

## Health and Art Narratives in Berlin. Institutions, collective practices and artistic approaches

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Summer Semester 2026: 13 April– 17 July 2026

### CATEGORY

(to be filled in later)

### COURSE STRUCTURE

2 contact hours à 45 min per week (summer semester: 14 weeks)

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

#### Time

- Session 1. Thu 23 April **Block (16-20h)**
- Session 2. Thu 7 May **Block (16-20h)**
- Session 3. Thu 21 May **Block (16-20h)**
- Session 4. Thu 28 May **Block (16-20h)**
- Session 5. Thu 11 June **Single session (16-18h)**
- Session 6. Thu 18 June **Block (16-20h) COIL session, on-line**
- Session 7. Thu 25 June **Block (16-20h) Veterinary Anatomy Theater**
- Session 8. Thu 2 July **Block (16-20h) Berlin Museum of Medical History**

#### Place

Seminar room 0323-26 at HU Institutsgebäude  
Hausvogteiplatz 5-7, 3rd Floor  
10117 Berlin



Public Transport:

**U2 Hausvogteiplatz** (This metro station has no ramps and no lifts. Next accessible stations: Spittelmarkt or Stadtmitte)

**U5 Museumsinsel** (+ 11 min walk), accessible with lifts and escalators

**Bus 200** (Haltestelle U Hausvogteiplatz)

**Bus 147** (Haltestelle Werderscher Markt + 6 min walk)

Accessibility:

Lift

Wheelchair accessible bathroom?

Next City toilette?

Sound equipment (microphon)

Vending machines?

Image of the classroom?

## COURSE LANGUAGE

English language skills are required for the course, and a minimum level of English B2 is necessary. The student will work with some advanced academic articles in English during the semester

**Language requirements** (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages)  
English B2

## TARGET GROUP

This course is open to students interested in academic and artistic research expanding and challenging the narratives of health and sickness provided by medical and clinical institutions. Structured around both theoretical and practical components, the seminar focuses on Berlin health institutions and Berlin-based artists and collectives in dialogue with international positions, with a particular emphasis on the practices of care and accessibility.

The course includes readings of theoretical texts and manifestos, guided visits to exhibitions and alternative and collective health spaces in Berlin, guest lectures, and the development of an accessibility proposal for some art works and/or an art exhibition related to health, sickness and care in Berlin.

Active participation is expected throughout the semester. Participating in small group discussions and sharing thoughts with the other students in a way which feels comfortable for all involved is an important part of the course.

No prior experience in Arts or Disability Studies is required but an open and respectful mind is required to approach the topics of the seminar.

This course is prepared for all international exchange students of all subjects with a strong interest in the course topic. Berlin Perspectives courses are designed for undergraduate students, and master's students may participate if their home university agrees. Regular degree-seeking students can select the course within the elective part of their study program (überfachlicher Wahlpflichtbereich üWP).

## **CREDITS = 5 ECTS**

The Berlin Perspectives courses are offered by the Career Center as part of the elective program üWP. Registration takes place via Agnes.

All courses are accredited according to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the how contemporary artistic practices approach, challenge, subvert and create new perspectives to overcome the binome Health/ Illness that medical and institutional narratives have perpetuated within social, economic and cultural areas. Framed within Disability Studies and Crip Theory we will explore how individual and collective artworks and projects critically interpret the experience of illness, fragility and vulnerability as a platform for social transformation and as an emancipatory tool to navigate a normative and ableist world. We will approach the different models of disability (medical, social and cultural), get familiar with terms like crip time, ableism, cure, intersectionality, care, eugenics and disability justice. The course will have a special focus on accessibility in art institutions, small organizations and collectives, and will approach the practice of *access rider* as tool of communications for disabled or chronic ill artist to work with art institutions.

