

Questions for Professor Mary Hess

1. What is the specific assignment for this essay?

Annalise was to reflect on her work at Clifton Springs Hospital, and to consider the unusual history of the facility as well as the tradition of alternative medicine practiced there and relate it to the hospital's current mission. Her essay dealt with the history of spas and the various water cures of the 19th century forward to the "integrative medicine" focus of today's facility.

2. How does this assignment fit with the goals of your course?

Annalise is an American Studies minor, and her research into 19th century medicine and spa culture is very thoughtful and informative. Clifton Springs' 150+ year history is seamlessly integrated into a larger analysis of integrative health care. Annalise also drew on her studies in Bath, a celebrated historic spa town, and her internship in an American spa. This approach is in the best tradition of American Studies.

3. Why does this student's essay stand out for you as strong writing?

Her paper is clearly written, full of pertinent and interesting details, and adds to the research on this unusual facility, as well as effectively showcasing local history.

Questions for Annalise VanHouten

1. How did you go about completing this essay? What steps did you follow?

This essay was a part of my fulfillment for a Course Equivalent. I interned in the Community Relations department at Clifton Springs Hospital & Clinic, and became very interested in "The Springs," their Integrative medicine center. Clifton Springs is unique in that its mission is to focus on a person's mind, body, and spirit. There is a long history involving the founder of the hospital, Henry Foster, that I found fascinating, and I wanted to explore the topic of alternative and Eastern medicine further. In order to write the paper, I did a lot of research, both about the history of the hospital, the Integrative medicine movement worldwide, and the significance of water in various cultures and religions. I also tried to educate myself on current views regarding Integrative medicine, including common biases, misinformation, and pending research.

2. What was the most challenging aspect of this essay assignment?

The challenging part of this essay was narrowing all of the things I wanted to say into about ten pages. The more I researched, the more I wanted to include. I found myself going on tangents, and so had to constantly rein myself in and try to stick with the very broad topic of Integrative medicine.

3. How does this essay connect to your work in the course as a whole?

The majority of my time at the hospital was dedicated to creating a graphic standards and style guide that will be used as the hospital works to redefine and unify itself through new branding and letterhead. I also had the chance to interact with the director of The Springs and brainstorm some ideas for a master plan template. This essay, in allowing me the opportunity to research the history and values of this part of the hospital, really helped in terms of insight as I helped to develop this master plan.

4. What is the most important thing you learned from doing this essay?

I've learned much more about the health care system in America--specifically, how much it is lacking in certain areas, such as in alternative medicine. Although the demand for complementary treatment plans has grown, insurance companies still do not consider many of these therapies legitimate, despite proof that many of them help. The lack of awareness about what Integrative medicine really means is something that I am interested in, and I learned that America still has a long way to go in order to provide patients affordable options aside from traditional Western medicine.