

## Art, Observation, and Empathy Syllabus

### Instructors

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### Course Schedule

Thursday, 09/29, 3:00-4:00 PM: Course Orientation Luncheon (JMEC, room 506)

Wednesday, 10/06, 3:30-5:00 PM: Session 1 (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Wednesday, 10/20, 3:30-5:00 PM: Session 2 (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Wednesday, 10/27, 3:30-5:00 PM: Session 3 (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Wednesday, 11/03, 3:30-5:00 PM: Session 4 (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Wednesday, 11/17, 3:30-5:00 PM: Session 5 (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Wednesday, 12/01, 3:30-5:00 PM: Session 6 (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Wednesday, 12/08, 3:30-5:00 PM: Session 7 (Philadelphia Museum of Art)

### Course Assignments and Grading

#### Pre Course Survey and Post Course Survey

- This course is part of an ongoing multi-year research study examining how art observation courses impact medical students.
- Prior to the first session and after the last session, a series of online surveys must be completed which will be emailed to you with a deadline by the student coordinators.
- All survey responses will be anonymous and de-identified.

#### 50 Word Reflections

- Five 50-100 Word Reflections are due to CANVAS by midnight the Monday prior to each session, except for the first session. You will also be required to comment on at least one of your classmates' reflections on CANVAS by midnight the following day (Tuesday).
- A final 250 Word (minimum) Capstone Reflection Essay will be due by midnight the Tuesday prior to the final session.
- Reflections must be submitted to CANVAS to receive credit.
- Details and descriptions of each assignment are detailed in the syllabus below at the end of the outline of each session's activities.

#### Attendance & Absences

- On time attendance at 6 of the 7 sessions is mandatory to receive full course credit.
- If you will be absent for a session, you must email Adam Rizzo and all student coordinators. Email addresses are given above.

### Course Logistics

### Arriving

Meet inside the North Entrance (adjacent to Anne d'Harnoncourt Drive; not the Rocky Steps) at 3:15pm. The museum is closed to the public on Wednesdays so it is important that you arrive on time as you will not be allowed to leave the group during the sessions. The course will begin promptly at 3:30 p.m.

If you are bringing a backpack or large bag, you will need to leave it in the education bag check area before the session. We will be moving between various spaces in the Museum and large backpacks/bags are not allowed in the galleries.

### Parking

#### Museum Garage

The Museum has a parking garage for visitors. Your membership entitles you to a reduced rate of \$8 for five hours of parking. You may access the garage via Art Museum Drive or Waterworks Drive.

#### Street Parking

Most street parking around the Museum and its neighborhood is two – three hour metered parking only. The City regularly patrols and gives tickets.

### Clothing Tips

Whatever the weather outside, it can often be the opposite in the museum! Dress in layers to be comfortable in both environments. Museum floors are hard, and we will be walking around a lot so comfortable walking shoes are helpful.

### What to Bring

We will provide all the materials you need for the course, though you are welcome to bring a notebook. Backpacks and large bags are not allowed in the galleries.

## **Course Goals and Overview**

Observation is a key component of physical examination and clinical diagnosis, but it is also a difficult skill to teach. Several studies have demonstrated inadequacies in the physical exam skills of medical students, residents and physicians. A reason for this may be the fact that physical exam courses in medical schools tend to emphasize identification of memorized clinical signs rather than formally teaching students how to observe and describe. In addition, the cognitive skills inherent in rigorous observation are also ones that are the basis for empathy. With this in mind the goals of the course are to:

- (i) Train the students in art observation skills
- (ii) Develop clinical observation skills
- (iii) Foster cognitive skills that are the basis of empathy

The gallery sessions will be structured around the Artful Thinking approach, developed by Project Zero at Harvard University and focused on six thinking dispositions: Observing and Describing, Questioning and Investigating, Reasoning, Comparing and Connecting, Exploring Viewpoints, and Finding Complexity. These thinking dispositions, or intellectual character traits, “represent forms of thinking that are powerful in terms of exploring and appreciating works of art... and are forms of thinking that are powerful in terms of building understanding in other

disciplines.”<sup>1</sup> Practicing these dispositions in the museum context is ideal for medical students, who can apply the processes of observing, investigating, reasoning, comparing, and perceiving in their practice. Each disposition will be developed by using Artful Thinking routines while exploring a variety of works of art. More information about Artful Thinking can be found here: <http://www.pzartfulthinking.org/index.php>.

