

# Fondren Fellows

**Project Title: Analysis of Medical Humanities Research Resources, Strategies and Tools at Fondren Library**



## **Brief Summary:**

This project explores under-researched materials related to health and medicine at Fondren Library, especially in the Woodson Research Center. The fellow would consult with librarians to identify medical humanities materials in the library's collections, then engage with medical humanities researchers (including students and faculty from outside Rice) to identify obstacles to accessing or using the materials (for example, lack of awareness, difficulty in finding items through searches, uncertainty in how materials relate to medical humanities, etc.). Lastly, the fellow would work with librarians to develop a library guide and strategies to increase visibility and usability of these resources.

## **Project Description:**

Research activity in medical humanities is rapidly ramping up, not only at Rice but internationally. Rice's Medical Humanities Research Institute is emerging as one of less than a handful of centers and institutes devoted to research in the field, and the number of students in medical humanities classes has steadily grown each year since the Minor in medical Humanities was established in 2016. Fondren Library houses materials that can enhance existing research foci and lead to new ones, yet because medical humanities is interdisciplinary, researchers are familiar with different types of resources and methods for finding them. Key areas of research in which Fondren materials could be central include documentation of the lived experiences of health, illness, and healing; historical and cultural differences in approaches to care and relationships between patients and caregivers; representations of the "healthy" body and the medicalization of difference; the rhetoric used in discussing medicine and care; and more.

This project aims to:

1. Identify medical humanities-related collections at Fondren, as well as collections that may not appear to relate to the field but contain items with the potential to lead to insights
2. Evaluate potential barriers to accessing and using Fondren resources in medical humanities research
3. Develop recommendations to increase visibility and discoverability
4. Create tools to connect researchers with these resources, such as finding aids (time permitting)

The project will have an immediate effect on students, as Melissa Bailar will incorporate Fondren's resources into her medical humanities research practica classes and will share the resources with other faculty and postdoctoral fellows teaching medical humanities classes. It will likely have a significant effect on medical humanities research being done at Rice and in Houston as researchers become aware of the resources available. It could also raise the visibility of Fondren as a site for this rapidly expanding area of research, aiding in faculty and student recruitment in medical humanities and attracting national and international visiting scholars.

This project is feasible if Fondren staff are able to assist students in accessing collections and understanding existing tools for discovering library resources, and potentially demonstrate how to create finding aids or other research tools. Melissa Bailar is well connected with medical humanities researchers at Rice and in Houston and can facilitate connecting students with them to learn about their research foci and the strategies they use for finding resources. Melissa Bailar and others can also provide feedback on how specific materials may or may not enhance research in the field and on the ease of using different tools.

### **Outline the key tasks that the Fondren Fellow(s) would work on.**

The project entails four key tasks, the first two of which can be conducted simultaneously:

1. Discovering existing resources: The fellow would work with librarians to find relevant resources and collections and consult with medical humanities faculty and staff to determine their potential impact on research.
2. Understanding research strategies; The fellow would consult with librarians about existing library research tools and with medical humanities researchers about the tools and strategies they use or need for finding, accessing, and assessing resources.
3. Recommendation Development: The fellow would conceptualize how to adapt existing research tools or potentially develop new ones to meet the needs of medical humanities researchers. In consultation with a reference librarian, the fellow would produce a brief report of recommendations.
4. Implementation: The fellow would create a new research resource (a libguide) for medical humanities in consultation with librarians and researchers. If time permits, the fellow may also work on implementing additional recommendations.

### **What qualifications would you expect from students working on this project?**

The fellow should have experience in working collaboratively and in conducting library research. The fellow will need excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to share progress and challenges regularly. Background and interest in medical humanities would be beneficial (for example, participation in the student club, coursework, or research experience in the field).

**What would students learn through their participation in this project?**

Students would learn:

1. Library research strategies
2. What exciting resources the library has - this could lead to the student's own research using these resources
3. Medical humanities perspectives on illness, health, and healing and key research topics in the field
4. How different disciplines approach research
5. How to translate research into practice through the development of recommendations and tools