

Medical Ethics and Humanities in Utah

Winter 2020

Discussions of the Impact of Racial Resentment on Health and Politics with Jonathan M. Metzl, MD, PhD

By Darian Hackney, 2020-21 PMEH Fellow



Jonathan M. Metzl, MD, PhD

Mental health, political polarization, race, and firearms are currently at the forefront of discussions among various disciplines throughout the United States. Jonathan M. Metzl, MD, PhD discussed the intricate interrelation of these topics in a series of three virtual presentations as the 2020 Max & Sara Cowan Memorial Speaker and Priscilla M. Mayden Endowed Lecturer, a collaborative effort between the Program in Medical Ethics and Humanities and the Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library.

Jonathan M. Metzl, is the Frederick B. Rentschler II Professor of Sociology and Psychiatry and the director of the Department of Medicine, Health, and Society, at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. For **Evening Ethics** on September 30, 2020, Dr. Metzl presented "Mental Illness, Mass Shootings, and the Politics of US Firearms," facilitating enlightening discussion surrounding his contention that recurrent citation of mental illness as the cause of mass shootings should be challenged. Metzl discussed mental illness characteristics, such as lowered mood, isolation, and decreased motivation, and argued that individuals who exhibit these characteristics are unlikely to be perpetrators of mass shootings. Dr. Metzl indicated in this presentation and in his writings that increased firearm research would be beneficial, not just in the context of mass shootings, but more broadly in connection with whiteness as an identity and in research regarding elevated suicide rates among white males in areas with fewer regulations on firearm ownership.

In the **Internal Medicine Grand Rounds** on October 1, 2020, Metzl explored the relationship between the diagnosis of schizophrenia and race, based on research from his book, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*. He delineated the history of schizophrenia prior to the 1960s and its initial association with white women and non-violent petty criminals to its eventual shift in the late 1960s to apply disproportionately to African American men connected to the civil rights movement. The 1960s also saw an important shift in perception toward schizophrenics where clinicians began describing those with schizophrenia as threatening to themselves and others rather than simply to themselves, as previously had been understood.

In the **Public Lectureship** held on October 2, 2020, Dr. Metzl presented "Dying of Whiteness: The Pandemic and the Politics of Racial Resentment." In this presentation, he discussed the application of many topics discussed in his book, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America's Heartland*, relate to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Metzl's book, *Dying of Whiteness*, is divided into three

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Evening Ethics Discussions



These informal, multidisciplinary discussions about current issues in medical ethics take place approximately bi-monthly or as ethical issues arise. A PMEH member facilitates discussion. Guided by the topic, we invite people with relevant expertise and experience and informed opinions to join us. Generally about 15-60 people from a variety of disciplines, including healthcare, public policy, philosophy, law, and business attend. We distribute short, timely articles from the nation's most thoughtful newspapers, journals, and magazines to the group in advance of our discussions. CME is offered.

"Slow Medicine, Ethics, and the Case of Mrs. C."

Facilitated by
Victoria Sweet, MD,
2020 Medical Humanities
Lecturer

**Wednesday,
November 18, 2020**

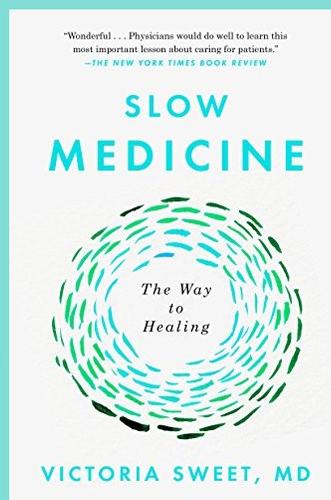
5:30-7pm

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://utah.zoom.us/
j/97006884871](https://utah.zoom.us/j/97006884871)

Passcode: 335652

Victoria Sweet, MD, agreed to work at Laguna Honda Hospital in San Francisco for two months but stayed twenty years. During that time, she completed a master's and doctoral degrees in the history of medicine, which, coupled with her patient care experiences, led her to develop a radical approach to medicine. "[U]nderneath our scientific modern medicine was an earlier way of understanding the body," she discovered: not corporate "fast medicine" where the body is viewed as a machine and the physician, a technological mechanic, but "slow medicine" where the doctor is more akin to a gardener, "stepping back and seeing the patient in the context of his environment." This, Sweet argues, is the way to healing.

