

Basel, 20 June 2017

Empathy and Ethics at the End of Life Perspectives from the Medical Humanities

A day-long workshop for doctoral candidates, jointly organised by the Institute for Biomedical Ethics and History of Medicine (University of Zurich) and the Department of English (University of Basel), within the framework of the SLSAeu Conference EMPATHIES (www.empathies2017.com)

Convenors: Anna Elsner, Franziska Gyax and Manuela Rossini

SPECIAL GUESTS

**Ivan Callus (literature/theory) and Marion Coutts (author/artist)
Anne Hudson Jones (literature & medicine) and Seamus O'Mahony (physician)**

Workshop description

Patients and their families approaching the end of life (be it due to old age, chronic incurable or terminal illness) are faced with a range of practical, medical, legal and psychosocial decisions. The role of contemporary medicine in shaping these decisions is at the heart of many of the recently published auto/thanatographies (memoirs by patients and those surviving them). It is also central to a number of texts authored by physicians reflecting more broadly on ethical challenges with regard to death and 'the way we die now' (O'Mahony 2016) in the twenty-first century.

In order to connect to the overall topic of the conference, special attention will be paid to empathy in doctor/nurse-patient interactions in end-of-life/palliative care and to the role of narratives/narration in fostering more empathetic relations between dying persons and caretakers – be they medical professionals, volunteers, relatives or friends. We will also address ethical, philosophical, and socio-cultural issues related to dying/death, explore representations of dying and death in literary and cultural texts, and discuss concepts of mortality and medicalised death. The workshop will include readings from *The Iceberg* by Marion Coutts.

Goals of the workshop

The goal of the workshop is threefold:

- First, to allow a selected group of doctoral candidates to discuss end-of-life issues from a literary (morning session) and medical perspective (afternoon session).
- Two, to thereby allow doctoral candidates to interact and create a network of peers who work on related questions by employing different methodologies.
- Three, by fostering a dialogue between bioethicists, literary scholars and medical practitioners, to function as an example of research in the field of the medical humanities and its mission to play an important role in approaching issues deriving out of a clinical context through the framework of the humanities and social sciences.

Application

For this interdisciplinary workshop short papers (15'-20') addressing these issues are welcome.

Please submit a 300 word abstract to the convenors by **20 May**.

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