

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

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| Name, title and level of final qualification(s) | MA Medical Humanities: Bodies, Cultures and Ideas (Level 7) |
| Name and title of any exit qualification(s) | PG Cert, PG Dip |
| Awarding Body | University of London |
| Teaching Institution(s) | Birkbeck, University of London |
| Home school/other teaching departments | Creative Arts, Culture and Communication (home) Historical Studies |
| Location of delivery | Central London |
| Language of delivery and assessment | English |
| Mode of study, length of study and normal start month | Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) September |
| Professional, statutory or regulatory body | N/A |
| QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England | N/A |
| Birkbeck Course Code | TMAMHBCI_C |
| HECoS Code | 100314 101233 |
| Start date of programme | Autumn 2019 |
| Date of programme approval | Spring 2019 |
| Date of last programme amendment approval | February 2023 |
| Valid for academic entry year | 2023-24 |
| Programme Directors | Peter Fifield and Sarah Marks |
| Date of last revision to document | 07/03/2023 |

Admissions requirements

Normal entry requirement is a 2:2 at BA level in an Arts, Humanities or Social Sciences subject. We welcome informal enquiries from applicants with other relevant qualifications ahead of application. as We base decisions on our own assessment of qualifications, knowledge and previous work experience.

Course aims

Scientific and technological advances are constantly pushing the bounds of medical possibility. But what role is played by the humanities? How is the practice of medicine represented and how do those representations determine our understandings and experiences of sickness and health?

The MA Medical Humanities: Bodies, Cultures and Ideas draws together students and staff working across different disciplines, historical periods and geographical regions to offer a transdisciplinary approach to the relationship between medicine and the humanities. It provides students with a rich and varied experience of studying at a postgraduate level, allowing them to satisfy and expand their passion for medicine and health. But our primary focus is always to transform these passions into meaningful research—to help students build the intellectual and methodological foundations to undertake sophisticated and original projects that prepare them for doctoral work and professional life. The curriculum is shaped by international research across departments. Students will also be introduced to the ways in which different disciplines think about health, illness, disability, treatment and patient experience.

The MA will address the cultural complexity of historical and current health issues, including infectious disease, diet and exercise, mental health and wellbeing, and disability. They will consider the development of clinical practices and institutions, the formation of medical expertise and authority, and the use of medical ethics and law. Students will also learn about the history of the medical humanities as an academic field and the debates that have shaped its identity and role. The MA is aimed at arts, humanities and social-sciences graduates, and will develop analytical, research and writing skills.

Course structure

| Level | Module Code | Module Title | Credit | Comp Core/ Option | Likely teaching term(s) |
|---------------------------|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Full-time – 1 year | | | | | |
| 7 | SSHC483S7 | Critical Entanglements and Methods in the Medical Humanities | 30 | Core | T1 |
| 7 | | Option Module | 30 | Option | T1 |
| 7 | | Option Module | 30 | Option | T2 |
| 7 | | Option Module | 30 | Option | T2 |
| 7 | | Either two further option modules OR | 60 | Options | T3 |
| 7 | SSHC485D7 | Dissertation in Medical Humanities | 60 | Option | T3 |

| Part-time – 2 years | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|--------|----|
| Year 1 | | | | | |
| 7 | SSHC483S7 | Critical Entanglements and Methods in the Medical Humanities | 30 | Core | T1 |
| 7 | | Option Module | 30 | Option | T2 |
| Year 2 | | | | | |
| 7 | | Option Module | 30 | Option | T1 |
| 7 | | Option Module | 30 | Option | T2 |
| 7 | | Either 2 x 30 credit option modules | 60 | Option | T3 |
| 7 | SSHC485D7 | OR Dissertation in Medical Humanities | 60 | Option | T3 |

Core: Module must be taken and passed by student

Compulsory: Module must be taken but can be considered for compensated credit (see CAS regulations paragraph 24)

Option: Student can choose to take this module

Indicative Option list:

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|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ENHU119S7 | A Confusion of Tongues: Illness, Language, Writing |
| AREN231S7 | Being Human: Posthumanism and the 21 st Century |
| AREN119S7 | Death in Victorian Culture |
| AREN019S7 | Disciplining Sex: Sexuality, Society and Modern Literary Culture |
| HICL046S7 | Early Modern London: Society and Culture |
| FDGD009S7 | Theorising Gender |
| FDGD012S7 | Queer Histories/Queer Culture |
| ARVC076S7 | Exhibiting the Body |

Students will have the option of completing a 15,000-word dissertation. Part time students will need to decide their route in advance in order to do modules worth requisite credit over the course of their degree.

