

## Overview

The BUSM **Narrative Writing Program (NWP): Writing from the Front Lines of Clinical Care, Education, and Research** provides faculty with the opportunity to develop narrative skills and competencies through reflective writing, reading, and listening. Such narrative training fosters writing skills and professional well-being while offering a framework for establishing empathic and collaborative teams. Our curriculum is designed to help faculty engage with stories and storytelling themes relevant to the daily lives of health care and science professionals. Experiential seminars offer instruction on writing theory and practice, contextual information about literary narratives, questions for discussion, and reflective writing prompts. Writing workshops provide participants with a venue for peer coaching on pieces developed outside of sessions, **with the goal of aiding participants in preparing at least one piece of writing to a form suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed journal by the end of the course.**

## Participants

BUSM DOM Faculty – including clinicians, educators, and researchers (up to 18 may be accepted for the program)

## Learning Objectives

- Acquire new writing competencies and self-efficacy to generate publishable narratives.
- Foster reflection and self-awareness for professional and personal well-being.
- Engage more empathically with patients, learners, colleagues, and self, refining skills for listening and interpreting personal narratives.
- Cultivate peer mentoring skills to form connections with a network of interdisciplinary colleagues.
- Develop essential skills for effective leadership (e.g. emotional awareness, openness, compassion).
- Learn about the importance of storytelling for career development.

## Time Commitment & Session Design

Sessions are 2 hours long and take place monthly from January to June. Most sessions include: 5-minute writing prompt; 45-minute experiential seminar/roundtable discussion (15 minutes to discuss writing theory, 30 minutes to discuss literary pre-readings); 60-minute writing workshop session; 5 minutes to journal and calendar participants' commitments prior to the next meeting; 5 minutes to complete evaluations. Participants must commit to attending at least 5 of the 6 sessions.

Each session will include the following components:

1. **Experiential seminars**, based on the pre-readings, involve discussions centered on writing theory and textual analysis. Seminars also may include spontaneous reflective writing exercises, in which participants are prompted to address significant and/or difficult experiences with patients, learners, colleagues, and/or self. Writing subsequently may be shared with the group for discussion.
2. **Writing workshops**, in which participants have the opportunity to read their work-in-progress narratives aloud and receive peer feedback. Workshop time also may focus on applying technical skills learned from creative/reflective writing to other forms of narrative (essays, advocacy-related work, education-focused manuscripts, etc.).

## Program Components:

- **Pre-reading and Writing Assignments.** Participants read assigned texts before sessions; come prepared to discuss pre-readings in the in seminars; and follow writing prompts to generate narratives for workshopping with the group.
- **Experiential Seminars/Roundtable Discussions.** Course directors and guest facilitators utilize curriculum modules and/or special workshop sessions to engage with participants regarding pre-readings.
- **Writing Workshops.** Participants take turns sharing their work-in-progress narratives with the group, reading pieces aloud and inviting feedback from peers. The 60-minute writing workshop portion of each session typically will be used to discuss 2-3 participants' writings.

- **Peer Mentoring.** Participants develop peer mentoring skills to provide mutual support as a means of encouragement and accountability for successfully achieving their writing goals.
- **Final Writing Goal.** Participants commit to writing and revising at least one narrative to submittable form by the conclusion of the program (e.g. poem, creative non-fiction, op-ed, etc.).
- **Participant Commitment.** Participants commit to attending and actively participating in sessions, to engage in self-reflection and honest conversation with peers, and to make progress on their writing goals.

**Preparatory Assignments (for the initial session):**

- Reflect and record personal and professional goals for the program. A primary goal is to generate at least one submittable piece of narrative by the conclusion of the program.
- Complete the pre-program survey (link will be sent via email).
- Complete the photo roster template.

**Writing from the Front Lines of Clinical Care, Education, and Research – Curriculum Overview**

All sessions take place on Thursdays, from 4:00-5:30 pm in Evans 118.

Date	Writing Theme	Literary Theme	Learning Plan	Preparatory Work	Facilitator(s)
January 11	Time Famine & Writer's Block	Why Write Your Stories? Storytelling & Healing	<p><b>4:00-4:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-min Writing Prompt: Read 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' by W. B. Yeats and write about your metaphorical 'lake isle.'</li> <li>• Course commitments</li> <li>• Participant goals and cohort confidentiality</li> <li>• Discussion of writing theory: time famine, perfectionism, and writer's block</li> <li>• Discuss/analyze literary pre-readings</li> <li>• Pass signup sheet for workshop dates</li> <li>• Journal and calendar commitments to be achieved prior to the next meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>4:55-5:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group workshop time: Emelia &amp; Sarah's narratives</li> </ul> <p><b>5:55-6:00 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing Theory Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Perfectionism' &amp; 'Writer's Block' by Anne Lamott</li> </ul> <p><b>Essay/Poetry/Prose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Digging' by Seamus Heaney</li> <li>• Opening 2 pages of <i>The English Patient</i> by Michael Ondaatje</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Stories Doctors Tell' by Tracy Moniz, PhD, et al.</li> <li>• 'The Poet's Obligation' by Pablo Neruda</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Christy Di Frances</a> , <a href="#">Sarah Wingerter</a> & <a href="#">Emelia Benjamin</a>

