

Programme Specification

1	Awarding body	University of London					
2	Teaching Institution	Birkbeck College					
3	Programme Title(s)	MA Medical Humanities: Bodies, Cultures and Ideas					
4	Programme Code(s)	TMAMHBCI_C.					
5	UCAS code (if applicable)	N/A					
6	Home Department	History, Classics and Archaeology					
7	Exit Award(s)	PG Dip; PG Cert					
8	Duration of Study (number of years)	1-year FT; 2-years PT					
9	Mode of Study	FT	X	PT	X	DL	N/A
10	Level of Award (FHEQ)	7					
11	Other teaching depts or institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – English and Humanities – History, Classics and Archaeology – History of Art – Law – Psychosocial Studies 					
12	Professional, Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) details	N/A					
13	<u>QAA Benchmark Statement</u>	N/A					

14	Programme Rationale & Aims
	<p>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?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

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.

15	Entry Criteria
	Normal entry requirement is a 2:2 at BA level in an Arts, Humanities or Social Sciences subject.

16	Learning Outcomes
	<p>Subject Specific:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An ability to historicise key developments in the ongoing emergence of the ‘medical humanities’ as a field. 2. 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. The ability to digest sophisticated theoretical texts and use them to examine literary and cultural examples. 4. An ability to 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. <p>Intellectual:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. The ability to use theoretical materials to examine specific literary and cultural examples. 10. The ability to read texts closely and critically and to articulate arguments. 11. The ability to consider topic from different critical and cultural, literary, historical and philosophical viewpoints. <p>Personal, social and practical:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Ability to present work effectively to peers in seminar environments. 13. Ability to reflect and debate in a productive manner and contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of open discussion.

	<p>14. The ability to work independently in a reflexive, self-critical way with both theory and practice.</p> <p>15. Good bibliographic and research skills.</p> <p>16. Good writing and oral-communication skills.</p>
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17	<p>Learning, teaching and assessment methods</p> <p>On completing the MA, students will demonstrate an ability to research, speak and write on major themes and concepts in the Medical Humanities; they will have compared different approaches to health and healthcare and reflected critically upon how these have changed across time; developed their analytical skills; and understood how present-day health practices and policies are shaped by wider social, cultural and historical forces.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Option modules are interdisciplinary and shared across SSHP, Arts and a number of other 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.</p>
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18	<p>Programme Description</p> <p>The MA Medical Humanities: Bodies, Cultures and Ideas runs for one year full-time or two years part-time, during which students complete two compulsory courses and EITHER two subject-specific option modules and a sixty credit dissertation, OR four option modules. The first compulsory course—'Critical Entanglements in the Medical Humanities'—introduces students to the important themes and schools of thought that have shaped the Medical Humanities. The other compulsory course— 'Methods: Medicine, Culture and Text' — foregrounds issues of representation in literature, art, ethics and history. Both also prepare students for dissertation-writing and establish pathways for progression to doctoral research. The option modules include clear methodological training and represent diverse research expertise, focusing on literary, visual and other cultural representations from antiquity to the present. Students have the choice to develop either a discipline-specific or an interdisciplinary dissertation. The latter will be supervised by two academic staff from different departments.</p> <p>Students will select interdisciplinary option modules from a range of choices taught collectively by staff from across English, Law, Modern Languages, Philosophy, History, Psychosocial Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Film Studies and History of Art.</p> <p>Indicative option modules include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ARVC076S7 Exhibiting the Body – ENHU119S7 A Confusion of Tongues: Illness, Language, Writing – ENHU122S7 Language Matters – AREN119S7 Death in Victorian Culture – HICL211S7 Renaissance Florence: Society, Religion and Culture – HICL101S7 Practitioners and Patients in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe – AREN241S7 Writing Biopolitics – SSHC481S7 Sex, Deviance and Disease in Britain, 1860–2020 – SSHC372S7 Madness and its Meanings – SSHC472S7 Mind, medicine and madness in the ancient world – SSHC400S7 The Senses in Medieval Europe – FDGD009S7 Theorising Gender – SSHC459S7 Medical Experimentation from Frankenstein to Nuremberg – SSHC458S7 Me, Myself and I: Identity and the Self in Europe, c.1500–c.1750 <p>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.</p>
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19	Programme Structure			
Full Time programme – 1 year				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	SSHC483S7	Critical Entanglements in the Medical Humanities	30	Compulsory
7	SSHC484S7	Methods: Medicine, Culture and Text	30	Compulsory
7		Option Module	30	Option
7		Option Module	30	Option
7		Either 2 further 30 credit option modules	60	Options
7		OR		
7	SSHC485D7	MA Medical Humanities Dissertation	60	Option
Part Time programme – 2 years				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	SSHC483S7	Critical Entanglements in the Medical Humanities	30	Compulsory
7	SSHC484S7	Methods: Medicine, Culture and Text	30	Compulsory
7		Option Module	30	Option
Year 2				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7		Option Module	30	Option
7		Either 2 x 30 credit option modules	60	Options
7		OR		
7	SSHC485D7	MA Medical Humanities Dissertation	60	Option

Status*

CORE – Module must be taken and passed by student; COMPULSORY – Module must be taken, mark can be reviewed at sub-exam board; OPTIONAL – Student can choose to take this module

20	Programme Director	Dr Peter Fifield, Dr Anne Hanley and Dr Emily Senior
21	Start Date (<i>term/year</i>)	Autumn 2019/20
22	Date approved by Education Committee	Spring 2019
23	Date approved by Academic Board	Spring 2019
24	Date(s) updated/amended	December 2018 (Correction to order part-time modules taken March 2023)