

HEARTBEAT

News from the Medical Humanities Program at Baylor University

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GREETINGS FROM MEDICAL HUMANITIES

Greetings from the Medical Humanities Program! It's been a while and we're glad to be back. We are looking forward to updating you on what we've been up to—and there is so much to tell...

Let's start with our new faculty member, **Emilie Cunningham, PhD, MPH**. Dr. Cunningham comes to us from Waco Family Medicine where she served as the Director of Programs for Women and Children. She is a Certified Childbirth Educator, Certified Lactation Counselor, and Certified Doula. One of her primary interests is the disruption of health inequities which makes her the perfect person to teach Racial Disparities in Healthcare.

In April, we gathered to celebrate and honor the incredible career of **Dr. Bill Hoy**, who has given so much to Baylor and his students.

A \$2 Million gift from Scott and Susan Orr of The Woodlands, TX, established the **Scott & Susan Orr Family Endowed Chair in Medical Humanities & Christian Faith**. This generous gift supports teaching, mentorship, and innovative research in the Medical Humanities Program.

Faculty and students enjoyed a day of reflection, camaraderie, and personal growth at the **Annual Medical Humanities Retreat** in January. This year's retreat was facilitated by our partners at CCHF (Christian Community Health Fellowship).

Speaking of CCHF, the Medical Humanities Program was able to send faculty and students to the **2024 CCHF Conference** in Covington, KY in March.

Dr. Stephen Post, PhD, Director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics at the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University, presented the Annual DeBakey Lecture in Medical Humanities and Bioethics in April.

...and much more!

With healthcare in heart and medicine in mind,

**The Medical Humanities Program
at Baylor University**



Medical Humanities



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WELCOME NEW MH FACULTY - EMILIE CUNNINGHAM, PhD, MPH!

This spring we welcomed our new faculty member, Dr. Emilie Cunningham. We asked her to tell us about herself and her background and here is what she had to say.



I had a pretty fantastic childhood in Houston, roller skating on my cul de sac, learning violin as a Frostwood Fiddler, and tape-recording Kasey Kasem's Top 40 countdowns on Sunday mornings – a true 80s kid. In high school, my youth leader, Amy DeBusk Gillespie, was my idol – the funniest woman I had ever met who taught me how to fake trip and snort spaghetti through my nose. She was an enthusiastic Baylor Bear and extremely influential on my coming to Baylor as an undergraduate. I often say I would not change a day of my college years. Yes, I had challenges, but I really did have a perfect college experience, so I have always felt grateful to what Baylor afforded me.

It was not until the births of my three sons that attuned me to the issues surrounding maternal health, both as a consumer myself and as an advocate for other families. I became a Certified Childbirth Educator as simply a place to start. My personal breastfeeding journey was initially very challenging, so I became a Certified Lactation Counselor to ensure my story did not happen to other women. (Alas, it often does.) The theme of my professional journey is that *I just kept moving forward*, following the insatiable interest to know more.

One February day, my family was walking down by the Brazos River, and I ran into an acquaintance. I said, "What are you up to these days?" and she told me about the Baylor Master of Public Health program, which also allowed her to teach undergraduate health classes. Within one week of that chance meeting, I had taken the GRE and submitted my application to graduate school. After earning my MPH, I continued pursuing a PhD, rationalizing that I was constantly reading maternal health journal articles anyway, so I might as well get the credentials, too. I worked at Providence Hospital doing inpatient lactation support and childbirth education while I completed my dissertation. That study explored the demographic characteristics of low-risk women who experience a cesarean delivery. I concluded that having Medicaid insurance status was associated with a greater likelihood of an earlier decision to delivery via cesarean in the absence of any other complications for mother or baby.

The data is too abundant about the reality of maternal inequities. I cannot exist in the world of maternal health and not prioritize this work. I am also particularly interested in the medicalization of childbirth, and the impact of fear on decision-making. Many families are overcome by the fear of birth, which can inhibit their ability to become engaged and have preferences. Families often abdicate control, thinking that they have no expertise to add to their situations. This is not true. I love showing families ways they can *partner* with their health care team to optimize the transition to parenthood, whatever that looks like for them.

