

# **The (Un)Common Instructor: A New Role for Medical Librarians Beyond Information Literacy**

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**ABSTRACT.** University common reading programs provide a shared experience as students transition into college life and develop critical thinking skills. In such programs, it is typical that all students in an incoming class read and discuss the same book. Conversely, the University of Florida (UF) Honors Program's *(un)common reads* facilitates the same skills development through multiple small sections, each focusing on a different book and each with flexible and innovative assignments and activities. Health Science Center (HSC) librarians have taught in these *(un)common reads* since Spring Semester, 2010-2011. This paper describes librarian involvement in this program, as well as the ensuing benefits for students, librarians, and the university at large.

**KEYWORDS.** Common reading, curriculum development, discussion courses, honors courses, instruction, librarians, popular medicine, undergraduate students

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

Universities have worked to develop high impact practices that promote positive student outcomes through active engagement, collaborative learning, diverse interactions with peers and faculty, and supportive environments. A literature review by Brownell and Swaner indicates that high impact practices are correlated to higher rates of student to faculty/peer interaction; increased student skills in critical thinking and writing; greater student engagement and respect for diverse viewpoints.<sup>1</sup> As noted in the Brownell and Swaner review article, a 2008 Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) report by George Kuh describes these practices, which include first-year seminars, service learning, learning communities, and undergraduate research, as having positive impacts on learning and personal development.<sup>1</sup> Students involved in such activities are more likely to report ease of transition to university life and academic expectations; a heightened sense of belonging and participation in the mission of the institution; and greater confidence in their own abilities.<sup>1, 2</sup> For the university, greater student engagement may increase student retention rates and overall student performance.<sup>3</sup>

First-year seminars are a common high-impact activity. These may take the form of extended orientations, multi-or interdisciplinary academic or discipline-specific seminars; or hybrid seminars that combine features of all models.<sup>1</sup> A first-year seminar based on the reading of a common book has long been part of college and university curricula. Incoming first-year students are assigned a book to read prior to college entrance, an activity which is designed to create community around the shared experience of reading and discussing the same text.

## ***AN UNCOMMON APPROACH TO COMMON READING***

In addition to a common reading and discussion seminar required for all undergraduates, students enrolled in the University of Florida (UF) Honors Program <<http://www.honors.ufl.edu>> have the option of a one-credit discussion-based course called the *(un)common reads*. The Honors Program seeks to attract and retain high-achieving students by offering learning experiences designed to inspire intellectual diversity, creativity, and critical thinking; to foster community spirit through service and leadership; and to provide opportunities for students to engage academically at higher levels.<sup>4</sup> In the classroom, the *(un)common reads* sections offer students the opportunity to experience topics and interactions with other students pursuing studies outside their majors, essential components of a broad-based education. Because approximately one-half of incoming Honors students select the pre-medical academic track, *(un)common reads* also allows these students to study literary works in the social sciences, humanities, and literature that they may not encounter otherwise.

Teaching in the *(un)common reads* program is not limited to instructional, tenure-track faculty. Twice a year, all faculty and staff are invited to submit a proposal for a course section exploring a single book in depth. Potential instructors select a book in an area of their expertise or personal interest and submit a one-page proposal that includes a description of the book as well as class assignments. Prospective classes are evaluated by staff and students of the Honors Program, rather than a curriculum committee, and as many as 30 books may be selected for the upcoming semester.

The course sections all share a common structure. They meet once a week, offer one-credit letter grades, are essentially limited to students in the Honors Program, and generally focus

on a single book in any genre. In some cases, the section can focus on more than one book, since there is no set curriculum and a great deal of freedom to choose class structure, supplemental materials, activities, and assignments. As a result, classes vary widely, with the ability to choose the book and set the curriculum, facilitating a rewarding and creative experience for both students and faculty. Many books are non-fiction and can encompass subjects ranging from social, geopolitical, and environmental topics to history, memoirs, and mathematics and unique formats including graphic novels. Students also enjoy reading and discussing fiction novels such as the Harry Potter series, *Game of Thrones*, and Abraham Verghese's *Cutting for Stone*.

Librarians at the Health Science Center Libraries (HSCL) have taught 24 *(un)common reads* sections to date. These have covered a number of health-related topics, including food systems; eugenics; patient and physician health narratives, such as narrative medicine and graphic medicine; disabilities; biopsychosocial determinants of health; health care systems and culturally competent health care practice; disease and stigma; death and dying; history of health care; racial/social/global health disparities; health and the environment; and aging. Upcoming classes will revisit some of these same topics while examining new ones in course sections that will highlight study of the monstrous, investigating the question "What makes a monster?"