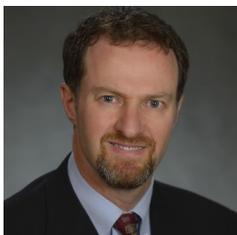


For Background Readings from Victoria Sweet, please contact linda.carlee@hsc.utah.edu

"Wellness Check: a Community Discussion of the Relationship Between the Hospital and the Police"

Coming in January! Watch for more information closer to 2021!

Keep the Date for Upcoming David Green Memorial Speakership

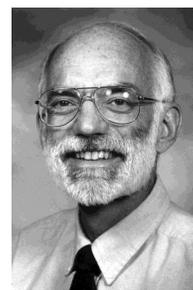


Steven Joffe, MD

Steven Joffe, MD, will be our 2020-21 David Green Memorial Speaker. Originally planning to visit Utah in December, the **new dates** for his Pediatric Grand Rounds and Evening Ethics are **April 28-29, 2021**.

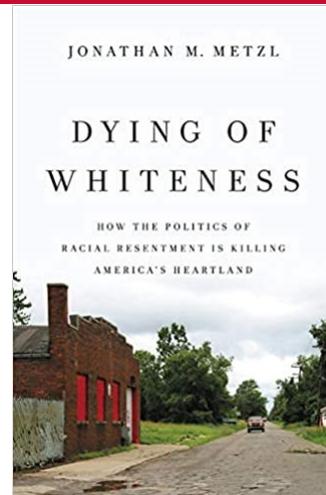
The David Green Memorial Lectureship honors David Green, MD, pediatrician, who, in 1989, was a founding member of the Department of Internal Medicine's Division of Medical Ethics, now known as Internal Medicine's Program in Medical Ethics and Humanities in the Division of General Internal Medicine. From 1983 through 1997, David was a faculty member in the Department of Pediatrics.

David was Director of Adolescent Medicine in the Division of General Pediatrics. At the University Hospital, he developed the Adolescent Unit and at the time of his death was Co-Medical Director of the hospital's Adolescent/Pediatric/Community Medicine Unit. For 17 years, David was Medical Director of the Utah State Development Center. He also was the course director and principal architect of the medical ethics course, required for many years, for fourth-year medical students, and he chaired the University Hospital Ethics Committee from 1985 until his death. David Green was known as a "skilled consultant and teacher of medical ethics, who, with sensitivity and insight, appreciated the complexity of individual cases. His memory lives on with us as we continue the important work to which he so faithfully dedicated himself.



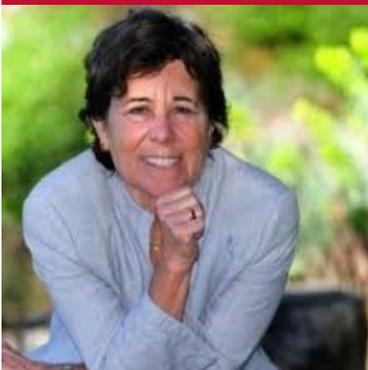
David Green, MD

sections; the first discusses firearms in Missouri, the second, healthcare in Tennessee, and the third, education in Kansas. Dr. Metzler examines each of these topics, their relationship to racial resentment, and uniquely explores the consequences of whiteness. In this lecture, he elaborated on how these central themes in his book relate to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Metzler stated, "whiteness is not just an identity, but also a place in a social hierarchy..." He focused primarily on health and healthcare topics, sharing research from his book about focus groups in Tennessee. For example, Dr. Metzler asked African American men, "who benefits from healthcare reform?" Responses included generous outlooks indicating that that society as a whole benefits from expanded healthcare coverage. Contrastingly, Dr. Metzler interviewed white men, typically suffering from chronic illnesses themselves. Their responses followed a narrative opposing healthcare expansion because despite helping individuals like themselves, it meant that they would be supporting groups that they considered "undeserving."