My husband Wes is literally the funniest person I have ever met and we really have fun together. I have a son at University of St. Andrews in Scotland, and freshman and junior sons at Rapoport Academy High School. All my family runs, but I do not enjoy running. I begrudgingly lift five-pound weights to stave off osteoporosis and admit to working on my dance fitness for the last 15 years. I love to puzzle (jigsaw, crossword, word find, logic) but have a hard time justifying the time that yields no productive value. I love to read about the history of birth and midwifery, as well as the occasional dishy celebrity biography every now and then. I suppose I spend a lot of time "piddling" – undefined loops around the house where I put that thing here and another thing there. I don't know where my time goes.

Teaching is my first love and being a part of the Medical Humanities Program faculty is truly my dream job. There is an atmosphere of joy that emanates from both colleagues and students that makes me show up for work every day with a posture of "how can I be helpful?"

DR. BILL HOY RETIRES

After 12 years as a Clinical Professor of Medical Humanities at Baylor, Dr. Bill Hoy has retired. Dr. Hoy came to Baylor in the spring of 2012 as an adjunct professor teaching the precursor to his popular course, End of Life Care & Bereavement. He then became full time, teaching that course and Christian Spirituality & Healthcare and went on to providing oversight to the MH curriculum, setting the schedule, and mentoring students and adjuncts.



Thank you, Dr. Hoy, for leaving an indelible mark on our institution and the people you've helped along the way.

Before coming to Baylor, Dr. Hoy was a pastor in southern California from 1982 to 1995. He then directed the bereavement program and oversaw the psychosocial team for Pathways Hospice from 1995 to 2012. In those days, Pathways had the largest community bereavement program in the state providing care to between 500 and 1,000 bereaved adults, teens, and children every year. About 40% of patients had suffered a loved one's violent death. During the first part of that era, he returned to graduate school for his doctorate in pastoral psychology. His dissertation developed and tested a training model for the continuing education of parish clergy in end-of-life care and bereavement.

Dr. Hoy has more than 35 years of care for the dying and bereaved and is widely regarded as an authority on the role of social support in death, dying and grief.

His experience includes more than 20 years leading bereavement and pastoral care programs in hospice care. Though primarily a bedside clinician, Dr. Hoy has authored more than 125 articles and book chapters as well as six books.

Dr. Hoy and his wife, Debbie (Baylor, 1977), make their home in Crawford, Texas and have welcomed dozens of Medical Humanities students into their ranch home for dinner and fellowship over the years. They are parents to two adult children, a super son-in-law, and grandparents to two delightful grandchildren with another on the way.



Dr. Hoy receives the 2024 Medical Humanities Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding and meritorious contributions to the field and his dedicated work to Baylor and his students.

“I consider my time in MH to have been among the highlights of my career. The opportunity to mentor men and women--several of whom are now practicing physicians and other health care professionals-- is a rare treat afforded by our small class sizes and clinically informed faculty. Though I have continued to conduct research and to publish (four IRB-approved studies and three books by Routledge plus a plethora of journal articles and book chapters) during my Baylor years, without a doubt it is the interaction with students that has been the highlight.”

-Dr. Bill Hoy

Bill Hoy Retirement Reception on April 25, 2024



Professor David Stamile, MDiv, Reflects on Dr. Hoy's Mentorship



“I am honored to call Bill Hoy a friend and mentor for more than a decade. I stand on Bill's shoulders every day in both the classroom and at the bedside. Through his guidance, I learned to navigate the dark waters of spiritual care in the midst of death, dying and bereavement. Beyond instructing me on the intricacies of providing spiritual and emotional support to those facing mortality, they also equipped me with the tools to effectively teach college students about navigating these profound moments. Bill's mentorship was a rich blend of practical wisdom and scholarly insight, honing not only my ability to offer compassionate care but also my capacity to educate and guide others through these complex and transformative experiences. Through his guidance, I learned to bridge the gap between theory and practice, preparing me to both accompany individuals in their darkest hours and empower future generations to do the same.” -David Stamile



2024 RETREAT-TREASURES OF THE KINGDOM



The 2024 Baylor Medical Humanities Retreat featured Christian Community Health Fellowship physicians serving in Dallas and preparing for missions overseas. This year's retreat asked the questions: What does it mean to be treasured by God? How can we share in the treasures of His Kingdom? Students, faculty, and CCHF physicians connected with thoughtful discussions, camaraderie, and personal growth. Here is what some of our students had to say:

"I really enjoyed the community that the retreat fostered for me."

"The retreat felt very engaging and personal. I really enjoyed meeting the people who practice medicine and hearing their stories."