In order to explore these topics fully and provide students with opportunities to develop the critical thinking and writing skills needed for collegiate level work, these classes have made use of a range of activities both inside and outside the classroom. Classroom activities have included in-class writing and drawing exercises, guest speakers (including book authors, individuals with an illness, and experts in the field), student-led discussions, student presentations, creation of resource databases and class portfolios, film screenings, online quizzes, and discussion of related study abroad opportunities. Out-of-class activities included field trips to

local museums, parks, arboretums, historic sites, film showings, campus scavenger hunts, required attendance at relevant local lectures, volunteering in local gardens, and exhibits. Written assignments within the class structure have included reflective journals, analyses of weekly readings, book summaries, and summaries of responses to other readings or media such as podcasts.

All of the *(un)common reads* taught by HSC Libraries' faculty have required that students complete a final project and have offered students the chance to choose the format and topic of this project, whether it be a formal academic paper/presentation or a creative work. Academic projects have covered health economics, the use of graphic medicine for reaching LGBTQIA communities, and explanations of how the brain processes stories, in formats ranging from PowerPoint presentations and research posters to surveys. Creative projects have included videos, musical compositions, comics, picture books, novels, paintings, a health promotion campaign, film showings, a cookbook, blogs and websites, volunteer activities at special events, oral history interviews, surveys, books of poetry, and artistic displays.

Curricular activities are tailored to particular books and subject areas, and leverage local resources, while student responses reflect the individual nature of the class format. Student projects respond to the material and activities provided in the class and have demonstrated thoughtful and creative interpretations of those, as described below.

A course section focused on the book, *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* by Siddhartha Mukherjee, brought in speakers from campus to discuss their experiences with cancer and, in particular, how the production of a written or visual narrative helps define and take ownership of one's illness story. Speakers included a UF employee who used journaling to navigate the experience of breast cancer and one who worked with a hospital artist-in-

residence to create a photographic time lapse narrative of images from a hospital window. A photojournalist faculty member in the UF College of Journalism spoke to the class about photographing every aspect of his cancer journey and turning it into a documentary, and his personal oncologist spoke about the experience of treating someone with a cancer diagnosis. One student in this class used a musical composition program to analyze cancer genes and worked with a friend to perform the resultant piece in class and at a medical humanities conference.

The class reading *The Graphic Medicine Manifesto*—a comprehensive academic work on the origins and application of graphic medicine written by the genre’s earliest advocates—was highly interactive and engaged class members in daily drawing activities that included creating self-portraits, illustrating experiences of health care, and creating collaborative “jam comics.” These improvised comics were created with each student in turn drawing a panel based on what the student before them drew, helping students explore the interaction of narrative and image (see Figure 1). Students were not required to share all of their works with the class, but they were required to submit a portfolio of their creations over the course of the semester. Half of the class created their own graphic medicine novels as their creative project.

**[PLACE FIGURE 1 HERE]**

**LEGEND: Figure 1: Graphic Medicine Class Activity**

The class on *The Man with the Bionic Brain* accompanied a National Library of Medicine traveling exhibit on disabilities caused by the Civil War. Students wrote reaction papers relating the book to twenty-first-century experiences and interventions for paralysis to exhibit-related lectures on 1860s artificial limbs and the history of social justice for disabled people. Guest

speakers in the class included the book's author, Dr. Jon Mukand, a physiatrist who graduated from the UF College of Medicine, plus a physical therapist, a psychologist, and the UF Team who creates 3D printed prosthetics for pediatric patients.

Another class, based on the book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, focused on classroom discussion and required students to take turns leading class discussions on the book's themes of the refugee experience in America, the health care system, cultural competency, and health literacy. In this class, an instructor would ask an opening discussion question based on the week's reading, and students were encouraged to engage in active dialogue with their classmates, exploring their thoughts and feelings related to often controversial issues in a productive manner. As the class became more comfortable with the format, students were randomly selected to ask their own discussion questions. This allowed students to explore themes of their own interest and offered valuable experience in facilitating discourse. Final projects included proposed solutions for health care financing, a video from the perspective of a student struggling with mental illness, and an illustrated book detailing the story of a refugee's experience with health care.

For a full list of book selections, see Table 1, which briefly describes all 24 sections taught to date by HSCL faculty.

