Exploring the Human Condition: Medicine in Literature

Instructors: Gonzalo Bearman MD, MPH  
Teaching Assistant: Brie Dubinsky  
Prerequisites: This elective is open to all 4th year medical students  
Course format: A reading and writing intensive, online (eCurriculum) course

Objectives:
- To appreciate the role of a physician and to explore humanism through literature  
- To develop knowledge of selected readings  
- To stimulate students to participate in online discussion of literature and engage in active critical thinking

Course requirements:
- Read three books and one poem from the menu of course texts and write a 1000 word review for each in the eCurriculum discussion forums  
- Participate actively in an online forum for peer review, critique, and spirited online discussion

Evaluation:
- Participation in online discussion  
- Quality of book reviews

Reading list:
- The Death of Ivan Ilyich, Leo Tolstoy  
- Ingenious Pain, Andrew Miller  
- The Bell Jar, Sylvia Plath  
- Madame Bovary, Gustave Flaubert  
- The Tennis Partner, Abraham Verghese  
- My Own Country, Abraham Verghese  
- One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, Ken Kesey  
- The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson  
- Mrs. Dalloway or On Being Ill, Virginia Woolf  
- The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, Anne Fadiman  
- “The Red Wheelbarrow,” William Carlos Williams  
- “The Woman Who Could Not Live With Her Faulty Heart,” Margaret Atwood  
- “The Mystery of Pain,” Emily Dickinson

Questions: Brie Dubinsky (dubinskyb@vcu.edu)