



RICE HUMANITIES

Medical Humanities

Health, Humanism, and Society Scholars – Project Submission Form

Project Title: **Religion, Spirituality, and Medicine: A Survey of Beliefs and Practices**

Project Description:

Spirituality and medicine have a longstanding, and complex, history. In many ancient cultures, the distinctions between medicine, religion, and magic were blurred; today, there seems to be more clarity about how spiritual and secular understandings of health, illness, and death diverge. But even if clinical and research medicine have done away with Divine causes of illness and wellness, spirituality and religion still play a role in the decisions patients make. Approximately 80% of Americans identify themselves as belonging to a religious tradition. And, since patients often incorporate their spiritual values into their medical decisions, a good understanding of the beliefs and practices of religious traditions is becoming important for competent medical care, research, and policy. This project involves assisting the creations of an expansive analysis (in the form of a table) of the interactions between medicine and religion. This would include identifying and synthesizing relevant information, for example, a book chapter or article on the beliefs of Sunni Muslims about end-of-life care. The student would then subdivide the domain (“end of life beliefs and practices”) into a number of topics, such as, “perspectives on pain management,” “advance care planning documentation,” “determination of death” and other essential areas. At this time, the project may develop into a pamphlet, website, or mobile application depending on procuring funding and the Primary Investigator’s other projects. Depending on the speed of development, the HHAS Scholar may also assist with creating a grant proposal, but it is unlikely the project will develop into a finished project within the year of the Scholar’s involvement, so their involvement would be primarily on the research side with some writing compositions possible.

Institution and Location: Baylor College of Medicine, Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy

Project timeframe: 2 semesters

Prerequisite training: Students with college-level research skills and ability to analyze religious and theological texts would be able to perform the tasks. The Scholar should also have clear written communication skills. The Scholar should be organized, detail-oriented, self-starting, punctual, and flexible on their weekly tasks. Students with an interest in religion, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, communication, or medicine are likely to find the research especially rewarding, but any student interested in the interaction of religion and medicine with college-level research and reading skills would likely fit well.



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Knowledge and skills student can expect to gain: The Scholar will likely gain a great deal of knowledge about the three Abrahamic religions' perspectives on numerous areas of medicine. The student is expected to have good research skills, but they will also improve these skills by identifying important texts, scholarly articles, and books, reading these resources, and then synthesizing their salient features for the project.

Expectations of student (Rice University requirements are listed):

- The student must devote 8 hours per week to the project (consistent with a 3-credit course) and will develop a timeline of activities in collaboration with supervisor. The student will meet at least monthly with the faculty supervisor to evaluate progress. This will be done via Zoom.

Expectations of PIs/project sponsors:

- The projects should be designed with the academic rigor of Rice University in mind, and abide by the U.S. Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards Act for unpaid internships. Mid-semester and final supervisor evaluations will be submitted to evaluate student's professional progress. Complete details found here: [Project Sponsor Eligibility](#).