

From University of Texas at Austin Proposal for an MA Degree in Humanities, Health, and Medicine

Note: This proposal follows a template mandated by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board for new degree proposals at any level and in any field.

Proposal Overview

The growing transdisciplinary field of Health Humanities explores and promotes relationships among the arts and humanities on the one hand and health and health care on the other. The methods and substance of the arts and humanities have the power to transform health care for all by enhancing human connections, deepening the capacity for empathy, and improving our understanding of the cultural and social contexts in which health, illness, and care occur. At the same time, focusing on health and health care reinvigorates and reveals new relevance for humanistic scholarship and teaching in a society increasingly dominated by STEM fields.

The field of Health Humanities (a term that includes medical humanities but is more capacious) now has two major professional associations in the U.S.: the Health Humanities Consortium and the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities. It is also served by several peer-reviewed scholarly journals here and abroad including, for instance, the *Journal of Medical Humanities, Literature and Medicine*, and *Medical Humanities*. A rapidly increasing number of colleges and universities offer graduate and undergraduate programs in the health and medical humanities, ranging from undergraduate majors and minors to master's and doctoral programs.¹ Recognizing the growth of such programs, the DoE's National Center for Education Statistics recently added a new CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code for "Medical/Health Humanities."

Humanities programs and departments also exist within numerous medical schools. The American Association of Medical Colleges, which accredits U.S. medical schools, has been giving increasing emphasis to the humanities, including the recent establishment of a special Committee on Humanities and Arts Integration.

The proposed 30-hour MA degree program draws on the College of Liberal Arts' world-class faculty in the humanities and social sciences, as well as distinguished faculty in the new Dell Medical School, the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, the Moody College of Communication, the College of Education, and the Schools of Nursing and Information. With a new Field of Study designation from the Registrar – specifically, Humanities, Health and Medicine (HHM) – we will create and staff as entirely new three-hour course, Introduction to Humanities, Health, and Medicine (HHM 3XX), as well as discipline-specific Departmental Report (HHM 3CC), Master's Report (HHM 398R) and Master's Thesis (HHM 698) courses. We will also create Theory and Methods in Humanities, Health, and Medicine (HHM 3AA) and Topics in Humanities, Health, and Medicine (HHM 3BB). The latter two courses will be cross-listed with an array of already-existing relevant graduate courses from across the University, as listed in Tables 4 and 5, respectively. (See Appendix L for letters of agreement by instructors, chairs, and deans, as appropriate.) These new HHM course numbers will enable students to meet the Graduate

¹ For list of master's degree programs, see Appendix P. For list of undergraduate programs, see <https://www.hiram.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Health-Humanities-Program-2019-final.pdf>.

School's Master's Degree requirement of 18 hours in the major. In addition, many departments offer highly relevant graduate courses that currently have the status of unnumbered topics (that is, there is no unique course or topic number reserved for them in the 2019-2021 Graduate Catalogue). This status impedes stable cross-listing arrangements with HHM course numbers. Until such time as these otherwise appropriate courses receive unique topic numbers, the GSC of the HHM MA program will consider allowing them to count towards the in-major requirements on a case-by-case basis. (See Appendix M for a sample list of existing unnumbered topics courses that may be considered.) The number of relevant existing graduate courses is significantly amplified by relevant upper-division undergraduate courses, of which students in the MA degree in Humanities, Health, and Medicine program will be allowed to take up to three (nine credit-hours). In most cases, undergraduate courses will be counted as outside-of-major credits.

A new Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) will be formed to oversee graduate program activity. The membership of this committee is defined in Table 5, Core Faculty. New members will be added to the GSC as appropriate. The core and affiliated faculty for the Humanities, Health, and Medicine MA degree program will be available to supervise the required final project as well as conference courses when the latter are required for an individual student's program of study (see next paragraph). The final project requirement may take the form of a departmental report or capstone project, an MA Report (3 hours) filed with the Graduate School, or an MA thesis (6 hours) filed with the Graduate School. The final project may be based on research that is primarily field, archival, textual, or some combination of these.

Both the conceptual capaciousness of the field of Health Humanities as it currently exists and the large inventory of relevant graduate and upper-division undergraduate courses that the University already offers will give students the ability to design, in close collaboration with the HHM Graduate Advisor, a coherent program of study that matches their interests, desires, and post-degree goals. A combination of structure and flexibility will allow for the creation of individualized study plans with different emphases, some of which might include, for example, Health and Culture; History of Medicine; Health, Ethics, and Social Justice; Health, Medicine, and Narrative; and Disability Studies. (Indeed, we expect that the possibility of complementing the Humanities, Health, and Medicine MA with UT's Master's-level Graduate Portfolios in, for example, Disability Studies and Health Communications will be attractive to a subset of students and potential students.)