Coursework includes reading theoretical texts, essays, manifestos and analysing artworks, films and video pieces related to the topic of the course. We will welcome as guests Berlin-based artists and collectives, curators, scholars and activist. We will enjoy guided tours to institutional and collectively organized spaces working with different narratives about Health and Sicknes: Berlin Museum of Medical History Charité Hospital, the TA T, Tieranatomisches Theater Humboldt University, Casinoooo-Berlin-Anticapitalist cafe and bar for social Medicine and Casa Kúa Berlin, Trans\* Inter\* Queer Community and Health.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

### Knowledge

- Understand, describe and identify the core approaches of Disability Studies and Crip Theory related to artistic practices
- Provide an overview of recent theoretical and artistical developments in the field of Disability Arts and Accessibility Aesthetics, as well as activists artistic positions
- Be familiar with *access riders* (documents that outlines disability access needs of disabled artists working with art institutions) and understand its complexities
- Critically analyse accessibility practices in the arts for/by artists, for/by art institutions or independent organizations in Berlin

### Academic/Transferable Skills

- Engage and critically reflect on artistic practices and collective initiatives related to Health and Sickness in Berlin
- Identify intersectional critique based on race, gender, ability, class, age and sexual orientation in artistic practices and collective initiatives related to health and sickness
- Communicate and discuss key concepts in individual and artistic practices related to health and sickness
- Apply this knowledge into their own fields of study

### Competencies

- Read and discuss recent theoretical and artistic research in Disability Arts and Accessibility Aesthetic
- Create affective and personal responses in different formats to the topics, analysed art works, visits and interventions by guests in the seminar, mobilizing the different knowledge and cultural backgrounds of the participant students.
- Formulate a proposal for an accessibility concept for art works and / or art exhibitions in Berlin

### **In-Class Expectations**

- This course welcomes students from diverse cultural, social, and academic backgrounds. It is intended as an inclusive space for critical exchange, collaboration, engagement, and participation. We value dialogue and recognize the importance of creating room for discussion and respectful disagreement.
- All participants are expected to contribute to a supportive and respectful learning environment. Discrimination of any kind—including racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, ableism, or any form of shaming or hate—will not be tolerated. Please come with openness, curiosity, and a willingness to listen and learn from others.
- **Plagiarism:** Copying someone else's ideas or words is unacceptable without properly crediting the source. Be sure you are using citations. In other cases, you will be dismissed from this course.

## **READINGS**

See program each week

## **ASSIGNMENT INFO**

### **Workload and assignments**

In order to be granted 5 ECTS, participants will be asked to

- actively attend all sessions (a minimum of 75% attendance is required for classroom and online sessions)
- prepare and revise the classroom/online sessions
- hand in the following **assignments**:
  - **Short assignment: Presentations and Group Discussions (30%)**  
 Throughout the semester each week, students (individually, in pairs or in small groups) will engage with assigned readings and art works proposed and will be responsible for leading the discussion. This short presentation should include:
    - A concise summary of the text / Description of the art work
    - Key concepts and keywords / Conceptual framework
    - Personal reflections or critiques
    - At least two discussion questions to prompt group dialogue
  - **Creative Responses (30%):**  
 Students will create a creative response to one text, art work discussed or exhibition visited in the seminar or other material related to the topics of the seminar. The responses can take any format: a short text, an image, a short video, a song, a poem or any other creative affective form in which the student engage subjectively from a situated and personal perspective with the material.
  - **Final Project (40%)**  
***Option 1: Creating Accessibility***  
 Students will work preferably in small groups (individual work is possible too) to develop an accessibility task and elaborate a final presentation document  
 Option 1a: Creating the text for an invitation (e-mail and /or social media) for an existing or imagined art exhibition, performance, talk or other artistic event indicating the ideal accessibility features of the event and applying accessibility principles to the invitation itself.  
 Option 1b: Critically analyze and comment the accessibility features of an existing exhibition or some of the works presented in it (it can be one of the visited ones during the seminar or other running in Berlin during that time). Expand and add accessibility missing aspects if necessary, and argument your proposals  
 (Some examples will be provided for both options 1a and 1b)  
 or  
***Option 2: Written paper*** about one topic related to the concepts, ideas, artistic works or artistic collectives and initiatives unfolded during the seminar (approx. 25,000 characters including spaces)

Failure to fulfil one of the mentioned components results in failure of the class.