How you will learn

Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the learning outcomes (below) of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with all of the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. You will find information on the virtual learning site (Moodle, see Academic Support below) about each of your modules, what to expect, the work you need to prepare, links to reading lists, information about how and when you will be assessed.

The MA introduces students both to foundational and cutting-edge methods and ideas. Through an emphasis on the ways that understandings of health and illness are contingent and socially embedded, our students develop an understanding and appreciation of cultures and societies beyond their own. They are introduced to a range of visual and textual sources and are able to experiment with a diverse range of qualitative and quantitative methods in preparation for their dissertation research. In so doing, they learn to devise creative, manageable research

questions, organise projects independently and craft arguments that are coherent, well-supported and persuasive.

The MA will be taught mainly through seminars, but student participation will also be encouraged through workshops, lectures, discussion groups and museum and archive visits. This hands-on component to cultural objects and practices will develop critical thinking and new multidisciplinary approaches to the close analysis of cultural forms in their archival locations and histories. Our small class sizes ensure students receive focused teaching that caters to their individual needs. They are able to test new ideas, discuss controversial issues and share their own experiences of healthcare and illness within a safe, supportive space.

Option modules are interdisciplinary and shared across schools and departments whose specialist focus overlaps. Through cross-listing and interdisciplinary collaborative teaching, students on the MA Medical Humanities: Bodies, Cultures and Ideas are able to debate, exchange ideas and contextualise their study. In developing their dissertation topics, students benefit from a wealth of world-leading research. Through the programme's thematic and disciplinary breadth, students are able to design projects that draw upon diverse themes to make original contributions to the medical humanities. The teaching and learning methods encourage the personal development of students because the assessment modes of close reading commentaries, assessed essays, research scrapbooks and the extended dissertation are all directed by the students' own interests. Individual tutorials enable them to relate their ideas cogently to the subject matter of the programme. Teaching and learning will also be supported by Moodle resources.

How we will assess you

The course will use a variety of assessment methods. Assessment is used to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. For most of the modules associated with this course, your assessment will be through the following types of assessment.

Close reading commentaries, assessed essays, research scrapbooks and, if chosen, an extended dissertation.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

'Learning outcomes' indicate what you should be able to know or do at the end of your course. Providing them helps you to understand what your teachers will expect and also the learning requirements upon which you will be assessed.

At the end of this programme, you should be able to

Subject Specific:

1. Demonstrate an ability to historicise key developments in the ongoing emergence of the 'medical humanities' as a field.
2. Demonstrate a grounding in twentieth- and twenty-first-century cultural and critical theories relating both to the specific development of the medical humanities as a 'discipline' and to an understanding of the body, subjectivity, discourse and cultural identity.
3. Digest sophisticated theoretical texts and use them to examine literary and cultural examples.
4. Historicise the cultural contexts in which medical discourses have developed.
5. Consider the functions of writing about health, medicine, disability and other related cultural phenomena and the specific ways in which different genres and forms construct medicalised subjectivities and address their audiences.

Intellectual:

6. Develop a multidisciplinary, theoretical and historical approach to medical humanities.
7. Identify and develop appropriate case studies.
8. Identify and use techniques, methodologies, and approaches to the analysis of a range of medical-humanities texts, objects and other cultural materials.
9. Use theoretical materials to examine specific literary and cultural examples.
10. Read texts closely and critically and articulate arguments.
11. Consider topics from different critical and cultural, literary, historical and philosophical viewpoints.

Personal, social and practical:

12. Present work effectively to peers in seminar environments.
13. Reflect and debate in a productive manner and contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of open discussion.
14. Work independently in a reflexive, self-critical way with both theory and practice.
15. Demonstrate good bibliographic and research skills.
16. Demonstrate good writing and oral-communication skills.

Careers and further study

You will find MA Medical Humanities graduates in the following kinds of roles:

- Journalist
- Author
- Campaigner
- Advocate
- Policy Advisor
- Academic Researcher
- Medical Communications

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on [the careers pages of our website](#).

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its [Common Award Scheme Regulations](#) and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services.](#) This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses. Please take the time to complete any surveys you are sent as a student.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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