Dr. Metzler noted that these men were not just dying of illness but also of a particular ideology that furthers the idea that minorities are attempting to usurp resources at the expense of white Americans. This ideology is shrouded in racism but disproportionately affects low and middle-income white Americans when viewed in the aggregate. Dr. Metzler noted that blocking Medicaid expansion in Tennessee cost each white person in the state five weeks of life, using this point to illustrate that we are all connected, and national systems should work for everyone. When asked by audience members about the COVID-19 pandemic and its relationship to whiteness as an identity, Dr. Metzler noted that moments of crisis are cultural moments that should aim to correct inequities and lay new groundwork for improved systems.

2020 Medical Humanities Lectureship with Victoria Sweet, MD



Victoria Sweet, MD

The Program in Medical Ethics and Humanities, Department of History, Health Sciences Resiliency Center, College of Humanities, College of Health, and Tanner Humanities Center at the University of Utah collaboratively invite you to events with our 2020 Medical Humanities Speaker, Victoria Sweet, MD.

Victoria Sweet, MD, is an associate clinical professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. She is the award-winning author of *God's Hotel: A Doctor, a Hospital, and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of Medicine* and *Slow Medicine: The Way to Healing*. In these two books, Sweet argues for a new approach to medical care that takes into account valuable lessons learned from pre-modern practices. Sweet advocates for care based on *viriditas*, Hildegard of Bingen's concept of the healing power of nature, onto which she grafts respect for modern medicine through engaging stories drawn from her own medical training.

There will be two opportunities to hear Victoria Sweet:

"Slow Medicine, Ethics, and the Case of Mrs. C."

Evening Ethics Discussion: Wednesday, **November 18, 2020, 5:30-7:00 pm**

<https://utah.zoom.us/j/97006884871> Passcode: 335652

CME event code: 323019 (call in # (801) 478-5852)

For background reading from Dr. Sweet for this session, contact linda.carrlee@hsc.utah.edu

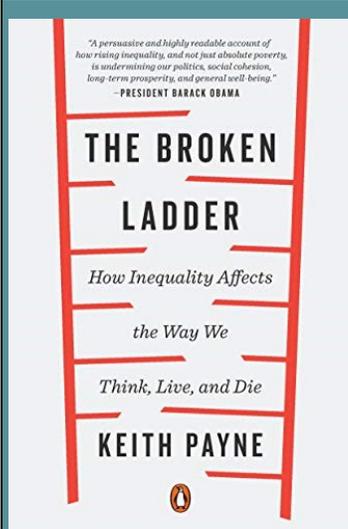
"Hildegard of Bingen: Medieval Lessons for Modern Medicine"

Tanner Humanities Lecture: Thursday, **November 19, 2020, 9:00-10:00 am**

<https://utah.zoom.us/j/94962580638> Passcode: 130121

Physicians Literature and Medicine Discussion Group

Schedule of 2020 Readings can be found on our website



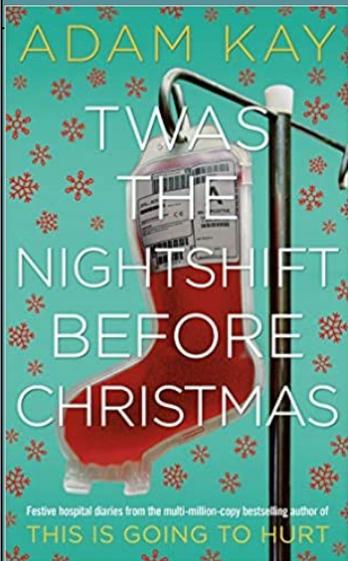
Wednesday, November 11, 2020

6:00-7:30pm, Facilitated by Mark Matheson, D Phil

zoom: <https://utah.zoom.us/j/97598744874> Password: 798988

The Broken Ladder: How Inequality Affects the Way We Think, Live, and Die,
by Keith Payne