Students who complete the MA degree in Humanities, Health, and Medicine will be well prepared to:

- Pursue health-professional education. For example, the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) is increasingly emphasizing the importance of both social-scientific and humanities training to medical education, an emphasis that is visibly affecting admissions decisions at UT's Dell Medical School and others.
- Bring humanistic knowledge, skills, and frameworks to the health care sector, whether as care providers, policy makers, researchers, advocates, consultants, or administrators (not only in health care facilities but also in fields such as human resources or health insurance), among other potential roles. The health care sector includes opportunities in private industry, public service, non-profit organizations, and academia.
- Pursue a PhD in fields such as History, English, Anthropology, and Philosophy/Bioethics, with a strong practical understanding of how research and teaching in these humanities

disciplines can help improve individual experiences, institutional practices, and society as a whole. The field of medical and health humanities is a growth area in higher education and therefore also on the academic job market. An MA degree in the health humanities will be a meaningful job market credential for PhD recipients in a range of humanities disciplines.

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Need

A. Job Market Need

Demonstrating the need for additional graduates in the field is vital. Provide short- and long-term evidence of the need for graduates in the Texas and U.S. job markets. Cite the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Texas Workforce Commission, professional association data, and other documented data sources to create a supply/demand analysis. Institutions should be able to show how the number of new graduates produced both in Texas and nationally compares to the number of job openings that require a degree in the discipline now and in the future on both the state and national levels. The use of predictive modeling is encouraged. If the program is designed to address particular regional or state needs in addition to workforce demands, provide a detailed description.

In 2017, health care spending accounted for 18% of the economy, a figure expected to continue growing.² In its 2018 Report on Texas Growth Occupations, the Texas Workforce Commission declared that “the Health Care and Social Assistance industry has become the dominant industry for employment in Texas – and the United States – in the last decade. Demand for health care workers in Texas is expected to continue to increase as the state has growing populations of both old and young people, who are the primary customers of the Health Care and Social Assistance industry.”

At the same time, leaders in the health care industry and in health care education have become increasingly vocal about the need for professionals with proficiency not only in STEM disciplines but also in humanities-based skills and approaches. For instance, “Medicine today finds itself caught in a paradox. It has undoubtedly enjoyed many successes, and yet it is also the profession with the highest rate of suicide, a burnout rate greater than 50%, rampant depression, dwindling empathy, a negative view by the public, and a disturbing tendency for physicians to quit. This conundrum has... led to a revisiting of the relationship between medicine and the humanities.”³ (The problems listed in the cited essay also afflict nursing and related health professions.) The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education recognizes both empathy and a tolerance for ambiguity—two qualities strongly correlated with

² <https://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/NationalHealthExpendData/Downloads/highlights.pdf>

³ Bedwell, Wendy L., Elizabeth Cerceo, Chayan Chakraborti, et. al. “Medical Students’ Exposure to the Humanities Correlates with Positive Personal Qualities and Reduced Burnout: A Multi-Institutional U.S. Study.” *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, vol. 33, no. 5, January 28, 2018.

humanities training⁴—as core competencies for medical practice.⁵ Indeed, research has indicated that the patients of physicians with higher levels of empathy can have better health outcomes.⁶

Many students who receive the MA in Health, Humanities, and Medicine will use it to prepare for or complement other health-professional degrees, including in specializations that the Texas Workforce Commission anticipates will remain in high demand in Texas, such as family medicine, pediatrics, geriatrics, and behavioral health. Based on reports from colleagues who participate in similar Master's programs at peer institutions, we expect that a significant percentage of applicants to our proposed degree program will view the MA as a productive means of developing relevant competencies while also burnishing their applications to medical or other health professional schools. Other students will go on to humanities PhD programs, including PhD programs in the medical humanities, such as the one at UT Medical Branch in Galveston. When students with, for instance, English, Comparative Literature, or American Studies PhDs go on the academic job market their master's degree in medical/health humanities will be an asset for jobs that list the field as a desired sub-specialization.

