

Curricular teaching on Medicine during the Nazi period and the Holocaust (MNH) at Giessen University Medical School

co-ordinated by the Institute of the History of Medicine, Giessen University,
chair: Volker Roelcke

1st year (1st semester)

practical course on „**Medical Terminology/Language in Medicine**“: in this context, input e.g. on:

- use and abuse of metaphors/metaphorical language in medicine, and medical terms in the public sphere: e.g. state, nation etc. as „organism“; foreigners/migrants/“others“ (individuals or social groups) as infectious agents/germs threatening the healthy „organism“; political interventions as „surgery“, etc.
- the grammatical prefix „eu-“ is used as entry point to shortly explain the origins and implications of the terms eugenics & euthanasia
- the grammatical suffix „-gen“ is used to explain the meaning of „iatrogen“, i.e. harm or disease caused by the (unintended or intended) intervention of physicians => ambivalence of the factual power of physicians in the doctor-patient relation, with the most extreme form being physicians „cleansing“, or „curing“ the „folk body“ (*Volkskörper*) of the German population in the context of the Nazi period (altogether ca. 60 min)

3rd year (5th semester)

lecture series on „**History, Theory, Ethics of Medicine**“ (8 lectures, 90 min each); 1 lecture specifically devoted to MNH, aspects of MNH also integrated in further lectures on broader topics:

- lecture 1: **Hippocratic Oath and Declaration of Geneva of the WMA: Origins, Contents, Legal Status** (=> foundation of WMA 1947 and Declaration of Geneva of 1948 as responses of international medical community to MNH and Nuremberg Medical Trial) (90 min)
- lecture 2: **The Concept of Experiment, the Laboratory Revolution and the Emerging Priority of Laboratory Knowledge in Medicine in the late 19th/early 20th Century** (=> shift of focus from suffering individual to diseased body, emergence of the patient as an „object“; idea of the analysis, manipulation and enhancement of the human nature) (90 min)
- lecture 4: **Medicine during the Nazi period and the Holocaust: Historical Knowledge, Implications for Today**
- lecture 6: **Basic Concepts, Theories, and Institutions in Medical Ethics/Bioethics** (=> specific concepts such as autonomy, and institutions as an answer to medical scandals, e.g. MNH/Nuremberg Medical Trial, Tuskegee Study)
- lecture 8: **The Concept of „Race“ and Racism in Society and Medicine: Historical Origins, and the (Co-)Responsibility of the Sciences** (=> origins and trajectory of the concept of „race“ in biology, medicine, philosophy from the 18th to the present, impact of scientific/scholarly knowledge on the public authority of racism and antisemitism, racism as a public health issue) (90 min)

4th year (8th semester)

obligatory seminars in „**History, Theory, Ethics of Medicine**“ (7 x 90 min, ca. 20 participants/seminar group):

students choose one seminar/topic from list of eight optional seminars; one of the seminar options devoted specifically to MNH:

- **Medicine During the Nazi Period: Historical Knowledge, Implications for Today** (7 x 90 min)

MNH-related contents also integrated in other seminar-options on broader topics (e.g.

- **Human Subject Research during the 20th Century: Historical Evidence, Ethical Implications** (7 x 90 min)
- **Dying and Death: Debates on a „Good“ Death, Past & Present** (7 x 90 min)
- **Medicine and Economy: History, Politics, and Ethics of the Allocation of Scarce Resource in the Health System: Priorization, Exclusion, and the (In-) Compatibility with Human Rights** (7 x 90 min)

one seminar-option: **Systematic Patient Killings by Physicians: „Euthanasia at Hadamar“** (includes exposure: excursion to Hadamar Memorial) (1 day)

Methods of teaching in the seminars include oral presentations by teacher and students, small group and individual homework, discussion of results in plenary group (20 students); teaching material is provided online.

Evaluation tools will be adopted according the suggestions formulated during the Lancet Commission; previously used tools were „self constructed“ (quantitative scaling plus open-ended questions).

extra-curricular:

Colloquium on the History of Medicine and Science:

presentation of ongoing research projects (invited speakers from Germany and beyond), with focus on medicine and biomedical sciences in the 20th and 21st century, regular presentation on medicine during the Nazi period and the Holocaust, and implications for post-World War II medicine and bioethics.