

Eloquence & EMINENCE



29th Annual
Emeritus Faculty
Lecture Series
• Fall 2026

*This free lecture series
features retired UW faculty
renowned for their scholarship
and teaching excellence.*



Understanding Place: How Literature, Geography, Culture & Walking Around Made Me a Better Doctor

John J. Frey, MD

*Emeritus Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health,
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I learned early that the context of my patients' lives went beyond their immediate social structure and included work, schools, neighborhoods, and local history. Long-term relationships are the heart of family medicine; each is a story. Good physicians learn from those stories. But I have also benefitted from reading literature, attending community meetings, and learning from colleagues in the social sciences & humanities. Spending time driving around and walking in neighborhoods where my patients live and work helped solidify what "community" means. Spending time on the "blue highways" where I lived has, I feel, made me a better doctor.

Speaker Bio: *I was born in Kansas City, MO, into a German Catholic family who eventually settled in Milwaukee. I am the first college graduate and medical doctor on either side of my family. During my time as a medical student in Chicago in the 1960s I connected with communities there. That feeling of energy, creativity, neighborhood, and connection has never left, regardless of where I lived. In 1979, I worked with Julian Tudor Hart in Wales and was the first US-trained family doctor to practice in the UK's National Health Service. Forty years ago, a colleague and I published oral histories of conversations with the George Washingtons & Thomas Jeffersons of Family Medicine, and I have since continued recording oral histories. I have edited biomedical journals since the late '80s and have recently been writing essays. I was Department Chair at the UW School of Medicine & Public Health for 13 years and my work took me to every part of the state. My teachers and colleagues have been psychologists, sociologists, geographers, oral historians, landscape architects, farmers, and, of course, my patients.*

Wednesday,
September 23, 2026
2-4 pm

at the Pyle Center,
702 Langdon St., Madison, WI

Refreshments
to follow

Registration Requested:



[aging.wisc.edu/
eloquence-and-
eminence-lectures](https://aging.wisc.edu/eloquence-and-eminence-lectures)

To request special accommodations,
contact Jenni.Suplinski@wisc.edu
by September 4th



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