

PHIL 190, Section: 01, "Philosophy of Medicine"

Fall 2020

Thursday, 3:00-5:45 PM

Sweeney Hall 241

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Course Description

From concerns about opioid over-prescriptions, to debates about the right to healthcare, to more immediate concerns about the ethicality of shelter-in-place during a pandemic, issues related to healthcare and medicine plague our society. Yet, despite their significance, little to no attention is usually given to the concepts that ground these debates. That is, while people question whether everyone has a right to healthcare, few ask: what does it mean to be healthy? Or what is a disease? How does sickness, or even just the threat of it, change one's relationship to the world and others? Answers to such questions are generally taken for granted, but in practice can shape an entire debate. For example, policy discussions about the best way to serve dis-abled communities must already presuppose (i) what dis-ability is?, (ii) who should be counted as dis-abled?, (iii) what exactly makes them dis-abled (whether genetics, deviation from a medical norm, and/or social arrangements)?, (iv) all are conditions classified as dis-abilities the same? and (v) is dis-ability itself a problem (or is it the way they are treated)? This course will be concerned with these types of questions, and more broadly with philosophical issues arising from the practice and study of medicine. Topics will include: definitions of normality, health and illness; addiction, mental health and pathologized behaviors, infectious diseases and contagion; and death and life-extension treatment.

Prerequisites: PHIL 70A, PHIL 70B and 6 units of upper division philosophy, or instructor consent.