During the days leading up to the seminar, read and discuss a modern version of the Hippocratic Oath (see for example http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=20909). As a class, list the most important elements of the oath.
Inspectional Read:

Distribute the text and have students examine it without “reading” it. Based on the title (“Prayer”), discuss what they expect the text to contain. Note that it was probably written in 1793 (over 200 years ago) by a German physician and is based on the writings of a man who died over 800 years ago. What inferences would they make about the text based on its origin?

Have the students number the paragraphs in their copy of the text (1-8). Finally, read the text slowly aloud, paragraph by paragraph, while students identify unfamiliar words and phrases.

Background Information:

Share as appropriate: Moshe ben Maimon (1135?-1204) or Moses Maimonides, was a medieval Jewish philosopher, astronomer and one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars and physicians of the Middle Ages. He was born in Córdoba (present-day Spain) on Passover Eve, 1135 or 1138 and died in Egypt on December 12, 1204. He was a rabbi, physician, and philosopher in Morocco and Egypt. Aside from being revered by Jewish historians, he is also very prominent in the history of Islamic and Arab sciences and is mentioned extensively in these studies. He was influenced by and influenced other prominent Arab and Muslim philosophers and scientists.

The text as we have it first appeared in print in 1793 and was probably written by German physician Marcus Herz based on the writings of Maimonides.

Vocabulary:

List the unfamiliar words and phrases identified by the students on the (interactive) white board. Be sure to include the following on the list: harmoniously, envelope, accord, frailty, unbridling, deranges, primal, beneficent, substances, alleviate, Providence, renown, astray, arrogate, charlatans, ficious, censure, imbue, vouchsafe.

Provide definitions for the following archaic terms:

unbridling: release from restraint
arrogate: to take or claim something without justification
charlatan: a person falsely claiming to have a special knowledge or skill
ficious: vicious (i.e. full of vice)
vouchsafe: to give or grant something in a gracious manner

and then divide the class into vocabulary groups to look up and share definitions of the rest. Discuss each word or phrase in the context of the overall text.
Divide the class into eight groups and assign one paragraph to each. Have each group write a 2-3 sentence summary of the paragraph in modern English. Once all the groups are finished, have each in turn read aloud both the original and the modern summary. Discuss each paragraph in turn until all are comfortable with the surface meaning—and then move on to the next paragraph.

Pre-Seminar Process

- Define and state purpose for Paideia Seminar.
- Describe the responsibilities of facilitator and participants.
- Have participants set a Personal Goal.
- Agree on a Group Goal.
Seminar Questions

Opening (Identify main ideas from the text.):

- In one sentence, what surprised you most about The Prayer of the Physician? (round-robin response)
- What surprised you about that aspect of the text? (spontaneous discussion)

Core (Analyze textual details.):

- In the first paragraph, Maimonides writes that some diseases appear as “beneficent messengers.” What do you think he means by this? Do you agree?
- Why, in paragraph 3, does Maimonides pray for protection against “thirst for profit” and “for renown and admiration”? Why are these things dangerous for a physician?
- What does Maimonides mean when he asks (in paragraph 3) that “in the sufferer let me see only the human being”?
- Why in paragraph 7 does he pray to “be contented in everything except in the great science of my profession”? Why does he not want to be content in his profession?
- Do you think that Maimonides believes physicians are scientists? Based on the “Prayer,” why or why not?

Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas.):

- If you were going to create a similar “Prayer” or Invocation for Scientists, what would you include from Maimonides? What would you add?
Post-Seminar Process

- Have participants do a written self-assessment of their personal participation goal.
- Do a group assessment of the social and intellectual goals of seminar.
- Note reminders for next seminar.

Post-Seminar Content

Transition to Writing:
Post on the (interactive) whiteboard the following question: “What should be included in an “Invocation for Scientists”? Have students brainstorm lists of everything they said, heard or thought during the seminar that is related to this question.

Writing Task:
After reading and discussing “The Prayer of Maimonides,” write an “Invocation for Scientists” from the perspective of a young scientist addressed to the “Spirit of Science.” Use “The Prayer of Maimonides” as your model. (Narrative/Description)

(LDC Task#: 27)

Brainstorm:
Display the writing task and then have students talk in pairs for two minutes to share thoughts about what the writing task is asking and how they might respond. Discuss for clarity with the entire class.
**Structure the Writing:**

Ask students to design an outline for this multi-paragraph “Invocation” based on the task. Encourage them to consider carefully each of Maimonides’ eight paragraphs for material to include.

**First Draft:**

Challenge all to draft their “Invocations” by writing the paragraphs defined by their outlines.