But there will also be productive employment opportunities available to MA degree recipients who seek to enter the workforce immediately. Each year the health-care sector creates thousands of positions for skilled professionals who do not provide direct patient care. These positions are located in health care organizations but also in public service, the non-profit sector, and academia. Students with the MA in Humanities, Health, and Medicine will be prepared to bring humanistic knowledge, skills, and frameworks to health-related careers not only as care providers, but also as policy makers, researchers, advocates, consultants, administrators, and educators, among other potential roles. Demonstrable engagement with humanistic teaching and practice is increasingly seen as important not only for direct-care providers but also for the broader institutional culture of health organizations.⁷

Handshake is a career-services platform designed for students and recent graduates. It is widely used by career-planning professionals in institutions of higher education, including the University of Texas at Austin. A search of Handshake performed on December 12, 2019 by staff in UT's office of Graduate Career and Professional Development yielded listings for 203 jobs in the health care industry in Texas and nationally. Of these 203 health industry listings, 34 jobs designated a Master's degree in a discipline centrally addressed by the health humanities—including, for instance, English, anthropology, history, American studies, philosophy, etc.—as a relevant qualification. (It should be noted that as an interdisciplinary field Medical and Health Humanities is still too new to appear by name in most non-academic job listings.) Relevant listed positions included, for example, Senior Program Assistant in Cooperative Research Programs at the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; Communications

⁴ Ibid.; Graham J, Benson LM, Swanson J, Potyk D, Daratha K, Roberts K. Medical Humanities Coursework Is Associated with Greater Measured Empathy in Medical Students. *Am J Med.* 2016;129(12):1334–7.

⁵ <https://knowledgeplus.nejm.org/blog/exploring-acgme-core-competencies/>

⁶ Hojat M., Louis D.Z., Markham F.W., Wender R., Rabinowitz C., and Gonnella J.S.: Physicians' empathy and clinical outcomes for diabetic patients. *Acad Med* 2011; 86: pp. 359-364.

⁷ Rider et al., 2018. The need to shape an organizational culture of humanistic teaching and practice. *J Gen Intern Med* 33(7): 1092-1099.

and Media Specialist in the Health and Medicine Division of the NASEM; Outreach and Training Coordinator for Urban Health Partnerships; Program Officer for the Episcopal Health Foundation; Grants Administrator at Massachusetts General Hospital; the Health Care Leadership Rotational Program at Humana Health; Chaplain Candidate at Northeast Army Health Recruiting; and Clinical Engagement Specialist at DocMatter, as well as several positions for medical and scientific writers, among other opportunities.

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B. Curriculum

Describe the educational objectives of the proposed program. For the description of educational objectives, distinguish between aspects of the curriculum that are standard for the field and aspects that would be unique to the proposed program.

Upon graduating from the Humanities, Health, and Medicine MA program, students will be able to:

- Practice critical thinking, reading, and writing at a level commensurate with an MA degree in the humanities from a top tier university.
- Facilitate the use of literature and other arts to deepen their understanding of the illness experience and thereby enhance empathy and human connections, as well as a tolerance for ambiguity. Students will be prepared to facilitate such experiences for health care providers, patients, and others.
- Demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of, and be equipped to perform research into, the social, historical, and cultural contexts in which health, illness, and health care occur.
- Comprehend a variety of different theoretical frameworks, types of knowledges, and modes of analysis that may be applied to the field of health, including those that prevail, for instance, in the humanities, the social sciences, and the biosciences, and understand how they differ from and relate to one another.
- Understand the significance of both cultural competence and cultural humility in health care settings.
- Analyze the power dynamics that pervade health care, including but not limited to dynamics of race, gender and sexuality, socio-economic and citizenship status, and ability and disability.
- Comprehend the central role that narrative plays in experiences of health, illness, and healing, as well as in ethical thinking.
- Demonstrate familiarity with key issues and problems in the field of bioethics.
- Apply knowledge, experience, and research expertise from the transdisciplinary field of Health Humanities to respond to an array of practical and intellectual challenges found in the worlds of health care, academia, government service, advocacy, and others.

If the proposed program has a unique focus or niche, describe it in relationship to peer programs. Indicate how the niche or specialties of the proposed program are appropriate for the job market and student demand, and describe how they complement other peer programs in the state (or nation, if relevant).

Describe how the proposed program would achieve national prominence. Indicate if the proposed program is designed to have a particular regional focus.

