

NEW COURSE — SPRING 2014

CLCS 3720

EMPATHY, MEDICINE, and the HUMAN CONDITION



3 credits — Tues. / Thurs. 10:45-12:05

PENDING APPROVAL: FULFILLS GEN ED HUMANITIES (HF) REQUIREMENT

Recent studies paint a distressing picture of a substantial decline in empathy among college students over the last 30 years (Konrath 2010). In this course we will closely read literature, non-fiction, and theory from a variety of cultures in order to explore the value of empathy, particularly as it intersects with questions of healing and medicine. Our texts will include George Saunders's "Escape from Spiderhead," a science-fiction story about mind-control drugs; Georg Büchner's *Lenz*, a 19th-century "docu-fiction" about schizophrenia and art; David Mitchell's *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*, a novel about the first encounters between Japan and the West — as well as Chögyam Trungpa on Buddhist health care, James Hillman on Jungian psychology, W.G. Sebald on civilization and melancholy, and Anne Fadiman on American and Hmong conceptions of illness, among others. **We will also practice hands-on, in-class contemplative exercises to help develop our own capacities for empathy and deep listening** (e.g., working with mindful silence and breath awareness to cultivate open attention, slowing down to "listen" to textual and visual images). Through this multi-pronged approach, we will attempt to unite analytical skills with experience; head with heart.

INFORMATION: Contact instructor – Prof. Joseph Metz, Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies (CLCS) – joseph.metz@utah.edu