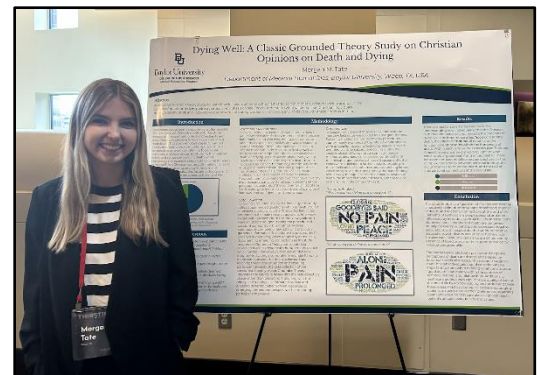
"All the people involved were intent on listening and giving meaningful advice."

2024 CCHF Conference

By Morgan Tate

Attending the 2024 CCHF Conference was such an amazing experience. What stood out to me while attending this conference was the radical and profound manifestation of the Christian faith in the practice of healthcare that CCHF holds. The community of believers at CCHF was one that cared deeply for the dignity, value, and worth of each and every human, especially in the context of God's command for us to care for the vulnerable and impoverished.

I also had the wonderful opportunity to present my research titled "Dying Well: A Grounded Theory Study on Christian Opinions on Death and Dying" while at the conference. I was surprised and excited that physicians, residents, and other attendees alike were so eager to hear about my research and its applications for the field healthcare.



Morgan Tate with her research:
"Dying Well: A Grounded Theory Study on Christian Opinions on Death and Dying"

The CCHF community is a really special group of people that are eager to invest in growing, strengthening, and inspiring Christians working in the field of healthcare. It was an inspiring experience to see such a strong and intentional fellowship of Christian healthcare professionals working in meaningful ways to preach and heal in their communities.

DR. STEPHEN POST DELIVERS THE ANNUAL DEBAKEY LECTURE IN MEDICAL HUMANITIES AND BIOETHICS

“DIGNITY FOR DEEPLY FORGETFUL PEOPLE”



Dr. Stephen Post

How do we approach a "deeply forgetful" loved one so as to notice and affirm their continuing self-identity? For three decades, Stephen G. Post, PhD has worked around the world encouraging caregivers to become more aware of—and find renewed hope in—surprising expressions of selfhood despite the challenges of cognitive decline. . He is the founding director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at the Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University. A leader in medicine, research and religion, Dr. Post continues to travel the globe speaking about memory issues and the transformative benefits of kindness, volunteering, spirituality, forgiveness, and purpose.

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Faculty and students enjoyed chatting with Dr. Post during his visit.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2024 DeBAKEY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Top Row: Lawrence Edmond, Katrina Nguyen, Ruth Mercer, Isabelle Russo, Emma Nicell, Carlos Alvarado-Richter.

Bottom Row: Jessica James, Emma Fraga, Hannah Yi, Mallory Abbott, Aron Basurto, Abigail Hills, Madilyn Johnson.

Not pictured: Nia Spilotro

\$2 MILLION GIFT FROM SCOTT AND SUSAN ORR ESTABLISHES MEDICAL HUMANITIES CHAIR



A \$2 million gift from Scott and Susan Orr of The Woodlands, Texas establishes the Scott & Susan Orr Family Endowed Chair in Medical Humanities & Christian Faith to support teaching, mentorship, and innovative research in the Medical Humanities Program. The Scott & Susan Orr Family Endowed Chair in Medical Humanities & Christian Faith is the second endowed chair established within the Medical Humanities Program since 2020.

The Orr Family Chair will be housed within the Medical Humanities Program, one of the few of its kind in the country for students who aspire to careers in healthcare and other affiliated professions. The program is intended to pair foundational science curriculum with courses in history, literature, Christian philosophy, and other disciplines to inspire deep discussion and critical thinking, providing a holistic, interdisciplinary approach for many pre-health students. The Orr Family Chair will support the program's Christian identity by fostering an appreciation with students of the importance of the doctor-patient relationship, the spiritual and emotional dimensions of disease and a heightened awareness of the human experience of illness.

The Orrs' motivation for this gift is to recruit and retain faculty leaders who will continue the program's rich tradition of intentional mentorship, fostering deep discussions and inspiring prospective physicians, nurses, healthcare administrators and other allied healthcare professionals through their teaching on the history, impact, and role of the Christian faith in healthcare delivery and administration.

“The Medical Humanities Program at Baylor is very special to our family, and we’re thrilled to be able to support the program in this enduring way with our gift. We have the utmost confidence in Dr. Barron as she leads and grows the program and are very excited to see the program’s impact on students in all areas of healthcare.”

