

The Five Colleges, Inc. / Andrew W. Mellon Foundation initiative exploring curricular innovations to bridge liberal arts and professional graduate education in health studies invites applications to participate in a faculty seminar: *The Riddle of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis: A Hidden Disability and Social Justice Issue*.

Fatigue is ... what a match is to the atomic bomb
(Author, Laura Hillenbrand, describing her experience with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis)

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), also often called Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), is a complex, biologically devastating, socially stigmatized, widespread, and poorly understood disease. A recent Institute of Medicine report estimates a U.S. prevalence of two million individuals and an economic cost of over 20 million annually. The personal and social costs, borne disproportionately by women, minority, and poor communities, are immense, yet the NIH reportedly allots four times more funding for research on male pattern baldness than to ME. Why has such a significant disease been so dismissed?

Five College faculty members from all disciplines are invited to participate in this seminar to explore ME from different perspectives. ME is a devastating disease whose physical effects are exacerbated by stigmatization, misinformation, and lack of medical understanding. The disease is associated with multiple causal pathways and with a diverse spectrum of unstable biomedical consequences. Moreover, ME does not have a clear set of diagnostic criteria and is subject to a great amount of misinformation—even within the medical community. Rather than unique, the biocultural complexity of ME may be more common in the future. We hope that seminar participants will engage faculty members across disciplines to better understand the diverse causes, contexts and consequences of ME. Ultimately we hope to individually and collectively develop outreach, undergraduate and graduate curricular materials.

Seven applicants will be selected to receive a stipend of \$1,500 to participate in an intensive seminar of approximately 25 hours during the week of May 18-22. The seminar will include subject experts and ethnographic testimonies, as well as documentaries and diverse common readings. The seminar will be preceded by an evening meeting and followed by at least one additional meeting to discuss tangible outputs and an opportunity for sharing findings. In addition to meeting, participants will be expected to develop a course, teaching component, or an outreach project related to ME. We seek to put together a keenly interdisciplinary group of faculty who will collaboratively explore the topic at hand. Participation is open to tenured, tenure track or contract faculty members with continuing appointments.

This seminar is part of the Five Colleges, Inc. / Andrew W. Mellon Foundation initiative. Witnessing an enormous surge of interest in global health, public health, and health disparities at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, this project builds on the interdisciplinary approach of the Five College Culture Health and Science program (www.fivecolleges.edu/chs) to develop pedagogical innovations emphasizing the importance of connecting social and behavioral sciences, the humanities and physical sciences to better prepare students at all levels to understand and engage with health issues.

Please send questions and/or a 1-2 page proposal (see below) with a short curriculum vita by April 10 to:

Alan Goodman (Seminar Coordinator)
Professor of Biological Anthropology, Hampshire College
agoodman@hampshire.edu

Your proposal should include:

Basic information: Name, institution, position, contact information.

Reason for interest in the seminar and any special expertise you would bring or would like to learn.

Potential Output: Please discuss your ideas about how you might use the seminar in your teaching or outreach projects. For instance, you might discuss ways in which you could add a component about ME to a current course or how you might develop a new course related to this topic, etc. Ideas could include creating a student ethnographic research project, a laboratory project, a co-taught course, etc. We welcome proposals that include accounts of particular pedagogies or teaching philosophies, as well as discussion of what you might hope to gain from or bring to the seminar.