## Session Outlines

### Course Orientation Meeting

*Ice Breaker: Personalized Museum Label*

Process

1. Everyone responds in writing to the following prompts:
  - a. Title (Name)
  - b. Provenance (Where do you come from? Where have you lived?)
  - c. Label (Fun fact about you)
2. Participants share their personalized museum label with the person sitting next to them.
3. Going in a circle, partners share what they learned about each other with the whole group.

*Perception Test*

Process

1. An artwork is projected on the screen for 30 seconds.
2. Students are given only 30 seconds to observe as many details in the artwork as possible. After 30 seconds, the image is removed from the screen.
3. Students are asked a range of questions about the content of the artwork and given a chance to discuss what they saw.
4. The artwork is then returned to the screen for a discussion about how much information can be observed with a limited viewing time.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

Museum visitors on average spend 17 seconds looking at a work of art. The average time it takes for a doctor to interrupt a patient describing their symptoms is 18 seconds. This routine illustrates the value of sustained observation for developing a deep and rich understanding of an image and asks students to consider how this practice relates to their own clinical experiences.

### Week 1 – Observing and Describing

*Elaboration game*

Process

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<sup>1</sup> Artful Thinking Final Report, November, 2006.

1. One person identifies a specific section of the artwork and describes what he or she sees. Another person elaborates on the first person's observations by adding more detail about the section. A third person elaborates further by adding yet more detail, and a fourth person adds yet more.
2. After four people have described a section in detail, someone else identifies a new section of the artwork and the process starts over.
3. After the artwork has been fully described, as a group, discuss some of your ideas about it. For example, what do you think is going on in the artwork? (and what observations make you say that?)

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine encourages students to look carefully and deeply at details. It challenges them to develop verbal descriptions that are elaborate, nuanced, and imaginative. It also encourages them to distinguish between observations and interpretations by asking them to withhold their ideas about the artwork – their interpretations – until the end of the routine. This in turn strengthens students' ability to practice careful evidence-based reasoning, giving them practice making sustained observations before jumping into judgment. The end of the routine ("what is going on?") also invites students to share their interpretations, encouraging students to understand alternative and multiple perspectives.

#### *Back-to-back Describe and Draw*

Process:

For this activity, two students sit back-to-back. One person (the describer) looks at a work of art and describes it to the other person (the listener), who cannot see it. While listening to the describer, the listener draws what they imagine the image to look like. The describer cannot look at the listener's drawing until it is finished. Afterward, the pair will discuss their experience guided by the following questions: What descriptive words were most helpful? What was challenging? The exercise is then repeated by switching roles and examining a new work of art.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

During this routine, students practice communication skills. The challenge is not only to describe an image in detail but also to organize descriptions logically.

End of session discussion: Students are encouraged to reflect on how the skills practiced during the gallery session relate to clinical practice, specifically how patients communicate their non-visual symptoms in words and how a doctor must elicit information from the patient to get a full picture of the patient's experience.

#### **Reflective Writing Assignment: 50-100 words**

**Artwork:** Think of a work of art you remember seeing before, either in person or in reproduction. Find an image of it online and spend time looking at it. **What do you see now that you did not see before? What drew you to it in the first place and how do you feel about it now? Submit the images along with your written reflections to CANVAS.**

## Week 2 – Focusing on Detail

### *Squares Picture Puzzler*

Process:

Whether looking at a work of art or reading a text, students often rush over the images or words, making quick decisions about what they see and what is going on. This activity challenges students to look carefully at small squares of a picture that has been cut up to slowly make inferences/predictions about what the entire work of art might look like. Students start from their single square of the picture and then work in a small group to build their understanding as more squares and parts of the picture are revealed.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine guides students to see images in a new way and avoid jumping to conclusions by focusing on just a detail. Students analyze the relationship between partial and more complete information and how it effects their understanding and interpretation.

