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UNH Global

Susan Curry

Senior Lecturer, Classics, Humanities, & Italian Studies (COLA) ~ United Kingdom

Thanks in part to the generous support of a Faculty International Development Grant from the University of New Hampshire's Global Education Center, I was able to spend six weeks in October and November 2018 in London and as an Academic Visitor in the Faculty of Classics at Oxford University. My main objectives were to use this time abroad and the resources of London and Oxford to develop a deeper understanding of the field of Medical and Health Humanities and to acquire the knowledge and resources necessary for the creation of three courses in Medical Humanities that draw on my own field of Classics.

This time abroad was probably the most productive six weeks I have ever spent as a scholar. It does not make for a very action-packed narrative, but I especially loved to spend long days in the Greek section of the Lower Reading Room of the Bodleian Library where I researched the different ways British universities have included the Medical Humanities in their programs of study and took advantage of the Bodleian's exceptional collection of databases to gather materials for the development of a bibliography in Medical Humanities and for my own course ideas. I now have most of the resources I need to develop three courses in Medical Humanities and Classics, for which I



Another Day at the Bodleian Library, Oxford

plan to create syllabi over the new few months. : “From Cradle to Grave: Health, Sickness, and Survival in the Ancient World,” “Ancient Souls/Modern Minds: A History of the Psyche,” and “Death and the Afterlife in Greece and Rome.” In addition, I was able to begin brainstorming for a course on “Narratives of Illness: Patients and Healers in Literature” and for ways to add a Medical Humanities component to existing courses in the Classics program, for example, “Ecology and Empire,” “Sex and Desire,” “Happiness,” and “Ancient



A Lapith with a Centaur in a Headlock in the British Museum

Minds” course idea.

Visits to the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford with its excellent Egyptian and Greco-Roman artifacts also significantly added to my future and existing course development ideas, but in Oxford I was also able to attend lectures that touched on or were sponsored by their own Medical Humanities project, for example, “Psychoanalysis and Art” and “Science and the Mutual Improvement Society.” I also took advantage of this time in Oxford to reach out to some of my colleagues at UNH who have interests in the Medical and Health Humanities with whom I plan to meet and discuss programming possibilities, and I was able to set up a meeting with the people in charge of Medical Humanities at Oxford. Philip Bullock, the director of the Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH) and Lydia Matthews, the contact for TORCH’s Medical Humanities project, were kind enough to discuss TORCH and the place Medical Humanities occupies within this greater Humanities center.

Stage.”

While in London, I also spent a couple of days in the British Museum, particularly among the Egyptian artifacts with a view to enhancing my “Death and the Afterlife” course idea. Of course, my British Museum visits also meant a chance to spend time with the Parthenon sculptures and the Greek and Roman collections, which gave me ideas for revising some of my existing courses and for my own research. In London, too, I visited the Freud Museum, again, with a view to developing my “Ancient Souls/Modern

Through this meeting, I also became acquainted with some cutting-edge research in the Medical Humanities, such as social prescribing, which I had not yet encountered. I was also enlightened as to the private and public funding sources on which TORCH's researchers depend and extended my vision of Medical Humanities beyond the classroom into the realms of research and public



Passing by Merton College on my morning commute

programming. A further outcome of this meeting was an idea to re-work our

department's "Ancient Stage" course in such a way as to bring health and pre-med students into the class alongside students from other disciplines with a view to preparing scenes from Sophocles' oeuvre that would then be performed at different health-related public venues (my own take on using Classics in social prescribing as well as building relationships between colleges and between the university and the community).

On the whole, I feel that I have laid the groundwork for creating a Medical and Health Humanities track within my department's existing Humanities program. I have also developed several ways that I can personally contribute to the program and made connections within UNH and at Oxford that would help in the further development of courses and other programming in Medical and Health Humanities at UNH and the broader community.

But, that is not all! While at Oxford, I also attended lectures unrelated to Medical Humanities, but relevant to my other teaching and research interests, including an excellent one-day conference on "The Future of the Humanities," with a keynote lecture from renowned critic Terry Eagleton, which was exceptional. I corrected proofs of an article on Seneca and worked on a new one on Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. I completed a long overdue book review and was also able to take advantage of the Bodleian's resources to gather materials for a few other articles I have planned. Most excitingly, I was able to follow up on a footnote and discovered a short piece on veterinary medicine in ancient Greek that I did not know existed and a copy of which was available in the Bodleian. I cannot wait to translate and study it.



A visit to the Roman Baths at Bath

artifacts.

I am very grateful to the Global Education Center for the Faculty International Development Grant and to COLA for the Pedagogical Development Leave, which allowed me to go abroad when Oxford was in session, for contributing their support to my time in London and Oxford. It is a cliché, I know, but the chance to spend several weeks working in and soaking up Oxford was really a long-held dream come true.

Time in Oxford within its beautiful buildings and long history is an education in itself. I will not soon forget my visit to the Botanical Gardens and its medicinal plants collection, conversations with scholars at lectures, lunch with my sponsor at Merton College, or my own “field trips” to Bath to see the Roman baths that I so often discuss in my classes but had never seen, and to Cirencester in the Cotswolds, formerly the ancient Roman town of Corinium with its small amphitheater and other Roman

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