We look forward to our discussion of Keith Payne's *The Broken Ladder: How Inequality Affects the Way We Think, Live, and Die*. Payne is a psychologist, and he's interested in both the material facts of inequality and its psychological consequences for people both up and down the social "ladder." In addition to considering the effects of actual poverty and wealth, he argues that "status"—our perception of our relative position in the social whole—is an important determinant of wellbeing. The sections of the book exploring health and medical care in the context of social inequality will be of interest to our group, and Payne also has much to say about politics, business, and race. This well-received book from 2018 should provide an abundance of provocative topics for conversation, and it's unquestionably relevant in the context of material inequality in the United States, which is both already precipitous and increasing. (A recent study revealed that the 55 richest Americans have as much wealth as the poorest 168 million.) We look forward to exploring this fundamental problem in our collective life.



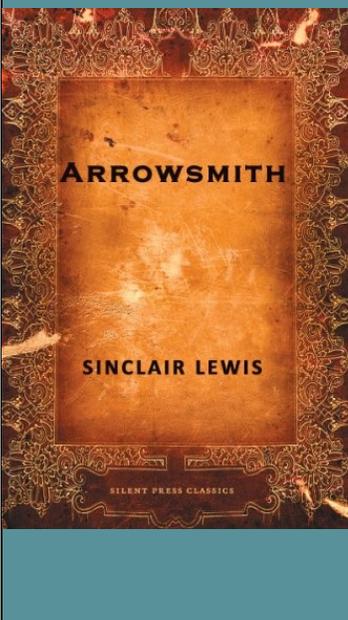
Wednesday, December 9, 2020

6:00-7:30pm, Facilitated by Jenny Cochrane, MA

zoom: <https://utah.zoom.us/j/96999909488> Password: 963487

Twas the Nightshift Before Christmas, by Adam Kay

Christmas Eve is a joyous, festive time spent relishing family, friends, or even alone time as everyone awaits the bells of Santa's sleigh. Unless you're one of millions of healthcare workers across the world for whom Christmas Eve is a shift unlike any other. In 'Twas the Night Shift Before Christmas, Adam Kay deep dives into his journals to give us a sense of what it's like being on the front lines of healthcare on one of the most emotional nights of the year—Christmas Eve. He recounts the joy of babies born, the heartbreak of lives lost—made somehow more painful amid cardstock stockings and rubber glove tree décor—and the insane shenanigans of the drunk and disorderly who find their way to the hospital with turkey bones stuck up their noses or baubles stuck up their backsides. Prepare to laugh and cry through a night shift you won't soon forget!



Wednesday, January 13, 2021

6:00-7:30pm, Facilitated by Susan Sample, PhD, MFA

zoom: <https://utah.zoom.us/j/96201470714> Password: 799252

Arrowsmith, by Sinclair Lewis

Martin Arrowsmith has for generations inspired readers. His tumultuous journey as a medical student, clinical practitioner, public health officer, and researcher captures conflicts many physicians experience: medicine vs. science, altruism vs. commerce, medical ethics vs. scientific fraud. Like many classics, however, Sinclair Lewis' 1925 Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *Arrowsmith*, can be read from multiple perspectives. Recently, critical attention has been drawn to the depiction of public health. As one physician-reviewer noted, "rather than seeming dated, public health aspects of the story can be viewed in the context of modern deadly viral infections and antibiotic resistant bacterial diseases." With COVID-19, *Arrowsmith* takes on new meaning. We'll begin our discussion with chapter 31 in which the protagonist, now working for a private research institute, is sent to a Caribbean island to study the effects of a serum he developed on the bubonic plague. The parallels are fascinating as well as uncanny.

Congratulations to Natalia Washington, PhD



Congratulations to Natalia Washington, PhD, for being a 2020-21 Tanner Humanities Center Fellow! She received the Virgil D. Aldrich Faculty Research Fellowship and will be working on her project, "Taxonomy is Taxidermy: Thinking Clearly about Diagnostic Kinds." Dr. Washington writes: "The project I will be working on this fall critically examines the nature of diagnostic categories in psychiatric medicine, the familiar labels like 'obsessive compulsive disorder' and 'generalized anxiety disorder' which can be found in the DSM. I will argue that, because these categories serve multiple roles in our social and epistemic environments-- 'major depressive disorder' for instance, does not just pick out an interesting neuropsychological condition, but points clinicians to appropriate therapeutic resources, and can provide self-understanding for patients--we should not expect a single taxonomy of diagnostic categories to best serve all purposes."