### *Mindful Looking: Step into a Landscape*

Process:

1. Take a few moments to silently observe the painting.
2. On a piece of paper, draw a simple schematic of the landscape using only 4 or 5 lines. This should only take 30 seconds.
3. Now imagine you can step inside of this painting. Allow yourself to “wander” through the landscape and write descriptive words and phrases about what you see on your schematic where they appear in the painting. You will end up with a word map of what you see in different sections of the artwork.
4. Share your observations in small working groups.
5. Now repeat steps 3 and 4 with the remaining 4 senses.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine pushes students to practice a form of perspective taking that focuses on how different people experience the world around them. This is an important skill to remember as it relates to the way in which patients experience clinical spaces in unique ways.

End of session discussion: Students will discuss their reflections on ways that patients have expressed comfort or discomfort with their hospital room, the ED, outpatient office, or other space within the health care environment. Students will discuss their own experience in different settings and how this made them feel as they provided care to patients.

### **Reflective Writing Assignment: 50-100 words**

Choose a part of the body. Find an image of it from *Netter’s Anatomy* and from *Gray’s Anatomy*. Describe and compare how their formal choices give different ideas about what is supposedly the same thing. Submit the images along with your written reflections to CANVAS.

## Week 3 – Considering First Impressions

### *Compare & Contrast*

Process:

1. We will compare and contrast 2 artworks that have a similar subject matter.
2. Starting with the one artwork, make as many observations as you can.
3. As a group, discuss the things you notice and begin to make interpretations about the subject matter.
4. Now turn your attention to the second artwork. Make as many observations as you can.
5. Discuss things that are similar or different about the artworks.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine allows students to look closely and make interpretations. It also encourages students to think about the ways in which the experience of looking at each artwork individually informs interpretations about the respective works.

### *Looking: Ten Times Two*

Process:

1. Look at the image quietly for at least 30 seconds. Let your eyes wander.
2. List 10 words or phrases about any aspect of the picture.
3. Repeat Steps 1 & 2: Look at the image again and try to list 10 more words or phrases to your list.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

The routine helps students slow down and make careful observations about a work of art. It asks students to think about words or phrases to describe the work and encourages them to push beyond conclusions from a single glance.

End of session discussion: Students will be asked to consider the role that first impressions play in clinical practice and how those impressions may contribute to bias (e.g. pain management by race, diagnostic anchoring bias). Medical education and practice is often centered on pattern recognition; how and when can practitioners move beyond “fast thinking” to eliminate anchoring bias in their clinical practice?

### **Reflective Writing Assignment: 50-100 Words**

**Self:** Choose a picture of yourself or take a selfie. Spend a few minutes reflecting on your facial expressions. How were you feeling at that moment? How is or isn't that visible in the image? What might someone else's first impression of you be or what might others read into your expression? Post the image along with your written reflection to CANVAS.

## Week 4 – Reasoning and Evaluating Evidence

### *Warm up - Looking: Ten Times Two (Abridged)*

Process:

1. Look at the image quietly for at least 30 seconds. Let your eyes wander.

2. List 10 words or phrases about any aspect of the picture.
3. Repeat Steps 1 & 2: Look at the image again and try to list 10 more words or phrases to your list.

### *Generating Questions*

Process:

1. Brainstorm a list of at least 12 questions about the artwork or topic.
2. Review your brainstormed list and star the questions that seem most interesting. Then, select one of the starred questions and discuss it for a few moments. (If you have the time, you can discuss more than one question.)
3. Reflect: What new ideas do you have about the artwork or topic that you didn't have before? What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine expands and deepens students' thinking, encourages curiosity and increases inquisitiveness.

### *Role of Information*

Process:

1. Break up into small groups of 3 or 4. Each group is given a different notecard that provides information about some aspect of the artwork.
2. In small groups, read the piece of background information you are given about the work and discuss how it relates to your observations or influences your interpretation.
3. Share the highlights of the discussions in a large group.
4. As an entire class, reflect on all the information given, how each piece relates to the other, and how their understanding has changed or deepened with the addition of additional background information.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine encourages students to analyze the role of information in developing an understanding of a situation. They consider how their interpretation developed over the course of gaining increasingly more information.

End of session discussion: Students will discuss the importance of gathering all data prior to coming up with a broad differential diagnosis, the difference between objective data and interpretation, and being comfortable with diagnostic ambiguity.

