

HCB 520: BIOETHICS and FILM – Medical Virtues in Three Acts
Winter session (Jan 2- 20, 2023)

Room: FPPM Conf Room, Level 3 HSC, Room 067

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This three-week graduate-level course will focus on film representations of medical virtues, particularly examining the actions around the fact of illness (illness experience), the act of profession, and the act of healing. A central concern will be the way in which film both reflects and helps create public images of the doctor-patient relationship, and how virtues represented in movies can impact professional identity formation.

Learning objectives:

Participants in this unique learning experience will be able to

- Define the field of positive psychology, its history, and sentinel text
- Describe the differences between virtues, strengths, and situational themes
- List three components of “cinematic elevation,” as described by Jonathan Haidt (2003).
- Identify three professions that have virtues as common elements of an internal moral philosophy.
- Explore the tension between virtue and self-interest for the medical professional.
- Discuss the philosophic basis and practical implications of virtue ethics in medicine.
- Describe the relationship between professional (medical) ethics and bioethics.
- List “The Necessary Ingredients” Pellegrino (1995) requires for “any normative theory of the ethics of the healing relationship based in virtue.”
- Reflect on any of the medical virtues as described by Pellegrino (1995) and how it is depicted in cinema.

Reading:

Niemiec, Ryan M, Wedding, Dan, “The Language of Film is Universal,” from Positive Psychology in the Movies, pp. 1-12. Hogrefe & Huber (2008).

Pellegrino, Edmund D. "Character, Virtue and Self-Interest in the Ethics of the Professions," J. Contemp. Health L. & Policy 53 (1989).

Pellegrino, Edmund D. "Toward a Virtue-Based Normative Ethics for the Health Professions"
Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal, Johns Hopkins University Press,
Volume 5, Number 3, September 1995.

Additional Textbooks/Resources: (not required, but excellent reference material)

Seligman, Martin and Peterson, Christopher, Character Strengths and Virtues, A Handbook and Classification, American Psychological Association / Oxford University Press; 1st edition (April 8, 2004).

Niemiec, Ryan M, Wedding, Dan, Positive Psychology in the Movies, pp. 1-12. Hogrefe & Huber (2008).

Pellegrino, Edmund, The Philosophy of Medicine Reborn, University of Notre Dame Press; (March 1, 2008).

iMDB List: The Best Movies for Doctors and Medical Students
[The Best Movies For Doctors And Medical Students - IMDb](#)

Written Reflections:

Each week, after viewing the assigned films and completing the reading assignment, students will be required to reflect in writing on one or more of the medical virtues, as described by Pellegrino:

- Fidelity to Trust and Promise
- Benevolence
- Effacement of Self-Interest
- Compassion and Caring
- Intellectual Honesty
- Justice
- Prudence

The reflection should reference examples from any one of the films we have viewed in class.

Schedule:

Pre-meeting (December, 2022)

HCB 520 Syllabus review

Discussion: The Language of Film is Universal

Live screening: Featuring iMDB official trailers from the following films

- Awakenings (1990)
- 50/50 (2011)
- The Farewell (2019)
- The Prince of Tides (1991)
- City of Angels (1998)
- The Painted Veil (2006)
- Brain on Fire (2016)
- Concussion (2015)
- The King's Speech (2010)

Discussion of Movie: Something the Lord Made (2004, Alan Rickman, Mos Def) this film is a dramatization of the relationship between heart surgery pioneers Alfred Blalock and Vivien Thomas. It is an exemplar of many of the character strengths and virtues that form the basis of our class.

Plan is to view this film as a class, the first week of January –Jan 3, 2023.

Week 1: (week of Jan 2, 2023)

The Fact of Illness and the History of Positive Psychology

How do persons become “patients?” What must they be thinking, doing, feeling in order to seek help, care, and healing? What qualities are they looking for in their physicians and other health professionals and in their relationship to those who offer help, care, and healing?

Objectives this week include:

- Define the field of positive psychology, its history, and sentinel text
- Describe the differences between virtues, strengths, and situational themes

- List three components of “cinematic elevation,” as described by Jonathan Haidt (2003).

Reading: Niemiec, Ryan M, Wedding, Dan, “The Language of Film is Universal,” from Positive Psychology in the Movies, pp. 1-12. Hogrefe & Huber (2008).

Films: *Awakenings* (1990, Robin Williams)

Something the Lord Made (2004, Alan Rickman, Mos Def)

50/50 (2011, Joseph Gordon-Levitt)

The Farewell (2019, Shuzhen Zhao, Awkwafina)

Week at a Glance:

Date	Lesson Plan
Monday, Jan 2, 2023	Home study and viewing of assigned films.
Tuesday, Jan 3, 2023	Focused screening: <i>Something the Lord Made</i> (2004, Alan Rickman, Mos Def), followed by group discussion.
Wednesday, Jan 4, 2023	Home study and reflection paper(s).
Thursday, Jan 5, 2023	Focused screening: <i>The Farewell</i> (2019, Shuzhen Zhao, Awkwafina) followed by group discussion.
Friday, Jan 6, 2023	Reflection papers due.