**Collaborative Revision:**

Have participants work in pairs to read their first drafts aloud to each other with emphasis on reader as creator and editor. Listener says back one point heard clearly and asks one question for clarification. Switch roles. Give time for full revisions resulting in a second draft.

**Edit:**

Once the second draft is complete, have participants work in groups of three-four and this time take turns reading each other’s second drafts slowly and silently, marking any spelling or grammar errors they find. (Have dictionaries and grammar handbooks available for reference.) Take this opportunity to clarify/reteach any specific grammar strategies you have identified your students needing. Give time for full revisions resulting in a third and final draft.

**Publish:**

Collect the final drafts of these essays and share them with the willing teacher of an AP or Senior Honors class at the local high school. Ask the teacher to have students read and reply candidly and authentically to your students’ writing, offering warm and cool feedback to their ideas.

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The Prayer of Maimonides

Almighty God, Thou has created the human body with infinite wisdom. Ten thousand times ten thousand organs hast Thou combined in it that act unceasingly and harmoniously to preserve the whole in all its beauty the body which is the envelope of the immortal soul. They are ever acting in perfect order, agreement and accord. Yet, when the frailty of matter or the unbridling of passions deranges this order or interrupts this accord, then forces clash and the body crumbles into the primal dust from which it came. Thou sendest to man diseases as beneficent messengers to foretell approaching danger and to urge him to avert it.

Thou has blest Thine earth, Thy rivers and Thy mountains with healing substances; they enable Thy creatures to alleviate their sufferings and to heal their illnesses. Thou hast endowed man with the wisdom to relieve the suffering of his brother, to recognize his disorders, to extract the healing substances, to discover their powers and to prepare and to apply them to suit every ill. In Thine Eternal Providence Thou hast chosen me to watch over the life and health of Thy creatures. I am now about to apply myself to the duties of my profession. Support me, Almighty God, in these great labors that they may benefit mankind, for without Thy help not even the least thing will succeed. Inspire me with love for my art and for Thy creatures. Do not allow thirst for profit, ambition for renown and admiration, to interfere with my profession, for these are the enemies of truth and of love for mankind and they can lead astray in the great task of attending to the welfare of Thy creatures. Preserve the strength of my body and of my soul that they ever be ready to cheerfully help and support rich and poor, good and bad, enemy as well as friend. In the sufferer let me see only the human being. Illumine my mind that it recognize what presents itself and that it may comprehend what is absent or hidden. Let it not fail to see what is visible, but do not permit it to arrogate to itself the power to see what cannot be seen, for delicate and indefinite are the bounds of the

1 The “Daily Prayer of a Physician” (reprinted here as the “Prayer of Maimonides”) is attributed to Maimonides, but was probably written by Marcus Herz, a German physician, pupil of Immanuel Kant, and physician to Moses Mendelssohn. It first appeared in print in 1793.
great art of caring for the lives and health of Thy creatures. Let me never be absent-minded. May no strange thoughts divert my attention at the bedside of the sick, or disturb my mind in its silent labors, for great and sacred are the thoughtful deliberations required to preserve the lives and health of Thy creatures.

Grant that my patients have confidence in me and my art and follow my directions and my counsel. Remove from their midst all charlatans and the whole host of of vicious relatives and know-all nurses, cruel people who arrogantly frustrate the wisest purposes of our art and often lead Thy creatures to their death.

Should those who are wiser than I wish to improve and instruct me, let my soul gratefully follow their guidance; for vast is the extent of our art. Should conceited fools, however, censure me, then let love for my profession steel me against them, so that I remain steadfast without regard for age, for reputation, or for honor, because surrender would bring to Thy creatures sickness and death.

Imbue my soul with gentleness and calmness when older colleagues, proud of their age, wish to displace me or to scorn me or disdainfully to teach me. May even this be of advantage to me, for they know many things of which I am ignorant, but let not their arrogance give me pain. For they are old and old age is not master of the passions. I also hope to attain old age upon this earth, before Thee, Almighty God!

Let me be contented in everything except in the great science of my profession. Never allow the thought to arise in me that I have attained to sufficient knowledge, but vouchsafe to me the strength, the leisure and the ambition ever to extend my knowledge. For art is great, but the mind of man is ever expanding.

Almighty God! Thou hast chosen me in Thy mercy to watch over the life and death of Thy creatures. I now apply myself to my profession. Support me in this great task so that it may benefit mankind, for without Thy help not even the least thing will succeed.


(Source - http://guides.library.jhu.edu/content.php?pid=23699&sid=190571)