

NEW COURSE — SPRING 2014

CLCS 3720

EMPATHY, MEDICINE, and the HUMAN CONDITION



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

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

EMPATHY



MEDICINE & THE HUMAN CONDITION

**NEW COURSE SPRING 2014 – CATALOGUE # CLCS 3720 – T & H
10:45-12:05**

LEARN crucial critical thinking and analysis skills for school and life **HELP DEVELOP** your own capacity for empathy and attention

By:

CLOSELY READING works of literature, case studies, diaries, & theoretical texts on healing

CONTEMPLATING cross-cultural encounters and the stories of others

PRACTICING in-class exercises (mindful silence, breath work, open awareness, “deep listening” to texts & each other)

INSTRUCTOR & INFORMATION: PROF. JOSEPH METZ, PhD
Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies (CLCS) – joseph.metz@utah.edu

EMPATHY



MEDICINE & THE HUMAN CONDITION

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- Empathy has been on the decline among college students over the last 30 years (Konrath 2010).
- Medical schools are increasingly seeking applicants with greater empathic, listening, and critical thinking skills (*New York Times*, April 15, 2012).
- Changes to MCAT 2015 reflect these concerns by placing greater emphasis on critical thinking and understanding.

This class can help you rise to the challenges ahead. In this course we will closely read and critically analyze works of fiction and non-fiction dealing with healing and empathy (a novel about the first medical encounters between Japan and the West, an 18th century diary of schizophrenia, a science fiction story about mind-control drugs, a case study of American and Hmong medical beliefs, and Western and Eastern works on psychology and caring for the ill, among others). **We will also practice hands-on, in-class exercises that expand our skills in empathy and deep listening** (working with silence and breath awareness, listening carefully to each other and to texts). Through these approaches, we will refine critical analysis skills, cultivate our own capacity for empathy and attention, and explore how cross-cultural encounters make us more responsive to the suffering of others and to our common humanity.

INFORMATION: Contact instructor Dr. Joseph Metz, joseph.metz@utah.edu