Week 2: (week of Jan 9, 2023)

The Act of Profession – How to Balance Effacement of Self-Interest with Physician Self-Care

Medicine is one of the “helping” professions. When medical professionals ask, “How may I help you?” there is an implicit promise that the medical professional possesses the knowledge, skills, and attitude to help and to heal, and that they intend to use those in the interest of the patient.

Pellegrino writes,

This “act of profession” is an act of implicit promise making that establishes a covenant of trust at the physician’s or nurse’s voluntary instigation. This self-imposed covenant imposes obligations on the professional from the moment it is made. (Pellegrino, 1995).

Objectives this week include:

- Identify three professions that have virtues as common elements of an internal moral philosophy.
- Explore the tension between virtue and self-interest for the medical professional.
- Discuss the philosophic basis and practical implications of virtue ethics in medicine.

Reading: Pellegrino, Edmund D. “Character, Virtue and Self-Interest in the Ethics of the Professions,” J. Contemp. Health L. & Policy 53 (1989).

Films:

The Prince of Tides (1991, Barbra Streisand, Nick Nolte)

City of Angels (1998, Meg Ryan, Nicholas Cage)

The Painted Veil (2006, Naomi Watts, Ed Norton)

Date	Lesson Plan
Monday, Jan 9, 2023	Home study and viewing of assigned films.
Tuesday, Jan 10, 2023	Focused screening: <i>The Prince of Tides</i> (1991, Barbra Streisand, Nick Nolte), followed by group discussion.
Wednesday, Jan 11, 2023	Home study and reflection paper(s).
Thursday, Jan 12, 2023	Focused screening: <i>The Painted Veil</i> (2006, Naomi Watts, Ed Norton) followed by group discussion.
Friday, Jan 13, 2023	Reflection papers due.

Week 3: (week of Jan 16, 2023)

The Act of Healing – Diagnostic, prognostic, and therapeutic acts

The *telos* of the physician-patient relationship is helping and healing. The promise that is made by the medical professional directs their knowledge, skills and techniques, and personal commitment to what is necessary to heal and to help the patient to whom they have made this promise. These are the diagnostic, prognostic, and therapeutic acts that are needed to achieve a technically correct and morally good decision and action.

Objectives this week include:

- Describe the relationship between professional (medical) ethics and bioethics.
- List “The Necessary Ingredients” Pellegrino (1995) requires for “any normative theory of the ethics of the healing relationship based in virtue.”
- Reflect on any of the medical virtues as described by Pellegrino (1995) and how it is depicted in cinema.

Reading: Pellegrino, Edmund D. “Toward a Virtue-Based Normative Ethics for the Health Professions” Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal, Johns Hopkins University Press, Volume 5, Number 3, September 1995.

Films:

Brain on Fire (2016, Chloe Grace Moretz)

Concussion (2015, Will Smith)

The King’s Speech (2010, Colin Firth)

Date	Lesson Plan
Monday, Jan 16, 2023	Home study and viewing of assigned films.
Tuesday, Jan 17, 2023	Focused screening: <i>Brain on Fire</i> (2016, Chloe Grace Moretz) followed by group discussion.
Wednesday, Jan 18, 2023	Home study and reflection paper(s).
Thursday, Jan 19, 2023	Focused screening: <i>Concussion</i> (2015, Will Smith) followed by group discussion.
Friday, Jan 20, 2023	Reflection and final papers due.

Grading:

Reflection Essays (3 X 10 = 30%)

Student weekly **participation** with in-class screenings (3 X 10 = 30%) *Students may substitute a Reflection on a film that we watched in class to earn the grade points for participation.

January 20th, 2023: **Final Research Paper Due** (40%)

Final Paper

Students write a 5-7 page final paper **due January 20th. (40% of grade).**

It is fine to focus on articles and movies assigned in the course, but students may feel free to expand their field of reference to television shows and series, including bio-pics and documentaries.

Structure of Final Paper

Writing Your Final 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.**

In this class, we are invited to think about big questions related to film representations of medical virtues, particularly examining the actions around the fact of illness (illness experience), the act of profession, and the act of healing. A central concern will be the way in which film both reflects and helps create public images of the doctor-patient relationship, and how virtues represented in movies can impact professional identity formation.

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?”

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 readers may be able to follow certain moves you make because they are familiar with the movies we’ve screened and the literature you’ve reviewed for this class, the public may 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 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 careful 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).

***From Official Stony Brook University Policy:
(Statements required to appear in all syllabi on the Stony Brook campus)***

Americans with Disabilities Act:

If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, are necessary and appropriate.

Academic Integrity:

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 are required to report and suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (Schools 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/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

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 Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and School of medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

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, 128 ECC Building, (631) 632-6748, or at 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-people-physical-disabilities> and search Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.