

Philosophy of Medicine

Philosophy 321, Fall Semester 2026

Instructor: E-H. W. Kluge
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 Office Hours: 8:30-9:30 Monday and Thursday, and by appointment

Instructional material:

- Material on Brightspace
- Recommended reading: Thompson RP and Upshur R; *Philosophy of Medicine: An Introduction* (available online through the library)

The following link may provide students with resources that may help them in their studies: <https://www.uvic.ca/vpacademic/assets/docs/initiatives/course-outline-senate-memo-2023.pdf>

The course itself

This course deals with the philosophical issues that arise in the field of medicine considered both as a domain and as a professional undertaking. Since medicine in both of these aspects is situated in a social context, the considerations that are considered relevant in this course extend beyond purely ethical matters and include some practical and legal issues as well. Moreover, since what constitutes health and disease is not an undisputed matter, part of the course is devoted to a discussion of the various conceptions of health and disease and their respective philosophical as well as practical implications. Furthermore, since the social context in which medical care is provided frequently differs from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the examples that are used to illustrate certain points are occasionally drawn from these distinct jurisdictions and sometimes even from a global perspective. As well, since the focus of medicine in actual practice is patients both at the individual and at the societal level, the ethical implications of this will also be examined and such issues as resource allocation and medical tourism will be considered. Another set of issues that will be explored is the mode of delivery of medical services—for instance, through direct interpersonal interaction or by means of telemedicine—as will be the use of medical records and the ethical implications of the development of artificial intelligence in healthcare. Since this is not a course in pure philosophy, students are not expected to be familiar with purely philosophical theories. Consequently, since it is a course in applied philosophy, the lectures (as well as the reading materials) will provide the relevant philosophical frameworks: in particular that of ethics.

Logistics

Grades for this course will be assigned on the basis of two examinations and a term paper.

Examinations: There will be a 1-hour in-class mid-term examination (worth 25% of the course grade) as well as a 2-hour final examination (worth 50% of the course grade) that is scheduled by the University. Students who have taken the mid-term examination and have received a grade for it may elect to make the final examination count for 75% of the course grade. If they

choose this option, they should write “75%” on the front page of the final examination booklet. The examinations are cumulative in their subject matter. Students are encouraged to discuss their examinations with the instructor.

Term paper: One short term paper (worth 25% of the course grade) on a subject decided by the student upon consultation with the instructor. The term papers are due on the last day of classes, and should be handed in electronically to the instructor’s email address (ekluge@uvic.ca). They should be maximally 10 pages in length, and in MS-Word format.

Significant dates:

- Mid-term examination: After completion of Section 6.
- Final examination: scheduled by the university
- Term paper: last day of semester

The mid-term examination will be returned as soon as they are graded. Final examinations are the property of the University and will not be returned. They will be available for viewing at the Records Office at a time designated by the University.

Grading

Grades will be assigned on a percentile basis with letter grade equivalents as follows: F=0-49; D=50-59; C=60-64; C+=65-69; B-=70-72; B=73-76; B+=77-79; A-=80-84; A=85-89; A+=90-100. The criteria for assigning grades may be found in the University Calendar.

Professional Conduct and Academic Integrity

Chat GPT and similar tools are not permitted in the conduct of this course. It is each student’s responsibility to know the University’s regulations in this regard. Inappropriate behaviour and violations of standards of academic integrity as defined in the University Calendar will be dealt with in accordance with University Regulations. The Policy on Academic Integrity is published in the [University Calendar](#). Students can also consult the Libraries’ [plagiarism guide](#) or the [Tri-Faculty Standards for Professional Behavior for Students](#), which draws together a number of existing UVic policies in one place for ease of reference. Professionalism is expected from all students enrolled in courses in the Faculty of Humanities. As part of professionalism, students, faculty and staff are expected to be familiar with University policies, including the Tri-Faculty Standards.

TENTATIVE OUTLINE OF LECTURES

I. Introduction

- Administrative details
- Scope and subject matter of the course

Suggested reading: *The Philosophy of Medicine*, chapter 1

2. The evolution and nature of medicine as a domain and as a profession

Material on Brightspace

Suggested readings:

- Conrad, Lawrence 1 (2009). *The Western Medical Tradition*. [1]: 800 BC to AD 1800. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. pp. 33–58. (available in UVic Library)
- Scot WA, The Practice of Medicine in Ancient Rome, <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/BF03016172.pdf>
- Lo, Vivienne; Stanley-Baker, Michael, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Medicine* (available in UVic Library)
- Ayurveda: “Ayurvedic Medicine: An Introduction”
https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-HE20_7250-PURL-gpo29672/pdf/GOVPUB-HE20_7250-PURL-gpo29672.pdf
- Chinese medicine
- Indian medicine
- Islamic medicine
- European medicine

3. Health, Disease and Death

Material on Brightspace

Suggested reading: *The Philosophy of Medicine* chapters 2, 11 and 12

4. Ethics and related matters

Material on Brightspace,

Suggested reading: *The Philosophy of Medicine* chapter 3

- Ethical theories
- Codes of ethics
- Models of professional/patient relationship
- Juridical provisions and their relevance

5. The patient as person

Suggested reading: Material on Brightspace

- Natural and constructive persons
- Abortion
- MAID
- PVS and related issues
 - enhancement and modification

6. The conduct of medicine

Material on Brightspace

Suggested reading: *The Philosophy of Medicine* chapters 8 and 9

- Healthcare professionals and their roles
- Informed Consent

7. Medicine/healthcare in the social setting

Material of Brightspace

Suggested reading: *The Philosophy of Medicine*, chapters 3 and 4

- Medical Service models

- Commodity model
- Rights model
- Mixed model
- Measures used
- Ethical validity
- Allocation of resources
- Medical tourism

8. Research and experimentation

Material on Brightspace

Suggested reading: *The Philosophy of Medicine*, chapters 6 and 7

- Traditional medicine
 - Qualitative (observational) studies
- Scientific studies (Causation models)
 - Animal studies
 - Randomized, double blind, controlled
- The role of placebos
- From research to actual practice
 - Confounding variables in actual life
- Orphan diseases

9. Personalised medicine, telemedicine and AIs in medicine

Kluge: *The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare* chapter 6, available on Brightspace

- Personalised medicine
- Telemedicine
- Electronic Patient Records
- AIs in medicine
 - Implications: from hands-on to policy making
 - Ethical issues

10. Summation and Review

The instructor and the University acknowledge and respect the First Nations Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Lək̓ʷəŋən and WSÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.