## Assessment Components

The final grade will be composed of the above-mentioned assignments.

## YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Maria Morata (Madrid, 1970) is a cultural agent, researcher, artist, independent curator and lecturer. Her artistic and research practice thinks of her body as a political entity, and illness as a platform for the creation of art and knowledge through anti-ableist and caring positions. Her theoretical and artistic field of interest focuses on the **material and epistemological encounters between (sick) bodies, technology and art**. She also researches **community archives based on fragility, questioning canonical and institutional archival practices**.

Since 2009 she has worked as a guest lecturer at various as well as in other educational structures in the areas of film, audiovisual and art and has curated film and visual arts exhibitions for museums and art institutions internationally. She is a member of the collective **Sickness Affinity Group (SAG)**, which works on illness and disability by questioning the enabling structures in which we live and work through artistic projects. She was also part of the **WeSync** collective, which developed a method of care through artistic resonance among its members and participatory performances. In 2022 he founded, together with Lorenzo Galgó, the artistic and research collective **cripxcess** whose work explores the relationships between cryp theory and dark ecologies.

Scroll for course Schedule

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# COURSE SCHEDULE

2 hours à 45 min per week (summer semester: 14 weeks)

**Attention: this course starts Thu 23 April 2026!**

## Session 1

**Thu 23 April: Introduction**

**Block (16-20h)**

This session provides a general overview of the course, including the readings, exercises, assignments, and final projects students will be responsible for during the semester. It includes an introduction to the instructor and participants to share academic backgrounds and motivations for joining the seminar during your time in Berlin.

Collective watching and discussion:

-Miserandino, Christine. **The Spoon Theory** But You Don't Look Sick: Support for Those with Invisible Illness or Chronic Illness [www.butyoudontlooksick.com](http://www.butyoudontlooksick.com)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jn5IBsm49Rk> 13 min

-*Audio Description and Haptic Tour* by choreographer Jess Curtis, Gravity Dance Company Tanz in August, Berlin, 2019 (6 min)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPZjOOrWd7M&t=324s>

-**10 principles of Disability Justice** by Sins Invalids  
<https://sinsinvalid.org/10-principles-of-disability-justice/>  
<https://sinsinvalid.org>

## Session 2

**Thu 7 May: (Critical) Disability Studies, Crip Theory and Arts**

**Block (16-20h)**

„Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick“ (Susan Sontag)

Theory Input: Introduction to Disability Studies and Crip Theory and artistic positions related to those study and activist fields.

Short Assignment (1)

Virginia Woolf. **On Being Ill**. Ashfield, MA: Paris Press, 2012 (1930) (p 3-28)

Short assignment (2):

Susan Sontag: **Illness as Metaphor**. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1977.  
(p. 3-9 /3-20)

Collective watch and group discussion:

Carolyn Lazard, **In Sickness and Study**, (2015-present), Instagram post and installation

<https://walkerart.org/magazine/carolyn-lazard-in-sickness-and-study>

Carolyn Lazard, *Crip Time*, 10 min, 2018

<https://www.artforum.com/video/carolyn-lazard-crip-time-2018-167173/>

*Recommended readings:*

Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. New York: New York University Press, 2006

Rodriguez Muñoz, Bárbara: *Health. The Ethical, Aesthetic and Political Significance of Practices, Positions and Theories connected to Health in Contemporary Art.*, Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art, MIT PR, 2020

Wexler, A., & Derby, J. (Eds.): *Contemporary Art and Disability Studies*, Routledge, 2019

Lorde, Audre. *The Cancer Journals. Special ed.* San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1997.