**[PLACE TABLE 1 HERE]**

**LEGEND: Table 1: List of (un)common reads taught by HSCL faculty**

## **DISCUSSION**



Academic librarians, including those in the health sciences, have long been integrated into the instructional mission of their organizations. However, much of the literature discusses instruction in the context of information literacy, whether broadly or narrowly defined. Recently, Sobel and colleagues surveyed librarians at 350 institutions to learn more about the phenomenon of librarians teaching credit-bearing courses for departments and disciplines outside of the library, and they refer to these librarians as “professor-librarians” to emphasize their teaching roles. Interestingly, for most of the librarians surveyed, the topic of the courses they taught related to either an additional graduate degree or deep interest and experience in particular subjects, which mirrors the UF HSCL experience. Respondents to the Sobel survey also addressed logistical and administrative issues including course load, funding, compensation, and tenure, noting that these are all complex issues that libraries must resolve when venturing into the realm of teaching courses in non-traditional areas.<sup>5</sup> Just as librarians have been teaching credit-bearing information literacy courses for decades now, librarians partnering to support their undergraduate honors programs is not a particularly new occurrence. From the literature, this support usually focuses on outreach with programming and services primarily related to research and information literacy.<sup>6</sup> While some of the librarian-taught *(un)common reads* sections may incorporate information literacy concepts, these are usually tangential to the purpose of the class rather than a core topic. In fact, UF has a librarian assigned as a liaison to the Honors Program who engages in more typical outreach activities.

### ***The Benefits of Teaching for Librarians***

While the majority of students taking the *(un)common reads* course are not currently primary clients of the Health Science Center Libraries, HSCL administration encourages library faculty to teach in sections of this course for a variety of reasons. Murray and Wolf's research on similarly structured freshman seminar courses has illustrated benefits to the faculty who teach them – the opportunity to experiment with new pedagogical techniques that may be translated to other types of courses; improved teaching skills; and an increase in professional satisfaction.<sup>7</sup> The HSCL faculty who teach in the *(un)common reads* program have reported experiencing these same benefits.

***Improved Teaching Skills and Techniques.*** The *(un)common reads* is a discussion-oriented, interactive course, with the instructor filling the role of facilitator as well as instructor. The small class size and emphasis on interaction encourages instructors to develop flexibility and to assess student need and level of understanding.

As facilitators of discussion-oriented classes, instructors develop specific skills such as asking thought-provoking questions and judging when it is appropriate to speak and move the conversation forward; and when it is better to allow the students to run with their current train of thought. By partnering librarians with less teaching experience with more seasoned colleagues, the novice instructor is able to observe and practice key facilitation techniques such as the wording of questions and comments in order to elicit responses and learns to employ the use of eye contact, open body postures, and tone of voice to encourage participation. Librarian-instructors develop the art of active listening by asking good follow-up questions and drawing quieter students out gently, respecting some students' desire to remain silent if they really feel they have nothing to contribute. They have learned to guide students' enthusiasm and impressive creativity and effort for just one hour of credit. These skills translate well to inter-professional

work, both with other librarians and with the students, staff, and faculty with whom the library collaborates.

Depending on the topic(s) and student interest, class structure can include more direct lecture and teaching; for some course sections, each class has included a mix of discussion and active teaching. In this case, the instructor prepares a short presentation including PowerPoint, readings, video, and other activities to teach on topics that may otherwise be unfamiliar to students. Providing this supporting information is important to students, who sometimes request more direct instructor engagement. Being engaged in lecturing also requires the instructor to expand their knowledge base and learn to judge students' needs for instruction versus their desire to discuss their ideas and responses.

***Improved Professional Skills and Abilities.*** Leading discussions, developing mini-lectures, providing additional materials, and conversing deeply about texts outside of the traditional information sciences also has the benefit of giving liaison librarians, who are required to deeply understand the information environment of a specific group or subject, a better understanding of a topic relevant to the interests of health sciences professionals. For example, after teaching an *(un)common reads* class related to disability, one librarian discovered a greater knowledge of spinal cord injuries and their long-term effects, brain anatomy and physiology, and the responsibilities of the inter-professional spinal cord injury care team. Such subject-specific learning is similar to the subject familiarity that librarians gain through extended experience searching the literature of a specific field, but rather than slowly gleaned over years of searches, the librarian gets a crash course in a particular topic through the *(un)common reads* section. The comfort and confidence that librarians gain in the subjects related to their section has many benefits: clearer conversations with researchers on their information needs, improved

understanding of search terms and subject headings to use when crafting a search, and more refined judgment when selecting books for acquisition or articles for a mediated search, to name a few.