-Scott Orr

“Healthcare and faith touch and impact us all, and with this gift we hope that students for years to come will have the opportunity to use what they’ve learned through the program to make a practical impact on the lives of patients in need of healthcare.”

-Susan Orr

ORR FAMILY LEGACY OF SUPPORT

Scott and Susan Orr and their family have a deep history in medicine and healthcare, and they are committed followers of Jesus Christ. With this gift, Scott and Susan hope to bring these two passions together to benefit future generations at Baylor.

Scott and Susan both attended the University of Puget Sound and were married in 1986. Scott went on to obtain a *juris doctor* at Western State University College of Law. Scott spent his career in the healthcare field, initially working for Medical Evaluation Specialists, becoming its president and general counsel, and then Veterans Evaluation Specialists, as its senior vice president and general counsel. Scott and Susan raised their children, Andrew and Jennifer, in El Dorado Hills, California, and when Andrew was in 11th grade, he accompanied Scott on a business trip to Dallas, following which they drove down to Waco to tour Baylor. Andrew decided on the spot that Baylor was where he wanted to attend college, and Jennifer ended up following him two years later. Scott and Susan visited Andrew and Jennifer often over the course of their time at Baylor, and they became connected to the Waco community and the Medical Humanities Program, initially through founding director Michael Attas, M.D., and later through current program director, Dr. Lauren Barron. They were captivated by Dr. Barron's passion for mentoring students and her strong belief in the role of faith in healthcare.

Following their time at Baylor, Scott and Susan's children both have gone on to careers in the healthcare field. Andrew is the vice president of operations at Health by Design. While at Baylor, Andrew was a member of the Medical Service Organization, American Medical Student Association, Future Healthcare Executives and Alpha Lambda Delta honor society. Andrew and his wife, Callie, are active in their church and community in Boerne, Texas, and they recently welcomed their first child, a son, Rowan MacGregor, to their family. Jennifer Bondaruk is a registered nurse, working in both the ED and ICU, and is completing a master's degree in nursing. While at Baylor, Jennifer was a member of the National Student Nurses Association, Medical Services Organization and the Baylor Student Nurses Association. Jennifer and Mark have a daughter, Maya James, and they enjoy serving their community in Flagstaff, Arizona.

Scott and Susan are retired and enjoy spending time traveling and visiting their family.



UNIVERSITY SCHOLAR WINS BAYLOR'S UNPRECEDENTED FOURTH CONSECUTIVE CHURCHILL SCHOLARSHIP



Alagu Subramanian, B.A. '23, who studied at Baylor as a University Scholar with concentrations in biology, medical humanities, and business administration, is among 16 recipients of the prestigious and highly selective Churchill Scholarship in science, mathematics, and engineering.

Alagu Subramanian is Baylor's fourth consecutive Churchill Scholar, an unprecedented success given the University has been nominating institution for only four years.

"Because the standards are so very high and the number of awards is so very few, we consider the Churchill the preeminent award available to undergraduates in STEM," said Andrew P. Hogue, Ph.D., associate dean for engaged learning at Baylor. "That Baylor has done something unprecedented in the history of the award by winning our fourth in a row is simply astonishing – a testament to our brilliant students, dedicated science faculty and vibrant undergraduate research enterprise. Alagu undoubtedly deserves his place in the Baylor-to-Cambridge pipeline."

As part of his medical humanities concentration at Baylor, Alagu also worked closely with Bill Hoy, D.Min., clinical professor of medical humanities, and presented a scholarly paper of novel grief models at the peer-reviewed international conference of the Association for Death Education and Counseling (ADEC).

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR SPRING 2024 GRADUATES

Sydney Barragan
Rheanna Blair
Marie Boone
Polly Bowman
Jessica Buron
Brenna Colihan
Addison Cummings
Avery Dickie
Adanze Ekwem

Jacqueline Farolan
Wyatt Fulbright
Diana Gillespie
Rachel Hulsey
Kaitlyn James
Annalisa Keating
Noor Khader
Mikaela Kim
Avery Lallande

Ava Leggett
Andrew Littlefield
Kayleigh Mann
Marigrace McDowell
Mackenna McGraw
Emma Joy Moore
Gabrielle Mullenax
Macy Narvid

Lydia Nicholas
Katelyn Patterson
Kemea Perry
Erin Piddock
Austyn Quiggle
Elena Santana Tello
Sarah Stellburg
Olivia Stephan
Emilie Stuckey

Aiden Sutton
Braeden Swilley
Nathaniel Takle
Morgan Tate
Jade Timmons
Suzanne Wandrei
Lily Weir
Alexa White

REFLECTIONS FROM MEDICAL HUMANITIES SENIORS

How has your experience in the Medical Humanities program shaped your career plans?

