The Ancient Roots of Modern Medicine: Development of an Interdisciplinary, Undergraduate Pre-Health Course

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a vehement push for the integration of humanities in medical education to develop professionalism, empathy, innovation, communication, and critical reasoning skills.

Ancient Greek and Latin language, literature, and medical practice, which lie at the root of modern Western medical terminology and practice, offer an opportune avenue to the study of medical humanities.

While many undergraduate programs offer courses in medical etymology, few courses in history, culture, and ethics of ancient Greco-Roman medicine exist; those that do are often targeted to students in the field of Classics.

To create a 36-100 student, lower-division, 3-credit course on the ancient roots of modern medicine, including in etymological, historical, cultural, and ethical terms, and targeted to undergraduate, pre-health students at the University of Colorado Boulder.

METHODOLOGY

Materials Selection

- Textbook: 12 medical etymology textbooks reviewed, rated on a 4-point utility scale. The Hippocrates Code (HC) chosen as main textbook and coded by themes derived from content presented.

- Supplemental Materials: 13 primary sources (ancient texts) and 49 secondary sources (modern scholarship) reviewed and coded by themes

- Syllabus Creation

  Formulated course objectives
  Course structures as a 15-week, Monday-Wednesday-Friday, 50-minute class schedule
  Work dedicated to etymology content
  Fri dedicated to discussion of culture, ethics, and history of ancient medicine and the relation to modern Western medicine.
  Organized readings into thematic units and selected supplemental readings to fit these units
  Composed lesson plans, discussion questions, and learning objectives
  Designed weekly quizzes, mid-term exams, and final exam

To become familiar with common Greek and Latin roots associated with the sciences, to learn to decipher and read medical terms, to understand the meaning and use of the Greek and Latin roots in modern medical terminology; instead of needing to memorize, you will learn to decipher initially challenging medical and biological terminology by recognizing and putting their root meanings.

To gain an appreciation of ancient Roman and Greek medical history and culture in their relation to the modern practice of Western medicine and the sciences.

To become familiar with common ancient bioethical principles that govern the ancient practice of medicine and the sciences; to learn to appreciate how these principles inform and influence modern medicine and the sciences.

To draw parallels between skills embodied in and fostered by the humanities and their direct application to the daily practice of medicine and the sciences.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Approved as a Classics major/minor course under “Literature, Culture and Thought”
- Approved as a “Arts and Humanities” General Education Distribution Requirement
- Anticipate offering course starting AY2022-23

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LITERATURE CITED