### **Session 3. Thu 21 May. More than a ramp. Accessibility and Arts**

#### **Block (16-20h)**

##### **1.**

##### **Guest: Kate Brehme, co-fundator of Berlinklusion (tbc)**

What is accessibility? how to approach it from institutions and small organizations, how to create collective access? How to curate exhibitions in an accessible way?

Presentation: **Berlinklusion** is an initiative of a small group of artists, curators, arts educators, mediators and facilitators with and without disabilities to implement positive change in Berlin's cultural sector by embracing inclusion and increasing accessibility for artists, arts-workers, participants and audiences with all (dis)abilities\*. We support individuals, museums, galleries, other arts organisations and communities through knowledge-sharing, collaboration and raising awareness about inclusion and accessibility in the arts.

<https://www.berlinklusion.de>

Bio:

**Kate Brehme** is a disabled independent curator, researcher and arts educator whose work explores access aesthetics and crip joy. Based in Berlin, she curates international and local projects and co-runs Berlinklusion, advocating for inclusion in the arts.

<https://www.katebrehme.com>

##### **2.**

We will explore the complexity and versatility of accessibility work and practices through artists, writers, choreographers and filmmakers.

-Sort Assignment (3)

***Sick Woman Theory*** by Johana Hedva, *Mask Magazine*

<https://syllabus.pirate.care/preview/library/Johanna%20Hedva/Sick%20Woman%20Theory%20-%20Mask%20Magazine%20%28558%29/Sick%20Woman%20Theory%20-%20Mask%20Magazine%20-%20Johanna%20Hedva.pdf>

-Short assignment (4)

Carolyn Lazard: **Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice**. Recess, The Standard Group, 2019

**15 Tips to create a radically accessible space**, Sav Schlauderaff & Zia Puig, The Queer Futures Collective, 2019

**Accessibility Toolkit: A Guide to making art spaces accessible** by Anne Zbitnew and Tangled Art + Disability, Humboldt College.

*Recommended readings:*

Cachia, Amanda: *The agency of access: contemporary disability art & institutional critique*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2024.

Cachia, Amanda: *Curating access. Disability Art Activism, and Creative Accomodation*, Routledge, 2023

Frida Laux and Nora Schneider: *Access and Exhaustion*

<https://www.access-and-exhaustion.org/story>

*Crip Technoscience Manifesto* by Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch

<https://catalystjournal.org/index.php/catalyst/article/view/29607/24771>

## **Session 4. Thu 28 May. Ableism critique and Crip time as artistic premises (i)**

**Block (16-20h)**

### **1. Guest: Saverio Cantoni**

Our guest will present their artistic work and the project *Mixed Feelings*, a series of radio shows embracing the diverse talents and stories of artists from the disabled community. The project experiments with multiple ways of broadcasting, with radio episodes accompanied by sign language and others in spoken language, both featuring English subtitles

<https://refugeworldwide.com/artists/mixed-feelings>

Guest Bio:

Saverio Cantoni (1985, Italy) is a white-passing cyborg, disabled – oral Deaf – artist based in Berlin. Situating their practice in the sonics, from haptic experiences to assistive technologies, Saverio has been experimenting with interferences, noises, and glitches for the past ten years to create participatory and accessible live performances. They choreograph sounds in several forms, mixing texts, visuals, and audible experiences, in an ongoing exploration of the *aesthetics of access*.