Depending on class assignments, instructors also can gain valuable information on how students read and react to different materials and to develop databases of recommended readings. For instance, the sections on *Animal*, *Vegetable*, *Miracle* and *Graphic Medicine Manifesto* required students to report on other books or movies (or both). In one case, as well, students rated the readings and films, and their reactions and reviews were incorporated into a shared database. Thus, librarians can become familiar with how their audience and clients perceive particular resources.

Librarians and other library professionals also gain direct experience with the university's online course management system. This enables them to understand faculty and student references to, and experiences with, the system. That understanding allows them to suggest ways the librarian/library can be involved in course web pages or invite faculty to consult librarians about types of documents that could be added to courses and/or copyright-compliant ways for faculty to do this. Often faculty request librarian presentations or feedback in their faculty's courses with very short turnaround times. Dealing with the course management system (UF uses Canvas at this time) in their own *(un)common reads* sections gives the librarian the opportunity to deploy that experience and knowledge of the system immediately. Facility with the course management system may raise faculty estimation of the librarian's intelligence and potential for collaboration and assistance.

***Professional Satisfaction and Passion for Teaching.*** It has been the HSCL's experience that librarians rarely develop sustained relationships with students unless those students are

employed by the library, taking a credit-bearing information literacy-related course, or working on a senior or other thesis or an extensive information-based research project such as a systematic review. As instructors in the *(un)common reads*, HSC librarians are afforded the opportunity to create lasting relationships with a population of highly motivated undergraduate students.

The smaller class size (a maximum of 20 participants) and ability for flexible, creative and/or experimental class design is especially refreshing for instructors used to teaching in large, required courses or to traditional teaching methods. In Murray and Wolf's study, an instructor described participation in a similar program as, "playing in the sandbox with first year students...It gave me the chance to try a number of learning strategies I would not otherwise have had the chance to pursue."<sup>7</sup> A librarian-instructor at the HSCL noted:

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Teaching a small class of highly motivated students, rather than large classes required for pre-meds made me happy to teach again! Getting to know the students and teaching them for an entire semester allowed me to develop professional relationships with them and contributed to my professional satisfaction. Being able to teach something that I am passionate about even though it is not my primary assignment has rejuvenated my teaching and my work overall.

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Selecting books and supplementary materials for the class has enabled librarians to further explore topics beyond librarianship and clinical medicine. For example, the librarians who share responsibility for health literacy explored cultural and societal values through *Spirit Catches You*. A librarian who liaises to UF's rehabilitative health science programs further

explored the world of the disabled through *The Man with the Bionic Brain*. The librarian-instructor who has taught books on the history of science, medicine, and eugenics numerous times to graduate and professional students, was excited to teach this material to undergraduates. Drawing on her interests in health literacy and art, another librarian successfully merged the two in the graphic medicine sections. In a sense, none of the subjects of the books was completely new to any of the librarians who taught, yet each book and each class has provided an opportunity for the librarians to learn and teach more in the areas the books cover.

An additional benefit to instructors in the *(un)common reads* program is an honorarium intended for use in professional development. HSC librarians have used these funds to attend professional conferences such as the Medical Library Association (MLA) annual meeting and for continuing education courses.

### ***Student Benefits from Librarians as Instructors***

Student benefits from courses similarly structured to the *(un)common reads* are clear; previous research touts the interdisciplinary nature of such courses in which students have an opportunity to explore subjects and issues outside their discipline and interact and discuss with students outside their major, who may have different knowledge and perspectives.<sup>7, 8</sup> Students, as well as faculty, benefit from the closer relationships they can develop with their instructors; such relationships provide opportunities for soliciting advice and letters of recommendation from the instructors. Students also benefit from the pedagogical innovations presented in such courses and the increased skill sets of the instructors who teach them, as described above.

While these benefits accrue whether the instructors are from the library or from academic units on campus, there may be additional benefits to students when the instructor is a librarian or other library professional. The librarian's information literacy skills, knowledge of nontraditional resources, and interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to the health sciences all benefit students both within the classroom and in the larger environment of the library.

***Information Literacy Instruction in the (un)common reads Context.*** While it is not the focus of the *(un)common reads* course, with a librarian instructor, students can be given an introduction to or reinforcement of information literacy skills and library resources. For instance, while working on a research paper and struggling to find relevant articles for the section on *The Graphic Medicine Manifesto*, a sophomore pre-med student received early instruction in databases focused on the health sciences from her instructor. In her course evaluation, the student mentioned that "taking some class time to give a brief overview of where and how to research would be very helpful in preparing for the final project," noting that other students may have had similar difficulties with finding relevant and authoritative resources. Although this need may not exist for all students, the comment does raise the possibility for librarians to provide individualized instruction in using subject-specific databases to which typical undergraduates may not be otherwise exposed.

