



University of New Hampshire
College of Liberal Arts

REvisions: UNH English

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Vol. 2, No. 4, Spring 2019

banner courtesy of Kayla Barron, UNH '20

UNH English: Leading the Way in New Scholarship

Prof. Shetty's Students Navigate the Intersection of Literature and Medicine

Virginia Woolf's ruminations on illness and sympathy; novelist Fanny Burney's 1812 description of her mastectomy; playwright Manjula Padmanabhan's dramatic take on transformations driven by medical technology. Students in Professor Sandhya Shetty's fall 2018 class English 415C: Literature and Medicine explored these and other significant topics at the intersection of literature and medicine.

In addition to questions of illness, mortality, and treatment, the course addressed ethical issues in modern medicine, pursuing them all the way from early-nineteenth century anatomy to twenty-first century concerns regarding organ transplantation and the emergence of the "post-human." This semester she is teaching The English Major Seminar, focused on similar material, but redesigned for English majors at the 700 level. Both classes build on her own research into literature and medicine.

In English 415C, students from a variety of majors across the university practiced critical reading of fiction, memoirs, plays, and historical essays to explore a range of issues in medicine, bioscience, and medical technology. For instance, students identified "the historical and ethical conundrums first-year medical students face in anatomy class" through reading neurosurgeon Paul Kalanithi's posthumously published memoir, *When Breath Becomes Air*. This book, which served to introduce students to morally disquieting aspects of medical practice, also opened up opportunities for them to further investigate unsavory aspects of medical history.

Shetty explains, "[S]tudents were fascinated and produced their best writing as they summarized [...] the way law and medicine worked together in Victorian London to exploit the bodies of the workhouse poor as 'raw material' for anatomical dissection and study."

So how can literature help us to navigate the promises and risks of medicine? Students read Manjula Padmanabhan's dystopian drama, *Harvest*, to find out.

"This dystopic science fiction play imagines a posthuman future on the basis of current trends in organ harvesting, the commodification of body parts, and the impact of organ transplant and other advanced biotechnological practices on notions of 'the human' and on traditional understandings of life and death," Shetty says.

Professor Shetty's interest in literature and medicine stems from her research on the entanglements of the two discourses in the colonial project, as that unfolded over the long nineteenth century in South Asia. She has recently published on medicine in postcolonial literature as well. An article on Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* explores the figure of the doctor-surgeon in the context of contemporary civil wars.

Her most recent publication centers on Anandibai Joshi, "the first Hindu-Indian woman to get a medical training abroad—in the United States." Shetty explains, "She received her M.D. in 1886 from the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania (WMCP), a pioneer institution in the field of women's medical education, itself then a new phenomenon in the U.S." Shetty researched across library archives in India and the U.S. to uncover contemporary biographies and papers about Joshi's life and work. Her essay, "Anandibai Joshi's Passage to America: The Making of a Hindu Lady Doctor," offers an extended reading of "Obstetrics of the Aryan Hindoos," the M.D. thesis Joshi wrote at the WMCP. Shetty's article on Joshi appears in *New Directions in Literature and Medicine Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan 2017).

The HUGEmanities Project: New answers to *Why the humanities?*

The HUGEmanities Project, a UNH COLA initiative, works to answer the question, *Why the humanities?* COLA students examine global problems and issues through their own diverse viewpoints, showcasing their engaged, active thinking and digital humanities work. The HUGEmanities Project provides COLA students with two different opportunities:



HUGEMANITIES!
THE BIG CONTEST THAT ANSWERS THE BIG QUESTIONS

WIN \$500!!

Have you completed a Digital Project this year?
Submit it to the HUGEmanities BIG Contest!

