

The Art of Observation Course Spring 2025

UT Southwestern Medical School – ENRH-115

COURSE INSTRUCTORS:

Heather W. Goff, MD (faculty sponsor) Professor of Dermatology, UTSW
Heather.goff@utsw.edu

Sarah Samaan, MD, BFA Cardiologist, Artist, Medical Coaching
heartsmarter@gmail.com

Patricia Santiago-Munoz, MD Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, UTSW
Patricia.santiago-munoz@utsw.edu

Courtney Crothers, UTSW Art Curator
Courtney.crothers@utsw.edu

Latoya Frolov, MD, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, UTSW
Latoya.frolov@utsw.edu

Alex Frolov, MD, Assistant Professor of Neurology, UTSW
Alexander.frolov@utsw.edu

STUDENT COORDINATORS:

Navya Bellamkonda

Soumya Somani

Tatum La

RATIONALE

The Art of Observation is a preclinical elective focusing on developing visual and communication skills for clinical diagnosis through looking at works of art. Through experiences with visual and some literary artwork, students in the course will improve their visual recognition skills to observe, analyze, interpret, and make meaning from information presented in the form of an image and relates to both examining patients as well as artwork. The course uses the power of art to promote the observation and communication necessary in addressing ambiguity in the physical exam and patient interaction.

We discuss factors influencing what we see, and how we interpret visual information. Other topics include conservation, artists with disease, empathy, physician burnout and cultural influences, with their implications for medical practice. Participants will cultivate habits of close observation, inspection, and cognitive reflections to shape his or her early medical career. Students will learn to synthesize observations and one's own knowledge and experiences as well as an awareness of the collaborative thinking process of the group, a skill vital to successful clinical practice.

The class will engage students in discussions, drawing and writing exercises, lectures, and interactive experiences that will foster communication. This is not an art history class and students need no previous training in art to participate. The course meets in accordance with the schedule at the Dallas Museum of Art, Nasher Sculpture Center, The Warehouse, The Crow Collection of Asian Art, and UT Southwestern Medical Campus.

COURSE GOALS

- Expand student's abilities to observe, describe, analyze with works of art and relate these skills to patient examination and care.
- Increase the student's abilities to do visual analysis and to communicate their observations, hypotheses, and conclusions with patients and doctors.

- Expanding students understanding of empathy and compassion and the importance in caring for patients and themselves.

OBJECTIVES

- Demonstrate observation skills through accurate and detailed descriptions of art and clinical images.
- Build verbal and interpersonal skills through speaking and writing about their visual observations.
- Understand how personal bias and judgement in evaluating a work of art has a relationship to their future medical practice.
- Demonstrate that empathetic communication can improve patient and self-care in their medical practice.
- Increase student engagement with the arts, The Dallas Museum of Art and other museums.

FORMAT

prior to the first class students will be provided with a sketch book, drawing pencils, and erasers to bring to each class session, please email course coordinators for instructions on where to acquire your supplies

- SIX two-hour sessions FRIDAYS 3-5pm
- Small group discussions and lectures
- Drawing, writing, or other creative experience each week
 - o Any necessary details for each class will be sent out to enrolled students ONE week prior to each class meeting
- Minimum of 20 students, capped at 30
- Classes are held at The Dallas Museum of Art, (1717 N. Harwood St.) Nasher Sculpture Center and, The Crow Collection of Asian Art, (2001 Flora St.), The Rachofsky Warehouse (14105 Inwood Rd.), and UT Southwestern Campus

COURSE STRUCTURE

Each class meets at the designated museum for that date. We will discuss the agenda for that date and work in large and small groups directly with works of art in the galleries to develop visual literacy skills through observation, description, analysis, collaborative interpretations, and presentations of their findings. Each session has a wrap-up discussion for students to provide feedback and discuss how the activity might apply to clinical practice. Sessions will incorporate drawing, photography and writing.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Students who attend FIVE of the SIX sessions AND complete the REDCap course evaluation will fulfill requirements for the course transcript acknowledgment and receive a passing grade. Evaluations are used to improve future curriculum.

Shuttle Transportation to and from UT Southwestern campus will not be provided. However, the DMA will comp parking to students.

MISSED CLASSES: **Contact One of the student liaisons**

A courteous 2-day notice for missed classes with arrangement for a substitute student to attend in lieu of the absent student is polite and requested.

ALL CLASSES ARE HELD FRIDAYS 3pm-5pm

Session 1

THE POWER OF OBSERVATION

Instructor: Sarah Samaan
February 7 | Dallas Museum of Art

Session 2

COLOR + PERCEPTION

Instructors: COURTNEY AND HEATHER
February 28 | Clements Hospital

Session 3

EMPATHY + COMPASSION + MINDFULNESS

Instructor: Sarah Samaan
March 14 | The Crow

Session 4

PAIN + HEALING

Instructor: Patricia Santiago-Munoz
April 11 | Dallas Museum of Art

Session 5

TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY + NARRATIVE MEDICINE

Instructor: Alexander Frolov
May 02 | The Warehouse

Session 6

LONLINESS + CONNECTION

Instructor: Latoya Frolov
May 16 | UTSW Simmons Cancer Center

There is a minimum of 20 Students with a maximum of 30 for this year's elective. All students are required to register for this class in Campus Solutions as with all other classes. No waitlist will be maintained by the Office of Medical Education.