On April 17, 2019, nine scholars from various departments at the University of Utah spoke on inspirations from Vesalius’ book De Humani Corporis Fabrica (translated in English “On the Fabric of the Human Body”). The event, “Bodies of Evidence: Seeing with Vesalius,” took place at the Marriott Library with five rare volumes of Vesalius’ amazing 16th century book on display, including the first edition, which was published during his lifetime. In “lightning round style,” each scholar spoke with contrasting contemporary perspectives on the ongoing impact of Andreas Vesalius, the Renaissance era “Father of Medicine.” Vesalius, who was offered the chair of surgery and anatomy at University of Padua at age 23 years, published De Humani Corporis Fabrica by age 29. The book secured Vesalius the post of imperial physician to Emperor Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain. The book’s enduring impact on biology, anatomy, medical practice, history, publishing, and teaching was highlighted by the scholars and called attention to the work’s ongoing significance in their respective disciplines.

Randy Silverman, Head of Preservation at Marriott Library, imagined this event earlier this spring, invited the speakers, and made sure the rare books were available for viewing by the audience of about 130 people. Mr. Silverman introduced the text, discussed how it was constructed (including details about paper making at that time) and steps taken to preserve the fineworks.

Michael Rudick, Professor Emeritus in the Department of English, spoke regarding the relationship of Vesalius and the printer, Johannes Oporinus, in his talk “Author & Printer Build a Monument.” Todd Victor Samuelson, Assistant Director of Special Collections at Marriott Library, spoke on the craftsmanship of the woodcut blocks, how they were used and improved upon for the book and then “recycled” for decoration on furniture in his talk “Vesalius’ Printed Texts, 1543-2014.”

Ginger Smoak, Professor of Medieval History in the Honors College with a focus on midwifery, addressed earlier anatomical drawings and their lack of detail leading up to Fabrica in her lecture “Before Vesalius: Medieval Anatomical Illustrations.” Nadja Durbach, Professor of History, gave a harrowing account of how bodies ended up on the dissection table (including from grave robberies or poor houses) in her talk “The Subject on the Slab.”

Gretchen Case, Chief of Medical Ethics and Humanities at the School of Medicine, recalled moments from her course, Art in Medicine/Medicine in Art, where students created their own work inspired by Vesalius. The large mural, on display during the event, was infused with the personal journey of today’s medical students. Luise Poulton, Managing Curator and Department Head of Rare Books at Marriott Library, focused on the University Library’s holdings of rare books and discussed the importance of students, staff and faculty taking advantage of the opportunity to handle the books for themselves in “Dead Bodies, Dead Books? Bringing 21st Century Students into the Past.”

Evening Ethics Discussion

Save the Date:

Ethics Surrounding Medical Marijuana

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

5:30pm-7pm Research Administration Building (RAB), 1st floor main conference room
We congratulate the Class of 2019 as they begin careers in the healthcare professions!

The PMEH continues to make creative and interdisciplinary contributions to medical education.

We encourage you to visit the Eccles Health Sciences Library to see the display of artwork created by first year medical students as part of “Layers of Medicine,” a core course taken by all pre-clinical students and soon to expand into the clinical rotations. Artwork will be on display through May 10, 2019, with more information here:


Our Interprofessional Education (IPE) -sponsored “Health Law for Non-Lawyers” elective for School of Medicine, College of Pharmacy, College of Nursing, and College of Health students completed its fourth successful year this spring.

Currently, we are reaching out to ethics committee members and clinical healthcare professionals interested in ethics consultation training with a half-day training session on Saturday, June 1, 2019 (limited to 30 participants) at https://law.utah.edu/event/half-day-ethics-training-ethics-consultation-ethics-committees/

Stay tuned for more innovations!
Physicians Literature and Medicine Discussion Group

Wednesday, May 8, 2019
University of Utah Hospital Large Conference Room #W1220
6:00-8:30pm, Facilitated by Susan Sample, PhD

There There: A Novel by Tommy Orange

Tommy Orange’s 2018 novel There There focuses on the lives of contemporary Native Americans living in Oakland, California, and the tremendous legacy of loss that this community experiences. Orange draws compassionate but unsentimental portraits of twelve Native characters whose paths will cross at the Big Oakland Powwow. There There has won numerous awards including the PEN/Hemingway Award, the National Book Critics Circle John Leonard Prize and the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize. Louise Erdrich says of Tommy Orange, he is “a new writer with an old heart.”