 Breakout Award Digital projects designed and authored by first-year students	 Digital Storytelling Award Digital projects of the narrative persuasion, creative non-fiction, and memoir	 Design and Innovation Award Individual or group project that showcases design as major factor
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Get your questions answered at
<https://mypages.unh.edu/theBIGcontest>
A COLA and New Hampshire Humanities Collaborative Initiative
Funded by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

The Big Contest

Submissions due May 6! The 2019 HUGEmanities Big Contest has three categories: The Breakout Contest, The Digital Storytelling Contest, and the Innovative Design Contest. The humanities ask us to consider Big Questions. The HUGEmanities Big Contest is looking for some Big Answers.

Do you have a digital project that...

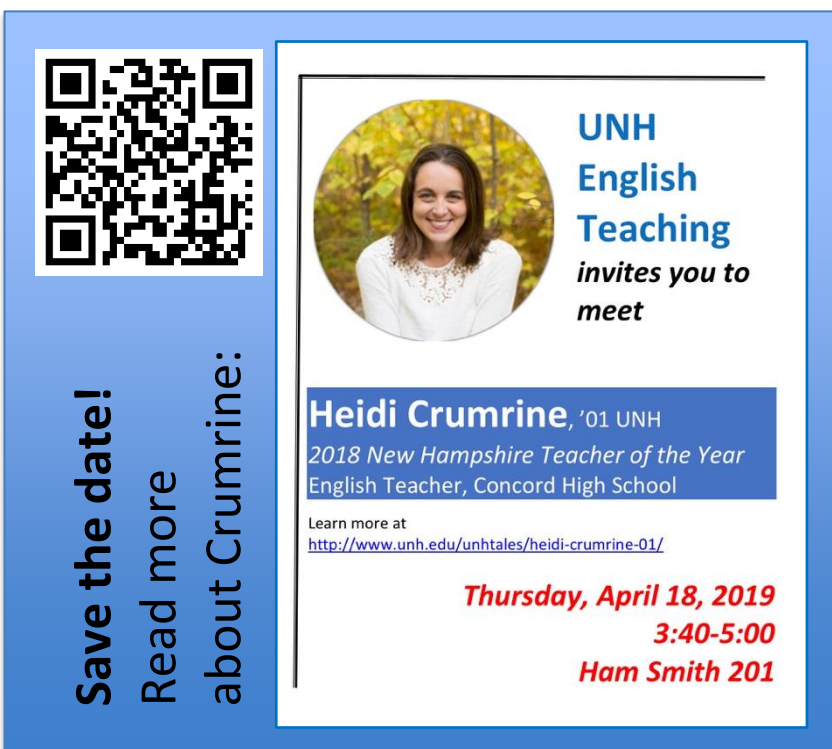
- explores a similarity or a difference in cultures?
- dabbles in a second language?
- examines a life and its impact on a person's creative process or achievement?
- explores an ethical question?
- considers the meaning of democracy?
- examines history to understand the past, or look towards the future?
- collects research that contributes to the way you understand the world?
- shares insight about who you are and how you fit into your community or your culture?

COLA students are active, engaged thinkers who look at subjects and problems from a variety of different viewpoints. What have you been thinking about? What is your story? Learn more at


<https://mypages.unh.edu/thebigcontest>

The Digital Project Summer Institute

Applications due April 25! The Summer 2019 HUGEmanities Digital Project Institute is a paid digital apprenticeship May 20–31, including workshops, mentoring, and training in digital production. Students will develop and publish a digital project that answers a humanities-driven question. Students will begin with a narrative and then will publish their work using movie making, and/or webcasting and podcasting skills. Student projects will be hosted on the New Hampshire Humanities Collaborative website. The HUGEmanities Project is funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, specifically the New Hampshire Humanities Collaborative, and is a College of Liberal Arts initiative. Learn more at <https://mypages.unh.edu/dpi>



Save the date!
Read more about Crumrine:



UNH English Teaching invites you to meet

Heidi Crumrine, '01 UNH
2018 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year
English Teacher, Concord High School

Learn more at
<http://www.unh.edu/unhtales/heidi-crumrine-01/>

Thursday, April 18, 2019
3:40-5:00
Ham Smith 201