**2,**

-Short assignment (5):

Collective reading and discussion of definitions of the following concepts:

*Ableism*, Talila A. Lewis

*Crip time* by Alison Kafer

*Crip Temporalities* Ellen Samuels

*Super Crip*, by Eli Clare

*Intersectionality* by Kimberlé Crenshaw and

*Care* by Joan Tronto and Bernice Fisher

-Short assignment (6) /collective watching: Autism and activism

***In my Language***, 2007, Amanda Baggs, 8 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnyIM1hI2jc>

<https://www.anothergaze.com/towards-diffractive-cinema-video-works-amanda-melissa-baggs/>

*Recommended readings:*

Ellen Samuels: *Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time*. In: *Disability Studies Quarterly*. Vol. 37 No. 3 (2017): Summer 2017

Alison Kafer: *Feminist Queer Crip Theory: A Critical View of the Future*. Indiana University Press 2013

Eli Clare: *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*. Duke University Press, 2017

Tom Sieber: *Disability Aesthetics*. University of Michigan Press, 2010

## **Session 5. Thu 11 June: Ableism critique and Crip time as artistic (and curatorial) premises (ii)**

**Single session 16-18h**

**Guest: Linnéa Meiners**

This session we will analyse a curatorial approach to exhibitions and artistic works related to health and sickness.

### ***Turn Illness into a Weapon, Artistic Perspectives Within Healthcare Movements***

Kunstraum Kreuzberg Bethanien (June-August 2024) with curator Linnéa Meiners

The group exhibition takes its starting-point from the grassroots healthcare struggles around the former *Diakonissen-Krankenhaus* (welfare hospital) Bethanien in 1970s Berlin. When it became clear that the abandoned building was to be transformed into artists' studios, the initiative *Kampfkomitee Bethanien*, among others, demanded to use the space as a children's polyclinic. <https://kunstraumkreuzberg.de/turn-illness-into-a-weapon-artistic-perspectives-within-healthcare-movements/>

Bio Linnéa Meiners:

Linnéa Meiners is a Berlin based curator, visual artist and filmmaker. In her work, Meiners investigates narrative transformations of revolution, art & labour and accessibility. She develops formats that engage with questions of solidarity, care and practices of resistance. She was artistic director of the non-commercial ACUD Galerie in Berlin Mitte after being artistic program director at the municipal Galerie im Turm in Berlin and was Curatorial Researcher at Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien.

## **Session 6. Thu. 18 June: Collaboration with the Medical Humanities at the University of Vienna (i), COIL program, Circle U.**

**On-line Single session: 16-18h. Zoom link: <https://hu-berlin.zoom-de/j/61096787662?pwd=iB1px38AeoHV8h8NukBUUtWI8rmO4W.1>**

Exchange with the students of Nora Heidorn's seminar **"Marie Stopes' 1920s Birth Control Campaign: Contraception, Feminism, and Eugenics**

<https://ufind.univie.ac.at/de/course.html?lv=124265&semester=2026S>

-Short Assignment for the exchange session online (7)

**Examined Life** with Judith Butler & Sunaura Taylor by Astra Taylor, 2008, 14 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0HZaPkF6qE>

## **Session 7. Thu 25 June. Institutions of Health and Care in Berlin (i) + Collaboration with the Medical Humanities at the University of Vienna (ii)**

### **Block (16-20h)**

**Meeting point at the Tieranatomisches Theater! Campus Nord, Philippstraße 13/Haus 3, 10115 Berlin**

#### **1.**

##### **Excursion and guided tour**

**Tieranatomisches Theater (TA T) Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin**

<https://tieranatomisches-theater.de/en/>

Guided tour with Paz Ponce, Kuratorin für Vermittlung und Outreach

#### **2.**

##### **Medical humanities and chronic illness**

**At Object Lab at Hermann von Helmholtz Center for Cultural Techniques**

**Guest: Monika Pietrzak-Franger (University of Vienna, Austria)** What are the Medical Humanities and how they approach the relation Art and Health? Professor Monika Pietrzak-Franger will share her latest publication project ***Scheinbar genesen. Leben mit Long Covid und das Recht auf Hoffnung (Seemingly recovered. Living with Long Covid and the right to hope)***. Through intimate interviews and accompanying photographs, the book offers a sensitive portrait of those struggling with the physical, emotional and social challenges of this debilitating disease.

