University of Birmingham

MA Health, Bioethics and Law

The programme will enable you to critically explore key issues in bioethics and law in terms of legal principles and philosophical concepts. Co-taught by the Birmingham Law School and the Department of Philosophy, the programme takes an interdisciplinary approach which caters to the needs of those from a variety of backgrounds. The programme is ideal for healthcare professionals, intercalating medical students, philosophers or anyone interested in the issues at the intersection of healthcare, ethics and law.

This programme is also available to legal professionals, although we also offer an **LLM Health, Bioethics and Law**.

Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham has been awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14

Course fact file
Type of Course: Taught
Study Options: Full time, part time
Duration: 1 year full-time, 2 years part-time
Start date: September 2014

Contact

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Details

You will take three core modules:

- Global Bioethics
- Human Rights and Healthcare Law
- Legal Foundations and Research Skills (for students without a Law degree) or Philosophical Foundations and Research Skills (for students holding a Law degree)

You will then choose three optional modules from the following:

- Criminal Law and Medicine
- European Health Law
- Global Ethics
- Mentally Disordered Offenders and the Law
- Philosophy of Cognitive Science
- Philosophy of Health and Happiness
- Value of Life

You will also complete a 15,000-word dissertation.

Modules

In addition to a research skills module, you will study the following two core modules:

Global Bioethics

This module introduces you to the increasing number of dilemmas in bioethics that cross national boundaries and transcend domestic regulation. Bioethical dilemmas, whether arising from scientific and technological developments or from the research practices of pharmaceutical companies, raise issues which cannot be effectively addressed at national or regional levels. Bioethics clearly calls for global solutions to what are global dilemmas and you will be introduced to some of the key bioethical issues which arise in the contemporary global context

Human Rights and Healthcare Law

Human Rights and Healthcare Law

This course explores the interface between human rights and health care law. It examines the evolution of Health Care Law both before and after the enactment of the UK Human Rights Act 1998. It explores this debate in the context of a number of controversial and topical issues.
Further information on the Human Rights and Healthcare Law module is available on the Law School website.

You will then choose three optional modules from the following:

Criminal Law and Medicine

The aim of this module is to explore some key aspects of criminal law and its relation to medicine. The focus will be on the arrangements in England and Wales, but where appropriate reference will be made to comparative material from other countries.
Further information on the Criminal Law and Medicine module is also available on the Law School website.

European Health Law

The EU is increasingly having an impact upon domestic health law and policy across member states. This has given rise to increased legislation, regulation and engagement by academic writers and policy makers in this area. This module explores the legal and institutional frameworks that deliver health law and policy in Europe and the nature and extent of their impact upon member states by reference to selected examples.
Further information on the European Health Law module is also available on the Law School website.

Global Ethics

This module aims to introduce you to key concepts and debates in global ethics. First, we will explore several prominent traditions in ethical theory; next we will apply these normative ethical theories to concrete ethical questions. In investigating these theories and applications, you will be encouraged to question your presumptions about the nature of ethics and moral values. The module also develops critical reasoning and argumentative skills through philosophical discussion and writing. The theoretical tools of analysis and argument can be applied in all aspects of global ethics..

Mentally Disordered Offenders and the Law

This module covers a number of areas, including relevant legislation (The Mental Health Act, The Human Rights Act and The Mental Capacity Act) and topics such as psychiatric defences, mental health tribunals, civil law and statutory care in the community as well as recent developments and proposed reforms.
Further information on the Mentally Disordered Offenders and the Law module is available on the Law School website.

Philosophy of Cognitive Science

This module covers a range of advanced topics in empirically-informed philosophy of mind. In any given year, some of the following topics will be addressed in detail: theories of intentionality; differences between human and animal cognition; pathologies of belief such as delusions and self-deception; theories of emotion; accounts of cognitive rationality; the relationship between ownership and authorship of thoughts; the narrative view of the self; the psychology of wisdom and expertise.

Philosophy of Health and Happiness

The module will examine debates at the forefront of current research in the philosophy of health and happiness. You will explore conceptual problems (e.g. what 'health' and 'disease' are) and question contemporary lifestyle issues (for instance, regarding how health, happiness and meaning relate, as well as whether there is a correlation between income and life satisfaction). You will also be asked to consider how technological advances (such as those in genetics) are changing these understandings.

Value of Life

This module is intended to provide scope for an assessment of that brand of extreme philosophical pessimism according to which life not only has no positive value but is something we should be better off without – that, to echo the title of a recent book by David Benatar, it is "better never to have been". The initial focus will be on the arguments for this view put forward recently by Benatar himself and before him by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860). The focus will then shift to the more affirmative approaches of thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and William James (1842-1910). An important subsidiary theme will be the nature of pleasure, pain, happiness and suffering.

Fees and funding

We charge an annual tuition fee. Fees for 2014/15 are as follows:

- Home / EU: £5,940 full-time; £2,970 part-time
- Overseas: £13,665 full-time

Learn more about **fees and funding**

Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's **Postgraduate Funding Database**.

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

University of Birmingham graduates - including those due to graduate in summer 2014 - may be entitled to a fee reduction through the **College of Arts and Law Alumni Bursary scheme**.

Entry requirements

The programme allows for multi-disciplinary entry. You need an upper second-class Honours degree, or equivalent, in humanities, social sciences, medicine or a cognate discipline.

Learn more about **entry requirements**

International students

Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our **country pages** show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an **English language qualification** to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our **English courses for international students**

How to apply

Learn more about **applying**

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the **How to apply pages**

Apply now

Learning and teaching

You will be taught by colleagues from across the University, and have access to expert supervision on a variety of topics from leading academics in the Department of Philosophy and the Birmingham Law School.

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the **Academic Writing Advisory Service (AWAS)** which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the **English for International Students Unit (EISU)**.

Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

The Adobe Flash Player or an HTML5 supported browser is required for video playback.
Get the latest Flash Player
Learn more about upgrading to an HTML5 browser

Our Philosophy graduates develop a range of skills including, good articulation, precise analytical thought, and the ability to analyse and construct sounds arguments, which can be used in a variety of occupations. A snapshot of graduate destinations over a five-year period has identified a variety of career paths, from the civil service to finance. Historically, over 96% of our Philosophy students have been in employment or further study within six months of graduating.

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