

Course description

Most researchers in the medical and health sciences focus on health and disease, either directly or indirectly. But what do these basic concepts mean and what do they entail? Arguing that there is hardly a single answer to these questions, this course explores a variety of theories and perspectives on health, disease, sickness, and suffering. Specifically, the course will critically examine the various ways in which human health and disease is understood and engaged with in medicine and health sciences. By applying perspectives from philosophy, history, sociology, and anthropology the course aims to make you able to view medical and health research in a broader perspective, to see your research questions in new light, and to add to your abilities to interpret and understand data. The course will investigate concepts, theories, and models of health and disease. In particular it will scrutinize various perspectives, knowledge systems, classification systems, and metaphors. The course will also investigate health management and governance, and analyze the relationship between power, interests, and gender in health and disease. The course will use a combination of lectures, group work, video, and reflection notes in order to engage the participants in active reflection over basic concepts in health-related research. It will actively use participants own research projects as examples.

Learning outcome

Knowledge

This course will give you knowledge about

- various conceptions, definitions and explanations of health and disease
- historical perspectives on health and disease
- power and knowledge related to health and disease
- issues of equity and justice related to health and disease
- critical perspectives on health governance
- gendered perspectives on health and disease
- minority perspectives on health and disease
- critical perspectives on diagnoses and diagnostic systems
- critical perspectives on evidence and clinical guidelines related to health and disease
- anthropological and sociological perspectives on the body, health, and sickness

Skills

This course will give you skills to

- identify and apply a range of perspectives in reflection on basic concepts in health care and the life sciences (such as health and disease)
- consider own and others' research questions and research undertakings in the light of critical theories
- draw on critical perspectives when analysing and interpreting data

General competence

This course will give you knowledge and skills that are helpful in

- exercising theoretical reflexivity
- reflecting on your own research and placing it in a wider landscape of science
- maintaining a critical attitude to established conceptions and paradigms in the life sciences and in health care

Lecturers

Dag Album, professor, Department of Sociology and Human Geography, UiO

Eli Feiring, associate professor at Department of Health Management and Health Economics, UiO

Jeanette H. Magnus, senior advisor, Management Section, Faculty of Medicine, UiO

Kåre Moen, associate Professor - Department of Community Medicine and Global Health, UiO

Nina K. Vøllestad, professor and head of Institute of Health and Society, University of Oslo.

Kari Nyheim Solbrække, professor, Department of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, UiO

Eivind Engebretsen, Vice-Dean of Postgraduate Studies & Professor, Faculty of Medicine, UiO

Vegard von Wachenfeldt MD, Department of Community Medicine and Global Health, Faculty of Medicine, UiO.

Matthias Barra, senior researcher at the Health Services Research Unit (HØKH), Akershus University Hospital, Norway.

Bjørn Hofmann, professor, Institute for the health sciences, NTNU Gjøvik and Centre for medical ethics, HELSAM, UiO.

Continuous reflection

Each day you are asked to reflect on the relevance of the topics for your own research. You will make reflection notes which can become valuable entries for your exam (essay).

Reading list

Each participant should put together an individual reading list of 350 pages where at least 200 pages stems from the core reading list of the course. The reading list has to be submitted by the end of the lectures.

Teaching

The course entails a mix of lectures, discussions, group work, and presentation of reflection notes.

Examination

Take-home course exam: write an essay that discusses a specific topic (e.g., from your own research) in the light of the perspectives discussed in the course. The essay should be between 7 and 10 pages and be submitted before September 18 at 16.00. Use Times New Roman font size 12, line spacing 1.5). The topic of the essay has to be approved of in advance and the content has to be within the scope and stated learning outcome of the course.

Course committee

Professor Ingrid Christina Foss, Department of Nursing Science, HELSAM

Associate Professor Eli Feiring, Department of Health Management and Health Economics, HELSAM.

Associate professor Kåre Moen, Department of Community Medicine and Global Health, HELSAM.

Professor Bjørn Hofmann, NTNU Gjøvik and Centre for medical ethics, HELSAM.