Bio Monika Pietrzak-Franger: Professor of Cultural Studies and Literary Studies, Director of the Institute of English and American Studies, and Co-Director of the Doctoral School of Philological and Cultural Studies (PhilKult) at the University of Vienna. Her research focuses on medical and health humanities, adaptation and transmediality studies as well as Victorian and Neo-Victorian studies.

## **Session 8. Thu 2 July. Institutions of Health and Care in Berlin (ii)**

### **Block (16-18h)**

**Excursion and guided tour. Meeting point at the Berliner Medizinhistorisches Museum der Charité!** Charitéplatz 1 10117 Berlin, Campusinterne Adresse Museum: Virchowweg 17)

##### **Berlin Museum of Medical History Charité**

with Monika Ankele Director of the Museum (tbc) and Nora Heidorn, curator the temporal exhibition "*Horizontal: The politics and Poetics of the Sickbed*"

<https://bmm-charite.de/>

Bio Nora Heidorn: She is a Berlin-based curator, researcher, and lecturer specializing in the intersection of gender, health, and reproduction. She completed a PhD at the Royal College of Art in London, where her dissertation focused on the history of reproductive healthcare artifacts from an intersectional feminist perspective. Her work involves interdisciplinary research, public engagement, and artistic collaboration.

Short Assignment (8) Please choose from the below proposals

**Andrea Vesalius: The anatomic tradition and the medical illustration**

*De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TaWh7MHGyCA>

**The visible human project: Body as digital Data Bank**

[https://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible/visible\\_human.html](https://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/visible/visible_human.html)

<https://www.srf.ch/play/tv/mtw/video/visible-human-project?urn=urn:srf:video:64a02c12-9945-4e1a-a186-7f568e8fb51f>

Short Assignment (9) Please choose from the below proposals

**Der Gläserne Mensch / The Transparent Man (Deutsches Hygiene-Museum Dresden)**

<https://www.dhmd.de/ausstellungen/dauerausstellung/die-sieben-themenraeume#c4252>

<https://www.dhmd.de/en/collections-research/research/transparent-figures-exhibition-icons-of-the-20th-century>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1AYuFW2Q8Gs>

**Tibetan Atlas of Medicine**

<https://opensea.io/de-DE/collection/atlasoftibetanmedicine>

<https://comparative-guts.net/tibetan-medicine/>

*Recommended readings:*

Waldby, Catherine: *The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine*, Routledge, New York, 2000

Martin Roth und Rosmarie Beier (Hg.): *Der gläserne Mensch – eine Sensation. Zur Kulturgeschichte eines Ausstellungsobjekts*, Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 1990 (Only German)

*Take Care: Kunst and Medizin*, Catalogue Exhibition Kunsthau Zürich, Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft, 2022 (only German)

**Other Ressources:**

Intersection of Care

<https://www.intersectionofcare.net/guidelines/>

Disability Arts Online

<https://disabilityarts.online>

Pirate Care

<https://syllabus.pirate.care>

Diversity Arts Culture Berlin

<https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin>

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Registration on Moodle (HU's e-learning platform)

### in case of online sessions

- Fully functional device (laptop, tablet, PC)
- Stable internet connection
- Software: Zoom (video/audio)
- *Recommended* hardware: external headset for better sound quality

## EXPECTATIONS & POLICIES

**Preparation for lively discussions:** be on time, have at least the required readings completed, and points in mind for discussion or clarification.

**Assignments:** complete all assignments according to the specified requirements on the schedule including handing them over to the lecturer.

**Commitment:** pay particular attention to the lecturer and respect differences of opinions in this international classroom.

**Academic guidelines:** Comply with academic integrity policies. Plagiarism in even a small assignment will result in failing the entire course.

**Attendance policy:** Students must contact their class teachers to catch up on missed work – to excuse absence please contact the lecturer.

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The course and its syllabus are subject to change. Last update: 7th November 2025