

Telling About Learning: How Narrative Medicine Practices and Methodology Can Enhance the Practice of Advising

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The focus of the talk is to create a conversation about how the "close reading" methods used in the growing interdisciplinary field of Narrative Medicine might assist academic advisors in building stronger, more empathetic relationships with their advisees, while also helping their advisees to re-imagine their relationship to, and take ownership of, their education.

Narrative Medicine is a relatively new interdisciplinary field, founded by [Dr. Rita Charon](#) of Columbia University, in which the close reading of literature, film, and other art forms, and the practice of writing in response to such works, is used to enhance one's ability to relate emotionally and intellectually to people who are different from ourselves, in all the ways one can imagine and experience difference (race, ethnicity, nationality, religious affiliation, sexual identity, gender, socio-economic status, educational attainment, and health status).

The practice of Narrative Medicine, as theorized by Charon, and taught at the [MS program](#) in Narrative Medicine at Columbia, is grounded in an understanding that our ability to relate to those who are different from ourselves is key to promoting the physical and mental health of individuals and communities, as well as promoting social justice and healing among individuals and communities.

In this session, you will be invited to consider the ways that the methods and goals of Narrative Medicine might be used to help advisors and students develop what Charon calls "deep and accurate" attentiveness to the "accounts of self" found in the personal stories and anecdotes our students tell about their experiences inside and outside the classroom, as well as in works of literature, film, and visual art dramatizing what it is like to be a student.

Ultimately, we will discuss how such attentiveness to, and understanding of, our advisees' sense of self as students and people can help us better support and advise our students.

In preparation, you are invited to read a brief excerpt from an article by Charon, as well as the poem "[Theme for English B](#)" by Langston Hughes and the personal essay "The Education of a Storyteller" by Toni Cade Bambara.