Wednesday, June 12, 2019
University of Utah Hospital Large Conference Room #W1220
6:00-8:30pm, Facilitated by Rachel Borup, PhD

Through a Long Absence: Words from My Father’s Wars by Joy Passanante

Winner of the 2017 INDIES Book of the Year Silver Award for Biography, Through a Long Absence: Words from My Father’s Wars is the captivating account of Bart Passanante, a young Army surgeon deployed with the 91st Evacuation Hospital during World War II. We read of harrowing surgical scenes but also pastoral landscapes from North Africa to Italy, England to France, Holland to Germany. Drawing on his four-volume diary, hundreds of letters to his wife, his paintings and photographs, Joy Passanante uses her father’s words to reconstruct the time he was absent, the years he and her mother never talked about. In this way, Through a Long Absence is also the story of Bart and Bertie, first-generation Americans growing up in St. Louis. Bart is the Italian foster child of a small-time gangster, graduating from medical school; Bertie, a seventeen-year-old Jewish girl, graduating from high school and forbidden to date a Gentile. In chapters alternating between Europe and St. Louis, we learn of Bart’s other “wars,” including conflicts in his unusual childhood—time torn from piano practice to bootleg—and the impact of his absence on his young marriage. In this way, Through a Long Absence is also a memoir of a daughter discovering herself through the writing of her father’s life, especially after he lost the ability to speak. For our discussion, we’ll be honored to have as our guest and co-facilitator Joy Passanante. The author of a novel, short story collection, and poetry chapbook, Passanante is former associate director of the Creative Writing at the University of Idaho. She has described her father as “a Renaissance man, a doctor, pianist and artist,” which suggests a good starting point for our discussion. How did music and art, as well as the war, influence the development of her father as a surgeon?

Wednesday, July 10, 2019
University of Utah Hospital Large Conference Room #W1220
6:00-8:30pm, Facilitated by Maureen Mathison, PhD

An Epidemic of Wellness, the Certainty of Dying, and Killing Ourselves to Live Longer by Barbara Ehrenreich

Not one to accept the status quo on issues, Barbara Ehrenreich has taken on our fear of youthfulness and mortality. With a PhD in cellular immunology, she has an ongoing interest in wellness and health. To a certain point. Rather than falling prey to our culture’s preoccupation with ageless longevity, she settles into the comfortable position of accepting aging as a natural process. What precipitated her questioning of our obsession with health and wellness was an article in Scientific American that “reported that the immune system actually abets the growth of tumors, which is like saying that the fire department is indeed staffed by arsonists.” Given that the body has its own mechanisms, why do we think we can control it through our regimen of rigid diets and hours at the gym, efforts that attempt to stave off aging, ill-health, and dying? Natural Causes provides much to think about in terms of quality of life and living joyously, knowing that ultimately we all meet the same fate.

The 2019 Schedule of Readings can be found on our website at:
http://medicine.utah.edu/internalmedicine/medicalethics/activities/literature/
Gretchen Case and Susan Sample, along with Karly Pippett, M.D., presented a panel on "Painted Bodies: Practicing the Science of Anatomy and the Art of Human Touch in Medical School" at the 8th International Health Humanities Conference in Chicago March 30. Case and Pippett engaged conference participants in a body painting session, replicated from the Layers of Medicine course they co-direct in the medical school. Sample analyzed written reflections from undergraduate pre-med students she teaches who had volunteered as models for the Layers course.

Photos from 2019 Cowan and Green Lectures

Cowan Speakership Series Lecturer Douglas B. White, MD, MAS
with Gretchen Case, PhD, MA

David Green Memorial Speaker Jeffrey R. Botkin, MD, MPH
with Gretchen Case, PhD, MA
PROGRAM IN MEDICAL ETHICS
AND HUMANITIES

Program Faculty:
Margaret P. Battin, MFA, PhD
Jeffrey R. Botkin, MD, MPH
Samuel M. Brown, MD, MS
Tencille R. Brown, JD
Gretchen A. Case, PhD
Leslie P. Francis, PhD, JD
Brent Kious, MD, PhD
Erin Rothwell, PhD
Jim Ruble, PharmD, JD
Susan Sample, PhD, MFA
Jill Sweney, MD
James Tabery, PhD
Jay Jacobson, MD (Emeritus)

Program Associates:
Rebecca Anderson, RN, PhD
Philip L. Baese, MD
Louis Borgenicht, MD
Maureen Henry, JD
Howard Mann, MD
Mark Matheson, DPhil
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• “Achieving Meaningful Access to Medicaid” by Leslie Francis
And Anita Silvers, has been published in The Hastings Center Report, Vol. 49, No. 2, April 18, 2019.

• Jim Tabery delivered the 2019 Alumni Lecture to the Department of History and Philosophy of Science on Tuesday, April 2, entitled "ALL OF US Should Be Concerned: What History Says We Should Expect from the Largest Medical Study in the Nation's History".

• Peggy Battin will be attending the meetings of the American Association of Suicidology in Denver, April 25-27, of the alumni of the Brocher Institute, Hermance, Switzerland, in June, of the European Society for Philosophy of Medicine and Health Care in Oslo in August, and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities in Pittsburgh in October.

• Leslie Francis spoke at the law and ethics panel at the meetings of the American Society for Medical Genetics, on legal challenges to and from Tier 1 recommendations for genetic screening (April 3). She spoke at the NYU symposium on race and Intellectual Property, on mammography patents and path dependence: problems of access for people with disabilities (April 5). She also spoke at the University of the District of Columbia Law & Disability symposium (March 29), on the ADA: looking forward to the next 10 years.