### **Reflective Writing Assignment: 50-100 Words**

**People Watching:** Apply your knowledge to people you don't know by observing people in a café or other setting. Select an individual or a small group. How might they be feeling? Describe the relationships between the people in the group. What mannerisms, facial expressions, body language, or tones of voice communicate their feelings to you? Submit your written reflection to CANVAS.

## **Week 5 – Perspective Taking**

### *Observation/Interpretation*

Process:

For this exercise students are asked to make their thinking visible in connecting their visual observations to specific interpretations of an artwork.

1. Using the Observation/Interpretation worksheet, students are asked to list their observations and interpretations in separate columns, being mindful to use arrows to directly connect their interpretations to the visual evidence they have observed.
2. Share out your interpretations and visual evidence for them.
3. Discuss how the different perspectives from which you approached the artwork and personal biases may have affected your interpretations.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine helps students further explore different perspectives. It helps them understand the ways in which the lens through which we approach an artwork can influence our interpretations.

### *Lenses for Dialogue*

Process:

1. Look closely at the artwork. What do you notice? Make lots of observations.
2. Choose and share a lens from the following list (or make one up): gender, (dis)ability, socio-economic status, sex, national origin, occupation, ethnicity, sexual orientation, family role, religion and spirituality, race, or other.
3. Consider how the lens you chose shapes the way you see and experience the artwork.
4. Take turns in small groups sharing your thoughts.
5. Ask questions to better understand another person's perspective (What do you mean by...? Can you say more about...?)
6. If there's time, select a second lens and repeat the process.
7. Consider what issues and themes this conversation brought up in your small groups.

End of session discussion: Coordinators will share stories and their own definitions of what it means to be empathetic as a doctor. Discussion will consider whether empathy can be learned and what tools we can use to practice empathy in the clinical context. The limits of empathy in the clinical context will also be discussed.

### **Reflective Writing Assignment: 50-100 Words**

**Humans of New York:** Select an image online from the Humans of New York series. Before you read the caption, record your first impressions of the person. Then read the caption. How have your impressions of the person changed or deepened? How did you form your first impression? What personal biases, if any, influenced your conclusions? What new questions do you have? Submit the image along with your written reflection to CANVAS.

## **Week 6 – Perspective Taking, part 2**

*See, Wonder, Connect*

Process:



1. Look closely. What do you notice? Make many observations.
2. What questions do you have? What do you wonder about?
3. How could this connect to your prior knowledge?
4. How could this connect to your own personal experiences?

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

The goal of this routine is to help students appreciate how looking closely at something can expand one's understanding of it, which in turn can provide a basis for making connections to other things. The routine encourages students to explore the interconnectedness of knowledge, and to understand that if they intentionally look for connections, they can find them.

### *Personal Response Tour Preparation*

Process:

1. Students will be given the following prompt: Find a work of art that reflects a particular challenge you have faced so far in your first year of med school. Reflect on the prompt as it relates to your chosen artwork.
2. Students will be given 30 minutes to explore 3 galleries and select an artwork for their reflection.
3. Students will spend the end of the session looking closely at their artwork and reflecting on the prompt. Students are encouraged to take notes.

### **Reflective Writing Assignment Capstone: 250 Word Minimum**

Your final assignment is to write a short essay reflecting on the given prompt as it relates to the artwork you chose at the museum this week. Research into the artist and artwork is not required, however if you are interested in finding out more about either, you are welcome to reach out to Adam and Suzannah, who can direct you to resources. Post your essay to CANVAS and be prepared to present your artwork to the group at the final museum session.

## **Week 7 – Personal Responses Tour**

Developed by Elizabeth Gauffberg, MD, MPH & Ray Williams, MA

Process:

1. Before beginning, 3 safe space ground rules are outlined: whatever is shared within the group must remain confidential; individuals are encouraged to stay in their comfort zone in revealing personal information; and group members should not question or challenge other's personal responses.
2. Participants then act as a tour guide of their own object by sharing their reflection with the group.
3. Participants are encouraged to respond, ask questions, and make connections.

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This intervention is specifically designed to promote individual reflection, foster empathy, increase appreciation for the psychosocial context of patient experience, and create a safe haven for learners to deepen their relationships with one another.