The proposed Humanities, Health, and Medicine Master of Arts program will achieve national prominence via the quality and interdisciplinary depth of its faculty; the variety and range of its course offerings, which will allow students to construct individualized pathways to the degree; the ability to take classes with students in other graduate and health-professional programs; and the desirability of its location at UT-Austin, a leading research university in a city internationally known for its cultural vibrancy and quality of life.

Provide an explanation of required, prescribed, and elective courses and how they fulfill program requirements.

- Students will be required to take HHM 3XX, Introduction to Humanities, Health, and Medicine, during the fall semester of their first year. The class will begin by providing an overview of the history, aims, and challenges of the field and its current role in health-professional education and practice. Subsequent units will focus on subfields within the health humanities, including history of medicine, narrative medicine, literature and medicine, medical anthropology, disability studies, medicine and the arts, and bioethics. These units will be designed and partially taught by UT experts in the respective subfields.
- Students will be required to take HHM 3AA, Methods in Health, Humanities, and Medicine, and will be strongly encouraged to do so during the fall semester of their first year. HHM 3AA will be cross-listed with selected theory and methods courses relevant to the field of Health, Humanities, and Medicine that are offered by other departments. Students will consult with the graduate advisor to determine which available course best fits their individual interests and goals. The list of cross-listed methodology courses will be reviewed regularly, and students may propose additional courses for approval by the Graduate Studies Committee.
- Students will be required to take either three, four, or five variants of HHM 3BB, Topics in Health, Humanities, and Medicine (depending on the degree path they've selected). HHM 3BB will be cross-listed with selected topics courses relevant to the field of Health, Humanities, and Medicine that are offered by other departments. Students will consult with the graduate advisor to determine which available courses best fit their individual interests and goals. To fulfill this requirement students must select HHM 3BB courses cross-listed with at least two different department. The list of cross-listed topics courses will be reviewed regularly, and students may propose additional courses for approval by the Graduate Studies Committee, especially relevant courses taught as unnumbered topics of a larger umbrella course, which prevents regularized cross-listing arrangements. On a case by case basis, and if petitioned by a student, the GSC will consider approving an upper-division undergraduate course to count towards the in-major topic courses requirement.
- Students will enroll in an additional three electives, chosen in conjunction with the graduate advisor. These electives may but don't have to be cross-listed with an HHM course number. Students will be advised to use electives to attain proficiency, if they do not already possess it, in a foreign language with significant numbers of native speakers in Texas or the nation (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese, Mandarin, ASL, etc.) In some cases, MA reports or theses may require reading proficiency as well. Students will be able to count up to nine hours of approved upper-division undergraduate towards the degree.
- As outlined in Table 2, above, students may opt to complete the 30-hour degree through a courses-only option or to incorporate a departmental report or equivalent capstone project (3 hours), an MA report (3 hours), or an MA thesis (6 hours). Final projects, for those who write them, will be advised by members of the Health Humanities Graduate Studies

Committee who have expertise in the chosen topic or by another faculty member approved by the GSC.

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C. *Strategic Plan and Marketable Skills*

Describe how the proposed program fits into the institution's overall strategic plan, and provide the web link to the institution's strategic plan.

Describe how the proposed program will align with the state's *60x30TX plan*, and address the goals related to completion, marketable skills, and student debt. Specifically identify the marketable skills the students will attain through the proposed program. Explain how students will be informed of the marketable skills included in the proposed program.

Explain how the proposed program builds on and expands the institution's existing recognized strengths.

UT Austin's President Gregory Fenves has articulated four overarching domains that together define the vision and goals of the University's [strategic plan](https://president.utexas.edu/vision-goals) (<https://president.utexas.edu/vision-goals>). One of the four central pillars of the University's vision is "transforming health and healthcare." To be truly transformative, however, this shared project cannot rely on the STEM disciplines alone. It must be transdisciplinary, drawing from knowledge bases, insights, and methods across the University. The proposed Master's Degree with a major in Humanities, Health, and Medicine brings concerns, approaches, and materials traditionally associated with the humanities to the shared project of transforming health and health care for all.

The proposed new MA program also aligns with key facets of the state's 60X30TX plan. The program's graduates will contribute to the goal of having 550,000 students complete a certificate, associate, bachelor's, or Master's degree from a Texas institution of higher education in the year 2030. Careful screening of applicants, followed by intensive and personalized advising throughout the duration of each student's enrollment, will lead to students completing their degrees in a timely manner. The program and its faculty will do everything in their power to assist students in obtaining financial support while they are working towards the degree, including helping students find and apply to appropriate graduate teaching assistant and research assistant positions across the University.⁸ Regardless, students from Texas will pay relatively low in-state tuition, which will be significantly more affordable for them than tuition for similar MA programs at out-of-state public and private universities.