***Quality, Innovative Course Resources for (un)common reads Sections.*** Having a library professional at the helm also allows for an emphasis on selecting quality, non-traditional texts. Library instructors are experienced in choosing complex and engaging texts that best represent the important topics in any subject area. In addition, library faculty are knowledgeable in navigating the library system and can ensure that books and articles are provided to the students in alternative formats, such as on course reserve or as e-books. This is an advantage now

that many states are seeking ways to reduce costs for students. For example, an instructor interested in graphic medicine used the in-class presentations that students completed on supplementary readings and resources as a way to encourage students to use the library's new graphic medicine collection.

***Interdisciplinary Perspective and Relationship Building.*** When library instructors from the health sciences teach Honors undergraduates, the students are given insight into the medical field from a unique perspective. The *(un)common reads* program benefits from the library instructor's comfort with interdisciplinary topics, showing the students clear links between medicine, allied health, and the humanities.

Weekly discussions may also reveal a human, personal side of the librarian instructor, reducing reluctance, fear, or dismissal of librarians in general. Students' association with the library instructors may dissolve their hesitation to consult a librarian and their fear of large and complex academic library systems. Close contact with students over the semester increases librarian understanding of the needs and information-gathering habits of these Honors undergraduate students. Librarians may modify their existing library workshop activities or topics based on this deeper understanding and thereby increase the effectiveness and outreach to student populations. Librarians are expert at connecting people with information and with each other and have knowledge of where expertise resides on campus and in the community. This knowledge facilitates the selection of guest speakers from different disciplines to vary the pace, activities, and interest level of the classes, which is essential for student engagement and participation.

***Benefits to the Library, University, and Community***



While developing syllabi, arranging class activities, facilitating class sessions, and grading student work consumes a considerable amount of librarian time, the HSCL's administration understands that the benefits listed above to librarians and students works to the advantage of the library and the university as a whole. Teaching courses outside the confines of information literacy integrates the library further into the educational activities of the university, aligning with the institution's primary mission. The library can gain through this expansion into the university's educational mission in a number of ways. Putting a human face on libraries can pave the way to getting undergraduates in the door, which in turn may keep gate counts at levels that ensure institutional support of the library. Students may also become more adept at using libraries, gain a greater understanding of the services, collections, and equipment that libraries offer, and perhaps even become alumni willing to contribute to library fundraising.

The classes provide a vehicle for librarians to reach out to experts outside the library. Librarians may cultivate new library users and advocates from the academic faculty or the community or strengthen existing bonds. At the minimum, inviting faculty to present to classes in which a librarian is the instructor of record broadens faculty perception of librarian skills in classroom management and course organization and preparation. Inviting faculty to present in librarian-led *(un)common reads* classes opens the door for them to reciprocate by inviting library staff to similarly share expertise with their students. Additionally, librarians can build on and/or develop partnerships through invitations to community leaders and organizations thematically relevant to the class objectives.

### ***APPLICATIONS FOR OTHER LIBRARIES***

UF HSC librarians have discovered the value of connecting with creative and non-traditional instructional offerings such as the UF Honors *(un)common reads* Program as a new avenue for reaching potential patrons, professional development, and personal satisfaction. Other health sciences libraries might benefit from closer instructional collaboration with their colleges but face challenges in getting their valuable instructional content integrated into program curricula that are already packed with subject-specific teaching. Despite not specifically focusing on the health sciences, honors programs/colleges, general/core education tracks, and interdisciplinary instruction programs are ideal library partners for several reasons.

First, these programs tend to have a mandate to offer innovative programming. As a result, their curricula may be more flexible than other academic units, creating more opportunities for all instructors, including librarians, to suggest courses or sections. By offering multiple sections of a single course, instructors can introduce new content without having to go through a long approval process. This flexibility allows room for experimentation with curriculum format and in general an openness to new ideas.

