Course information for the Master’s programme History: Medical and Health Humanities

Block 4:
● COURSE: Introduction to Medical and Health Humanities
Classes focus on major issues in healthcare today, and can include topics of specific interest to students in the class as well as those that are in the news. Exploring subjects such as addiction, sexual health, and mental illness, course readings and discussions will draw on a range of perspectives, including History, Mad Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Science and Technology Studies.
Looking at examples of projects that weave humanities approaches into medical education, patient care, and healthcare activism, we will consider how these activities are transforming the way we think about health and illness, and examine the uses of art, music, design, history, and digital media in health and medicine.
The course prepares students to take an interdisciplinary approach in their own work and to be able to critically evaluate examples of medical and health humanities in practice.

● COURSE: Knowing by Sensing
The senses offer scholars intriguing topics that transcend disciplinary, chronologic and geographic boundaries. But beyond this the senses are valuable methodological tools, that provide us with different types of knowledge than text and image alone can provide. In our digital and visually oriented age of social media and the internet, the senses and the body are undervalued and underestimated – especially in academia. Even when scholars study the senses, they are hesitant to engage with them: they remain the object of study, but aren’t considered informative in themselves.

This course teaches students to include the different senses in the production of knowledge, to train their sensory gaze, and to be able to describe sensory phenomena. The course addresses disciplines such as medicine, medical history, archaeology, (art-)history and non-academic topics such as gastronomy, art and dance. An inter-disciplinary team of experts will address the sense of touch, smell, sight, taste, hearing, synesthesia and even our interoceptive senses (balance, weight, etc.). It challenges the classical hierarchy of the senses in which only sight and hearing are considered aesthetic and informative tools. Senses, body and mind will work together to fundamentally transform the way in which we know, study and understand.

Students will participate in a wide variety of lectures, workshops and experiments offered by specialists, including visits to the Rijksmuseum and Oosterdok, and a wine tasting. They will keep track of their experiences and progress in a multi-sensory ‘sense-log’, and (learn to) present their research in a multi-sensory presentation.

Block 5:
● COURSE: Objects of Knowledge (in the Medical and Health Humanities)
Classes focus on the production and use of historical medical artefacts, and their interpretation today by scholarly researchers, museum curators, and public audiences. Sessions include visits to medical museums, curator’s tours of exhibitions and collections depots, and hands-on classes working directly with objects and archival materials. Course readings and discussions address the histories of collecting different types of medical heritage, such as human remains or medical technologies, and the challenges and benefits of preserving and displaying them.

Students are also encouraged to consider how the presentation of the past reflects contemporary concerns, and conversely, how historical objects might be used to engage with current issues, such as anti-vaccination or disability rights.

2019
COURSE: Medicine and Society
Medical theories and practices reflect the society in which they were formed as well as reshaping the world around them. In this seminar, this dynamic relationship between medicine, science and society is examined through a focus on the most innovative and exciting new approaches emerging in current research.

An international group of professors and scholars from universities and institutions around the country are invited as guest lecturers to discuss core themes in the history of medicine and their own work, focusing on the implications of their projects for understanding the history of health and medicine as well as contemporary issues:
- How does our interpretation of the history of medicine shift when we combine the different perspectives of healthcare practitioners and patients, for example?
- What can we learn when we examine local public health issues in broader global contexts, from international drug trades and the treatment of addiction to emerging infectious diseases and public health surveillance and quarantine?