7AAN2058 Philosophy of Medicine

Syllabus – Academic year 2018/19 (semester 2)

Basic information

Credits
20

Module Convenor/Lecturer
Alexander Bird (Email: Alexander.Bird@kcl.ac.uk; Office: Philosophy Building 610)

Lecture and seminar time and venue
Thursdays 09.00–11.00, PHILOSOPHY BLDG 405

| Module description | This module aims to give students an understanding of central topics in contemporary philosophy of medicine, with a particular emphasis on methodological issues in the clinical medical research. This module will cover topics that include:
| | • The nature of disease and illness
| | • What is mental illness?
| | • The Birth of the Clinic
| | • Revolutions in medicine
| | • Observational studies and Hill’s criteria of causation
| | • Randomized controlled trials
| Evidence-Based Medicine |

| Learning outcomes | By the end of the module, students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable and practicable skills appropriate to a level-7 module. In particular they will be able to demonstrate:
| | • An understanding of certain central topics in contemporary philosophy of medicine
| | • An understanding of the significance of these questions for medicine and of their connection to related issues in wider philosophy
| | • An ability to use the techniques of philosophical argument to analyse and discuss questions arising from the study of these topics
| | • Transferable skills:
| | o analysing arguments
| | o constructing a coherent and effective argument
| | o writing a clear and well-structured essay around an argument |
**Assessment**

**Formative Assessment** 1 x 3000 max word essay  
Essay due by Friday 22 March 2018, by 16.00. This will not count towards your mark for the module.

**Informal assessment on presentations** You will give a 10 minute presentation on the topic of your essay in one of the final two classes of the module. You will get feedback on your presentation. This will not count towards your mark for the module.

**Summative Assessment** The summative assessment will be by exam. The exam will be 2 hours long. You will be asked to write an answer to one question, from a list of questions covering the topics discussed.

**Consultation times**

First half of term: Wednesday 12.00–13.00; Thursday 17.00–18.00  
Second half of term: Thursday 17.00–18.00; Friday 08.30–09.30  
I am very happy to arrange to meet at other times or to talk by Skype.

**Books and Resources**

The readings for the course are separated into the following two categories:  
Core Reading reading that everyone who wants proper coverage of the subject must read.  
Further Reading additional readings to help further develop your views on a particular subject.

The best books on philosophy of medicine are:


An interesting, if contentious, introduction to some topics in medical epistemology is:


Strongly recommended for historical background is:


**Other Resources**  
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu>. Please ensure you respect the Encyclopedia’s citation policy. See articles on:  
• Philosophy of Psychiatry  
• Mental Illness
Topics and reading

Week 1: Defining disease, health, and illness

Core Reading

Further reading
http://analysis.oxfordjournals.org/content/67/2/128.short#
http://www.springerlink.com/content/6246685672j455g1/

Week 2: The birth of the clinic and the changing face of disease

Core reading
http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/content/38/3/622.full

Further reading

Week 3: Scientific inference in medicine

Core Reading
Peter Lipton (2004) Inference to the Best Explanation (2nd edition) esp. chapter 4 “Inference to the Best Explanation”
http://eis.bris.ac.uk/~plajb/research/papers/Eliminative_Abduction.pdf
Further reading

Week 4: Revolutions in science and medicine

Core reading

Further reading
https://muse.jhu.edu/article/404024/pdf

Week 5: The randomized controlled clinical trial

Core Reading

Further reading

Week 6: Reading week

Week 7: Epidemiology and inferring causation

Core reading


http://ajph.aphapublications.org/cgi/reprint/95/S1/S144

**Further reading**


**Week 8: The evidence-based medicine movement**

**Core reading**


**Further reading**


**Week 9: Placebos and alternative medicine**

**Core reading**


http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/bulletin_of_the_history_of_medicine/v072/72.3kaptchuk.html

**Further reading**


**Week 10: Student presentations week 1**

**Week 11: Student presentations week 2**