“I would not be pursuing my intended career path if it weren’t for the Medical Humanities Program. I have changed my mind several times over the last four years as I have striven to determine my career goals and vocation. For a long time, I struggled to proceed because I had a wide variety of interest that spanned multiple disciplines. However, after the Introduction to Medical Ethics course introduced me to the world of Bioethics, I quickly realized I was wrong. Bioethics, like Medical Humanities, encapsulates a vast array of disciplines and promotes collaboration among them – religion, philosophy, medicine, sociology, psychology, healthcare, etc. I now hope to become a Clinical Ethicist and Bioethics Professor and will be a Bioethics and Health Humanities PhD student at the University of Texas Medical Branch in the Fall.”



Mikaela Kim,
Medical Humanities senior

What has been your favorite medical humanities course and why?



Brenna Colihan,
Medical Humanities

“My favorite MH class has definitely been Supervised Clinical Medicine. I am not the traditional student seen in this course, because I am not pre-health, but being chronically ill has meant way too much time spent in doctors’ offices anyway. I loved getting the background perspective into the life of a medical professional and getting to explore so many new fields! Although it is coded as a religion class, I would also HIGHLY recommend Dr. Stahl’s Disability Ethics class. Even as a disability nerd, I am always learning new things and having new ideas about disability and what it means for us as people!”

What do you wish you had known as a freshman?

“You don’t have to have everything figured out from day one. Enjoy your time and open up your mind to the possibilities of the world that you have never discovered.

Let your passions drive you and help them define your path rather than trying to force yourself to be passionate about what you think should be your path.”



COURSE SPOTLIGHT

THE STORY BEHIND MEDICINE, MISSIONS & THE GOSPEL



Dr. Terry Lassiter graduated from Baylor College of Dentistry in 1987 and holds both a Bachelor of Science from Baylor University and a Master of Arts in Global Leadership from Dallas Baptist University. As a Baylor student and Pre-Dental/Biology major, Dr. Lassiter says that he strongly sensed that God's purpose in his life was to become a medical missionary overseas. He read books on medical missions and sought out missionaries that could assist him in his preparation. Later, he met his wife, also a Baylor alum with the same passion of becoming a medical missionary. Together, they began a 26-year journey serving the poor in the Caribbean and the Amazon. They began teaching and training other new missionaries to pass on what they had learned.

In 2017, Dr. Lassiter and his wife returned to Waco where he began his own dental practice, Alpha Omega Dental Associates. He learned about our program through Dr. Barron and Dr. Hoy, and they asked him to consider teaching a course on medical missions. He states, "I must say, this request to teach at my alma mater was exciting beyond words. The course developed and was entitled 'Medical Missions and the Gospel.'" His personal guideline in formulating the course was the question, "What do I wish I had known about medical missions when I was a student?"

The course began in the Spring 2020 semester with 18 students to teach them of the foundational concepts of medical missions from a Christian & Biblical perspective. In preparing for the course, Dr. Lassiter reflected upon what he desired most as a Baylor student: hearing from those who were actual practitioners. He states, "Once invited, outstanding missionaries and speakers jumped at the opportunity to speak in the unique and special academic setting of the Baylor Medical Humanities Department. These included a Baylor graduate and single female surgeon who started a state-of-the-art missions hospital in India 40 years ago; another Baylor graduate and cardio thoracic surgeon who worked in a remote war-torn part of the Middle East; an MD who started a large medical clinic to the poor in west Memphis, Tennessee, among others." Student Jada Rosa says that God working even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic has become clear to her through this course. "We learned the history of Christian missions and how it started with plagues and pandemics centuries ago." She has enjoyed hearing how Christians have stepped up in times of uncertainty and speaking with several missionaries currently working around the world. She "learned that their missions, while serving different populations, all follow the same Luke 10 and Matthew 28 calling."

In his experience and discussions with students major in health care fields, Dr. Lassiter has noticed "a strong desire to make a difference in the world" rather than materialistic motivations. He says that "The Baylor Medical Humanities program is uniquely positioned in American academia to meld this inspiring desire with practical training, thus graduating students who will indeed make an effective difference in the places they ultimately practice and serve."

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