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Lessons Learned from Team Teaching Disease and Disability

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It's possible for an English instructor to teach a class on the literature of illness and disability by herself. It's also likely that a Chemistry professor could teach a compelling course on Alzheimer's disease, Down syndrome, and depression. So, what did they – and their students – gain when they taught the class together? This roundtable discussion will provide an overview of the fall 2018 course, "Disease and Disability: The Science and the Stories." The course sought to give voice to the human condition of chronic disease and disability through the examination of narrative and science. Through study of both the literature and science of disability and chronic disease, the course helped students establish a foundation of the biological origins of these specific medical conditions, and a sense of how those origins contribute to our understanding and perception of those illnesses and disabilities. The course created a dialogue with students and instructors, establishing the connections between various chronic diseases and disability, the biological basis of these conditions, and the ability to incorporate this into original works of creative writing. Through reading, researching, and writing about disability, students, hopefully, developed a sense of empathy for those living with an illness or disability. This roundtable discussion will feature teaching practices, sample lesson plans, and excerpts from student work. This roundtable will also devote time to discussion of team teaching, more generally: What did we do well? What could we have done better? What should we have thought about? As more instructors prepare to offer team-taught, interdisciplinary courses, this roundtable will address questions about logistics, policies, and planning between two professors.

Learning Outcome(s): Attendees will leave with an understanding of the medical humanities and its value to students, as well as practical advice on team teaching.