Marketable skills include high-level competencies in research, writing, communication, and critical thinking, especially but not exclusively regarding health and health care, that have been honed by completing 30 credits of graduate work, including the completion of a major research project, at a top-tier institution. Additional skills include expertise in bringing a variety of different analytic frameworks from the humanities and social sciences to issues in health and health care. These will include some of the most complex questions vexing our current system such as inequities in health care and health outcomes for patients, as well as burnout and a loss

⁸ Please see the letter in Appendix Q from English department chair Dr. Martin Kevorkian, indicating the department's interest in hiring HHM master's students as teaching assistants for English 316.

of meaning suffered by many practitioners. The marketable skills students will acquire in the MA program will be communicated to them in recruitment materials (online, offline, and in person), in advising sessions, and by the faculty teaching their classes.

The program builds on existing strengths at UT-Austin and takes advantage of several factors that make this a propitious time to launch a new MA degree in Humanities, Health, and Medicine at the University. The University already possesses a critical mass of distinguished researchers and educators working at the intersection of health and the humanities, including, for instance, medical historians, sociologists, anthropologists, ethicists, and literature scholars. Under the leadership of the Humanities Institute in collaboration with other campus units, this cohort has been gaining size, momentum, and cohesiveness. Highlights over the past few years include:

- Humanities Institute Faculty Fellows Seminar on Health, Well-Being, and Healing (2016-2018) - Included 24 UT faculty (from Liberal Arts, Fine Arts, Communication, Social Work and Law). Met weekly during spring and fall 2017 to workshop projects and consult with distinguished visiting scholars. Culminated in a public symposium.
- Pop-Up Institute on Health and the Humanities (May 2018, Co-sponsored by the Humanities Institute and the Vice Provost for Research) - Convened researchers from nine UT Colleges and Schools for month-long institute. Culminated in a public symposium and a concept paper that recommended the creation of an MA program in the Humanities, Health, and Medicine.
- Monthly Health Humanities Research Seminar (September 2018-present), co-sponsored by the Humanities Institute, with support from the Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities #1, and Dell Medical School – UT researchers, student scholars, community health practitioners, and, on occasion, distinguished external presenters meet every month for presentations and discussions on health humanities topics. The seminar always runs at or near full capacity.

Faculty who have participated in these ongoing events now form a community of researchers and educators in the health humanities who are familiar with one another's work and accustomed to working together. They constitute a pre-existing foundation for the proposed MA degree program. In turn, the program, once established, will encourage and provide a structure for additional transdisciplinary collaboration.

In addition, Dell Medical School, which welcomed its first class of students in 2016, is virtually unique among its peer institutions in being located on the same physical campus as the major research university with which it is affiliated. Dedicated to transforming both medical education and health care, Dell's educational, clinical, and research missions all emphasize person-centered care and community engagement. The importance of the humanities and humanistic social sciences to these endeavors is recognized by DMS leadership and many of its faculty. Moreover, with the support of Dean Clay Johnston, Executive Vice-Dean for Academics Sue Cox is eager to launch an MD/MA dual-degree program with the Humanities, Health, and Medicine, and there are already medical students who have indicated interest in such an option. (Please see Appendix Q.) Faculty and students from the campus's other highly distinguished health-professional schools (the Steve Hicks School of Social Work, the School of Nursing, and the College of Pharmacy) have been eager participants in the Humanities Institute's Health Humanities programming, as have leaders of the Center for Health Interprofessional Practice and Education.

Importantly, over the past several years the University has been expanding its offerings in the field of health humanities at the undergraduate level, thus creating a pool of potential recruits for further study and credentialing at the Master's level. As previously noted, Health and Society has become one of the College of Liberal Arts' fastest-growing undergraduate majors (currently at 500 students). Recognizing student demand, UGS's Bridging Disciplines Program just launched (fall 2019) the new health humanities certificate program Patients, Practitioners, and Cultures of Care, whose development was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The Principal Investigator and the two co-PI's of the NEH Connections grant that supported the development of the PPCC curriculum are all members of the faculty for the proposed MA degree in Humanities, Health, and Medicine. Both co-PIs are members of the proposed program's Graduate Studies Committee.