Second, these programs often are responsible for creating numerous course offerings, each covering a different book and thus require a larger number of instructors, creating a demand for instructors beyond academic faculty. This opportunity is particularly valuable for non-tenure track library faculty or librarians without faculty status at their institution for whom instructional opportunities can be limited. Finally, the interdisciplinary nature of many of these programs is very well suited to the unique skillset of librarians, as described above. As the health sciences move toward incorporating more inter-professional education into their curricula, this need for instructors with interdisciplinary skillsets is highly likely to increase. While the specific

curricular structure of universities varies, programs and coursework with the traits listed above are good opportunities for librarians to become more involved with instruction.

### ***CONCLUSION***

The HSC library faculty's experience teaching *(un)common reads* has benefitted their overall instruction, understanding of concepts in the health sciences, skills in facilitating discussion, skills in developing lectures and curricula, and facility with course management software. It has benefitted the library in increasing its visibility and tearing down some barriers to its use and relieving some burden of cost for librarian professional development. It has benefitted students by providing advanced college-level reading, writing, speaking, critical thinking, and leadership opportunities, introducing them to various information resources and evaluation of sources in general and giving them a human face to put on the task of information seeking at a large academic library system.

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**Figure 1 – Graphic Medicine class activity**

Table 1. List of (un)common reads Sections Taught by HSCL Faculty

<i>The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer</i> , Siddhartha Mukherjee, 2010	Cancer, history of cancer, physician-patient relationship	Guest speakers, in-class writing	Musical composition (later presented and performed at a conference), attitude survey, poetry, personal narrative
<i>The Graphic Medicine Manifesto</i> , M.K. Czerwec, Susan Merrill Squier, Michael J. Green, Kimberly R. Myers, Scott T. Smith, Ian Williams, 2015	Drawing as a social practice, graphic medicine, visual representations of medical experience, experience of illness, story and healing, art and healing	Guest speakers, in-class drawing, student presentations on graphic novels	Graphic novellas, comics
<i>Harry Potter and Imagination: The Way Between Two Worlds</i> , Travis Prinzi, 2008	Renaissance medicine and science, science and culture, impact of story, eugenics	Guest speakers, required attendance at lecture series, field trip, in-class trivia contests (use of Kahoot software)	Volunteer at special events, paintings, cookbook, Herbology notebook, transfiguration notebook, set design for Harry Potter play
<i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i> , H.G. Wells, 1896	History and sociology of science, evolution, eugenics, science fiction	Student presentations	Science fiction novelettes, poetry
<i>The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales</i> , Oliver Sacks, 1985	Neurology, physician-patient relationship, experience of illness, story and healing, art and healing	Required attendance at lecture series, field trip	Video, musical composition, poetry
<i>The Man with the Bionic Brain and Other Victories over Paralysis</i> , Jon Mukand, 2012	Experience of illness, Spinal cord and brain injuries, stroke, aphasia, brain-computer interface, research ethics, bioengineering disability and disability studies	Guest speakers, film clips, 3-D printed arm prosthetic demonstration	“Marketing” plan for increasing seat belt use; painting of brain sections labeled with name and associated health conditions; tables of spinal cord injury costs

<i>Moloka 'I</i> , Alan Brennert, 2003	Infectious disease, stigma, health disparities, Polynesian culture and health	Required attendance at lecture series, field trip	Creative writing
<i>My Own Country: A Doctor's Story</i> , Abraham Verghese, 1995	AIDS, rural medicine, disease and stigma, LGBTQ rights, homophobia, physician-patient relationship	Required attendance at lecture series, field trip	Music composition, paintings, drawings, poster
<i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i> , Anne Fadiman, 1998	Hmong culture, immigration, refugee experience, cultural competency, US health care system, health literacy	Student-led discussion	Illustrated storybook, proposed solutions for cultural competency in healthcare
<i>Thank You, Madagascar: The Conservation Diaries of Alison Jolly</i> , Alison Jolly, 2015	Malagasy culture, politics (international aid in a developing country, who wins and who loses in conservation), biodiversity, sustainability, importance of meeting the needs of local communities	Student-led discussion of journal articles related to book, instructor led-presentation and discussion of photographs of Malagasy nature and culture	Illustrated children's A-Z book of Malagasy plants and animals, song about conservation, quiz games and puzzles related to Madagascar, English/Malagasy language lesson, book of Malagasy recipes
<i>Things to do in a Retirement Home Trailer Park...When You're 29 and Unemployed</i> , Aneurin Wright, 2014; <i>Can't We Talk About Something More Pleasant?: A Memoir</i> , Roz Chast, 2012	Aging, caring for aging parents, graphic medicine, narrative and healing	Guest speakers, in-class drawing, student meditations and presentations on graphic novels	Graphic novels, Comics

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