine.” It is the desire to embrace the humanities which first drew him to Baylor, and which he now believes enables him to make a positive impact on his future medical class.

Besides contributing to one’s medical class and the greater professional world, a Medical Humanities education has the potential to create almost limitless impact on future patients. Senior John Davis said, “It is plainly evident the humanities have not only opened my eyes to the pains and suffering of my future patients, but have equipped me with new tools to act in a way that benefits them.” Sarah McWilliam likewise wrote that “a Medical Humanities-informed education teaches its students’ compassion and empathy – two things that many argue are severely lacking within the healthcare field today.”

At the very heart of medical practice, “doctors must listen, talk, and empathize,” Paul Gaschen writes in his vision statement. These tasks “must be sought after and explored in a uniquely human-oriented manner,” a manner which Medical Humanities more than accomplishes. It is no wonder that these remarkable students were chosen to be this year’s DeBakey Scholars. Combing optimism and altruism with determination and thoughtfulness, these scholars are well-equipped for their futures in medicine.
Spring’s Scholarly Events & Happenings

Professing Medicine: Oaths & Facts & Values

This spring, Dr. Jeffrey Bishop visited Baylor in February at the invitation of the Medical Humanities Program and the Philosophy Department. He lectured on the pros and cons of oath-taking among medical practitioners in a talk entitled, “Professing Medicine.” Dr. Bishop is an internist and a philosopher whose scholarly work focuses on the historical, political, and philosophical conditions that underpin contemporary medical practice. He is Professor of Philosophy and holds the Tenet Chair in Health Care Ethics, as well as serving as Director of the Albert Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics at St. Louis University. Dr. Bishop is also the author of, “The Anticipatory Corpse,” a book which one reviewer says is “destined to change the way we think and, hopefully, practice medicine” – so add his book to your reading list!

Dr. Barron & Professor Julia Hitchcock presented together at the 6th International Health Humanities Consortium in Houston Texas on March 11th.

Their talk was titled “Creative Crosstalk,” and featured innovative curricular design and collaboration in the Visual Arts & Healing course, featuring a joint studio art project based on Thomas Eakin’s “The Gross Clinic.” This painting was recreated in charcoal by students from both the Art Department and Prehealth students (who are much more used to spending time in the Baylor Science Building than in an art studio!). Currently, Dr. Barron and Professor Hitchcock are preparing to assemble this semester’s studio art project, for which there will be an opening reception during the last week of class.

STEM & Humanities Symposium

Dr. Barron served on the Steering Committee and participated in a panel discussion at the 3rd Annual STEM & Humanities Symposium sponsored by the College of Arts & Sciences. The focus of this year’s symposium was Global Health. This event provides a forum for discussion from scholars of disciplines from across the university in an effort to foster collaboration and curricular innovation. It was a pleasure to have Dr. Michael Merson from Duke, and Dr. Peter Hotez from Baylor’s School of Tropical Medicine, as our keynote speakers.

A list of readings and related links is available at: http://sites.baylor.edu/stem-and-humanities/stem-humanities-symposium/
Dr. Hoy speaks at this year’s ADEC Meeting

Dr. Bill Hoy presented a session at the 40th Annual Conference of the Association for Death Education & Counseling on April 7 in Portland, Oregon. “Developing Death Awareness of Pre-Med Students in an End-of-Life Care Course” overviewed the ways he helps pre-med students in MH 4372 to become better able to support dying patients and their families. While at the conference, Dr. Hoy moderated a panel discussing the work of the late Dr. Ronald Barrett, whose scholarship focused on African American death customs. Dr. Hoy also introduced Baylor University Scholar David Crawford, who presented his Honors Thesis research on African American clergy perspectives on end-of-life care.

Upcoming Medical Ethics Seminar

Save the date! On September 8, 2017, plan to attend the Medical Ethics Seminar sponsored by the Institute for Faith and Learning, together with the Medical Humanities Program and our local Medical Society. This year’s event will feature Raymond Barfield, M.D., Ph.D., Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Christian Philosophy at Duke Medical School and Duke Divinity School. This annual seminar – now in its fourth year – invites physicians, nurses, administrators, chaplains, and other health care professionals to come together to reflect on ways in which their shared Christian faith might inform the practice of medicine. The title of this year’s presentation is, “Why We Should Listen: Patient Satisfaction, Burnout, and Ethical Medicine.”

For more information, visit: http://www.baylor.edu/ifl
2017 Honors Theses

Nicholas Bellacicco
The Pedagogy of Clinical Empathy: Formation of the Physician

David Crawford
Investigating the Influence of African American Clergy on Congregants’ Medical Decision-Making at the End of Life

Rahul Dadwani
Social Justice in the Christian and Islamic Faiths and its Implication on Donor Organ Allocation

Abbie Fahnestock
The Necessary Hedonism of Disenchantment: Analysis of the Disenchantment of the Universe with Particular Attention to Medicine and Theology

Micah Gamble
Integral Approach to the Spanish Short Stories of Author B. Traven

Geordyn Hoge
Medicalizing Childbirth in the 18th Century through the Illustrated Obstetric Anatomy Atlases of William Smellie and William Hunter

Maggie McGlothlin
Oral Storytelling and Irish Identity

Brittany Nelson
Autonomy or Beneficence: An Analysis of End-of-Life Care in Pediatric Patients

Morgan Smith
Rediscovering Ars Moriendi for Modern Medicine and the Church

Katrina Youngblood
Watching Them, Watching Him: A Novella
Medical Humanities Graduates
Class of 2017

Marc Abuloc
Sarah Allen
Logan Baragana
Aaron Burchfield
Akshay Chhana
Mayra Franco
Adelaide Frey
Micah Gamble
Maureen Genov
Carlyn Grandcolas
Jane Han
Erin Hayes
Aaron Hocher
Hannah Huntington

Kimberlee King-Tezino
Garrett McCaskill
Courtney McNeely
Megan Mitchell
Kayona Moore
Brittney Nelson
Destiny Newsome
Michelle Nguyen
Lauren Pevehouse
Robyn Purdy
Rebecca Ramdass
Angela Ray
Emily Reneer
Danielle Roberts

Lisiann Rodriguez
Melanie Roe
Callie Schott
Catherine Scott
Morgan Smith
Sara Stephens
Taylor Stroman
Kaitlin Tabula
In Yin (Shana) Tang
Lauren Tsao
Michelle Ugwu
Christian Walker
Andrew Walton
Katrina Youngblood

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A LUNCHEON HONORING
Baylor University’s
Medical Humanities Graduates
Class of 2017!

HOSTED BY THE
MEDICAL HUMANITIES PROGRAM
Baylor Science Building - Atrium
Saturday, May 13
Directly After Graduation Ceremony
RSVP: By May 5th
sue_mock@baylor.edu