Course leader

Professor Bjørn Hofmann, Institute for the health sciences, NTNU Gjøvik and Centre for medical ethics, HELSAM, UiO.

Place

The course will be held in [Runde Auditorium R-105 at Domus Medica tilbygg, Sognsvannsveien 9.](#)

Course plan (preliminary)

	Monday 24.08.2020	Tuesday 25.08.2020	Wednesday 26.08.2020	Thursday 27.08.2020	Friday 28.08.2020
Main Topic	Concepts of health and disease	Perspectives on health and disease	Perspectives on health and disease (broad)	Power and knowledge in health and disease	Equity and justice in health and disease
09.00 – 09.45	Introduction		Presentation and discussion of reflection notes		
10.00 – 10.45	What is health and what is disease? <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Perspectives on disease: Disease, Illness, Sickness. <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Gender health and gendered perspectives on health and disease. <i>Kari Nyheim Solbrække</i>	Knowledge and power in handling health and disease <i>Eivind Engebretsen</i>	Health, disease, dysfunction, disability in law and in clinical practice. <i>Vegard von Wachenfeldt</i>
11.00 – 11.45	Concepts at work: the power of <i>health and disease</i> <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Experiencing illness and well-being <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	The transition from disease to health: recovery. <i>Anne Marit Mengshoel</i>	Critical perspectives on diagnoses and diagnostic systems. <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Responsibility for health and disease: personal, professional, or public? <i>Eli Feiring</i>
11.45 – 12.30	Lunch				
12.30 – 13.15	How to define health and disease? Concepts, definitions, and theories <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Valuing health and disease (ethics). <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Biological, biomedical, and clinical perspectives on health and disease. <i>Nina K. Vøllestad</i>	Enhancing health and expanding disease: The dynamics of health and disease. <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Measuring Health and Disease in a global and local perspective. <i>Jeanette Magnus</i>
13.30 – 14.15	What is the relationship between health and disease? <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Disease, prestige, stigma, priority, and typicality <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Experiencing health and disease: anthropological perspectives. <i>Kåre Moen</i>	The practical making of health and disease: the role of technology. <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>	Severity as a moral qualifier of disease. <i>Matthias Barra</i>
14.30 – 15.15	Group work on the concepts of <i>health and disease</i>	Group work on the various perspectives of <i>health and disease</i>	Group work on the various perspectives of <i>health and disease</i>	Group work on the power of <i>knowledge about health and disease</i>	Health and disease: critical perspectives, now and in the future <i>Bjørn Hofmann</i>
15.30 – 16.00	Summary of group work	Summary of the day	Summary of the day	Summary of the day	Information about exam

Literature

Based on the literature list below, course participants will set up their own reading lists for their participation in this course, choosing 350 pages from the following literature.

Album, Dag, Lars EF Johannessen, and Erik B. Rasmussen. "Stability and change in disease prestige: A comparative analysis of three surveys spanning a quarter of a century." *Social Science & Medicine* (2017).

Aronowitz R. Framing disease: an underappreciated mechanism for the social patterning of health. *Social science & medicine*. 2008;67(1):1-9.

Aronowitz R. *Making Sense of Illness: Science, Society, and Disease*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Boorse C. A Second Rebuttal on Health. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 2014; 39:683-724.

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Carel H. Can I Be Ill and Happy? *Philosophia*, 2007; 35: 95–110

Clouser KD, Culver CM, Gert B. Malady. In: Almeder RF, Humber JM (eds). *What is a disease?* Totowa, NJ: Humana Press, 1997: 173-217. (Følgende kan være lettere å få tak i: Clouser, K. D., Culver, C. M., & Gert, B. (1981). *Malady: a new treatment of disease*. *Hastings Cent Rep*, 11(3), 29-37.)

Conrad, Peter, and Kristin K. Barker. "The social construction of illness key insights and policy implications." *Journal of health and social behavior* 51.1 suppl (2010): S67-S79.

Csordas, Thomas J. "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology." *Ethos* 18.1 (1990): 5-47.

D'Amico R. Is disease a natural kind? *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 1995; 20: 551-69.