For some fun information about Natalia, see <https://thc.utah.edu/newsletter/august/fellow-facts.php>

PMEH Calendar of Events

<p>*The Physicians Literature and Medicine Discussion Group 6:00-7:30 pm (via Zoom)</p> <p>The Broken Ladder: How Inequality Affects the Way We Think, Live, and Die, by Keith Payne, PhD Facilitated by Mark Matheson, DPhil; zoom: https://utah.zoom.us/j/97598744874 Password: 798988</p> <p>Twas the Nightshift Before Christmas, by Adam Kay, Facilitated by Jenny Cochrane, MA; zoom: https://utah.zoom.us/j/96999909488 Password: 963487</p> <p>Arrowsmith, by Sinclair Lewis, Facilitated by Susan Sample, PhD, MFA; zoom: https://utah.zoom.us/j/96201470714 Password: 799252</p>	<p>Wed. November 11</p> <p>Wed. December 9</p> <p>Wed. January 13</p>
<p>*Evening Ethics (via Zoom)</p> <p>"Slow Medicine, Ethics, and the Case of Mrs. C." with Victoria Sweet, MD, 5:30-7:00 pm: zoom: https://utah.zoom.us/j/97006884871 Passcode: 335652</p> <p>"Wellness Check: a Community Discussion of the Relationship Between the Hospital and the Police," with Natalia Washington, PhD</p>	<p>Wed. November 18</p> <p>January 2021</p>
<p>Medical Humanities Tanner Lecture with Victoria Sweet, MD (via Zoom)</p> <p>"Hildegard of Bingen: Medieval Lessons for Modern Medicine," 9:00-10:00 am; zoom: https://utah.zoom.us/j/94962580638 Passcode: 130121</p>	<p>Thurs. November 19</p>
<p>Internal Medicine Ethics Resident Conferences 12:30-1:00 pm (via Zoom)</p> <p>"Medical Futility: What to Do When Patients Change Their Minds about Code Status," with Susan Sample, PhD, MFA & Timothy Fuller, MD</p> <p>"Impaired Health Professionals: What to do when colleagues need help," with Leslie Francis, PhD, JD & Rob Davies, PhD</p>	<p>Tues. November 10</p> <p>Tues. December 15</p>



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Program Members on the Road and In Print

Teneille Brown, Leslie Francis, and Jim Tabery have an opinion piece on categorical exclusion criteria in COVID-19 crisis standards of care in the American Journal of Bioethics (July 27, 2020), "[Embedding the Problems Doesn't Make Them Go Away.](#)"

Susan Sample's poem, "Remains", in the August 4, 2020 edition of JAMA can be found [here](#).

Peggy Battin presented "The Completed Life? Valerius Maximus' account of a woman of Ceia during the first-century Roman Empire" on September 3, 2020, at the opening conference of *Completed Life Initiative*, a new organization led by Columbia Bioethics Alum Sarah Kiskadden -Bechtel. **Peggy Battin** also presented "Do We Have the Right to Die?" at Generations in Salt Lake City on August 25, 2020. She will have an opinion piece in early November in the Salt Lake Tribune, "What About the Triaged Out?" about rationing in the COVID-19 pandemic.

On October 15-17, 2020, **Brent Kious, Peggy Battin**, and others participated in a panel on Medical Aid in Dying in psychiatric illness.

Susan Sample was an invited reader at Huntsman Cancer Institute's Remembrance Ceremony and led a virtual writing workshop for Women in Survivorship at the U South Jordan Health Center in October. She also presented with **Gretchen Case** a narrative and medicine workshop for graduate students in the genetic counseling program. In November, **Susan Sample** facilitated writing workshops for health sciences faculty and staff through the Wellness and Resiliency Center and for nursing staff at Huntsman Cancer Hospital, and in December, **Susan Sample** will be a panelist discussing research and writing experiences during the pandemic for Marriott Library faculty.