**Writing from the Front Lines of Clinical Care, Education, and Research – Curriculum Overview**

Date	Writing Theme	Literary Theme	Learning Plan	Preparatory Work	Facilitator(s)
February 8	Special Poetry Workshop	The Power of Poetry	<p><b>4:00-5:00 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to poetry writing</li> <li>• Discuss/analyze poetry pre-readings</li> <li>• Poetry writing exercise</li> <li>• Share/discuss writings in pairs</li> <li>• Volunteers read their first drafts to the group and receive peer feedback</li> </ul> <p><b>5:00-5:55 pm</b> Group workshop time: Participants TBD</p> <p><b>5:55-6:00 pm</b> Complete evaluations</p>	<p><b>Writing Theory Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘The Rules for Writing Practice’ from <i>Wild Mind</i> by Natalie Goldberg</li> </ul> <p><b>Essay/Poetry/Prose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poems</li> <li>• ‘The Crow and the Cave’ - Maria Mazziotti Gillan’s Interview with <i>Rattle</i> (part 2)</li> <li>• ‘The Least of These: Reading Poetry to Encourage Reflection on the Care of Vulnerable Patients’ by Johanna Shapiro, PhD</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Poetry and Medicine’ in Medscape Journal</li> <li>• ‘Taking Its Pulse: Poetry in the Context of Narrative Medicine’</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Francine Montemurro</a>
March 1	First Drafts	Professionalism	<p><b>4:00-4:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-min Writing Prompt: Read ‘Days’ by Philip Larkin and write about the purpose of your days.</li> <li>• Writing theory discussion: first drafts and short assignments</li> <li>• Discuss/analyze literary pre-readings</li> <li>• Journal and calendar commitments to be achieved prior to next meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>4:55-5:55 pm</b> Group workshop time: Participants TBD</p> <p><b>5:55-6:00 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing Theory Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Shitty First Drafts’ and ‘Short Assignments’ by Anne Lamott</li> </ul> <p><b>Essay/Poetry/Prose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘The Steel Windpipe’ by Mikhail Bulgakov, MD</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘The Use of Force’ by William Carlos Williams, MD</li> <li>• ‘On Medicine and Boundaries: Frost’s Mending Wall’ by Gabriel L. Perlow and Andrew C. Furman, MD</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Christy Di Frances</a> , <a href="#">Sarah Wingerter</a> & <a href="#">Emelia Benjamin</a>

**Writing from the Front Lines of Clinical Care, Education, and Research – Curriculum Overview**

Date	Writing Theme	Literary Theme	Learning Plan	Preparatory Work	Facilitator(s)
April 12	Elements of Storytelling 1: Plot, Character, Setting	Grief & Loss	<p><b>4:00-4:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5-min writing prompt: Read ‘Bells for John Whiteside’s Daughter’ by John Crowe Ransom and write about grief and loss.</li> <li>Writing theory discussion: plot, character, and setting</li> <li>Discuss/analyze literary pre-readings</li> <li>Journal and calendar commitments to be achieved prior to next meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>4:55-5:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group workshop time: Participants TBD</li> </ul> <p><b>5:55-6:00 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing Theory Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘8 Tips on How to Write a Great Story’ by Kurt Vonnegut</li> </ul> <p><b>Essay/Poetry/Prose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Equinox’ by Elizabeth Alexander</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘The Dead’ by James Joyce (We <b>strongly suggest</b> that you read this, as it is arguably the most perfect short story in the English language and will be discussed in the session!)</li> <li>‘The Absence of Something’ by Lawrence J. Hergott, MD</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Christy Di Frances</a> , <a href="#">Sarah Wingerter</a> & <a href="#">Emelia Benjamin</a>
May 3	Elements of Storytelling 2: Point of View, Narrative Voice	Empathy & Courage	<p><b>4:00-4:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5-min Writing Prompt: Read ‘Do not go gentle into that good night’ by Dylan Thomas and write about courage.</li> <li>Writing theory discussion and point of view and narrative voice.</li> <li>Discuss/analyze literary pre-readings</li> <li>Journal and calendar commitments to be achieved prior to next meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>4:55-5:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group workshop time: Participants TBD</li> </ul> <p><b>5:55-6:00 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Writing Theory</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘Point of View: Enhancing Your Narrative Voice’ - quick overview at the <i>Huffington Post</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Essay/Poetry/Prose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘First Love’ by Richard Weinberg, MD</li> <li>‘The Garden Party’ by Katherine Mansfield</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>‘The Good Doctor’ by Adam Haslett, JD</li> <li>‘His Stillness’ by Sharon Olds</li> <li>‘Darkness’ by Anton Chekhov, MD</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Christy Di Frances</a> , <a href="#">Sarah Wingerter</a> & <a href="#">Emelia Benjamin</a>

**Writing from the Front Lines of Clinical Care, Education, and Research – Curriculum Overview**

Date	Writing Theme	Literary Theme	Learning Plan	Preparatory Work	Facilitator(s)
June 14	Submitting for Publication	Resilience & Hope	<p><b>4:00-4:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-min Writing Prompt: Read 'Looking for Something Lost' by Mark Van Doren and write about something lost.</li> <li>• Discuss possible venues for submitting narratives for publication</li> <li>• Discuss/analyze literary pre-readings</li> <li>• Journal and calendar commitments to be achieved prior to next meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>4:55-5:55 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group workshop time: Participants TBD</li> </ul> <p><b>5:55-6:00 pm</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete evaluations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Resource on Publication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Venues for Publication, Etc.'</li> </ul> <p><b>Essay/Poetry/Prose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusion of 'Little Gidding' (No. 4 of 'Four Quartets') by T. S. Eliot</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Hope is the Thing with Feathers' by Larry D. Cripe, MD</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Christy Di Frances</a> , <a href="#">Sarah Wingerter</a> & <a href="#">Emelia Benjamin</a>