Doust J, Vandvik PO, Qaseem A, Mustafa RA, Horvath AR, Frances A, et al. Guidance for Modifying the Definition of Diseases: A Checklist. *JAMA Internal Medicine*. 2017;177(7):1020-5.

Feiring E. Lifestyle, responsibility and justice. *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2008;34:33-36.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/jme.2006.019067>

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Gabbay J, Le May A. Evidence based guidelines or collectively constructed "mindlines?" *Ethnographic study of knowledge management in primary care*. *BMJ* 2004 Oct 30;329(7473):1013.

Greenhalgh, Trisha. Evidence-based medicine: A movement in crises? *BMJ*, 2014;348(3725)

Grue, Jan. Discourse analysis and disability: Some topics and issues. *Discourse & Society* 2011;22 (5):532-546.

Haldar, Marit; Engebretsen, Eivind & Album, Dag (2015). Legitimizing the illegitimate: How doctors manage their knowledge of the prestige of diseases. *Health*. ISSN 1363-4593. . doi: 10.1177/1363459315596798

Hesslow G. Do we need a concept of disease. *Theor Med* 1993; 14, 1-14.

Hofmann B. Complexity of the concept of disease as shown through rival theoretical frameworks. *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 2001; 22(3): 211-37.

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Hofmann B. *Hva er sykdom?* Oslo: Gyldendal Akademisk, 2014. (229 sider)

Hofmann B. Medicalization and overdiagnosis: different but alike. *Medicine, health care, and philosophy*. 2016;19:253-264.

Hofmann B. Simplified models of the relationship between health and disease. *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 2005; 26(5): 355 - 377.

- Hofmann B. Suffering: Harm to bodies, minds, and persons. Handbook of the Philosophy of Medicine. Berlin: Springer; 2015.
- Hofmann B. Looking for trouble? Diagnostics expanding disease and producing patients. Journal of evaluation in clinical practice. 2018;24(5):978-82.
- Hofmann B. Expanding disease and undermining the ethos of medicine. Eur J Epidemiol. 2019;34(7):613-9.
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- Leslie, Charles. "Medical pluralism in world perspective." Social Science & Medicine. Part B: Medical Anthropology 14.4 (1980): 191-195.
- Lie, Anne Helene Kveim (2012). Sykehistorienes eksempelbruk, I: Ellen Marie Krefting; Anne Eriksen & Anne Birgitte Rønning (red.), Eksemplets makt. Kjønn, representasjon og autoritet fra antikken til i dag. Spartacus. ISBN 9788230400890. Kapittel VIII. s 203 – 229
- Lock, Margaret, and Patricia Kaufert. "Menopause, local biologies, and cultures of aging." American Journal of Human Biology 13.4 (2001): 494-504.
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- Nordby H. The analytic-synthetic distinction and conceptual analysis of basic health concepts. Medicine Health Care and Philosophy 2006; 9: 169–180.
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Additional reading:

Aronowitz RA. *Making Sense of Illness: Science, Society, and Disease*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K. and New York, 1998

Conrad P, Barker KK. The Social Construction of Illness: Key Insights and Policy Implications. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 2010;51(1 suppl):S67-S79.

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Kahn J. *Race in a bottle: The story of BiDiI and racialized medicine in a post-genomic age*: Columbia University Press, 2013.

Katz, S. *Disiplining old age. The formation og gerontological knowledge*. University Press of Virginia, 1996.

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Martin CM, Peterson C. The social construction of chronicity--a key to understanding chronic care transformations. *Journal of evaluation in clinical practice*. 2009;15(3):578-585.

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Toombs SK. The Temporality of Illness: Four Levels of Experience. *Theor Med* 11, no. 3 (1990): 227-41.

Vogt H, Hofmann B, Getz L. The new holism: P4 systems medicine and the medicalization of health and life itself. *Med Health Care Philos.* 2016;19(2):307-23.

Wyller, V. B. (2014). *Give to the Doctor What Is Due to the Doctor!: Why "Fair Rationing at the Bedside" Is Impossible*: Oxford University Press.