

## The arts and politics of social well-being

(University of Applied Sciences Bremen, Germany: 6 ECTS)

The WHO's definition of health is: „a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity“ (WHO 2006). As social well-being is a complex phenomenon and includes political aspects, this part of the definition is often neglected in health sciences, even though it has a great impact on the daily work of healthcare providers like nurses. As there is no objective definition of well-being, this programme starts from the students' individual point of view, inciting creative ways of self-expression to form a personal vision of well-being. As a project group the students will create a multimedial impulse for social change or further reflection. The process will be scientifically accompanied by lectures on narratology, phenomenology of the body and norm-critical pedagogy. The seminar is designed as a hybrid format, students can join per Zoom or in presence.

### Course content:

As the concept of well-being is a very diffuse one, it enables to follow the vision to make the world a better place to live. At the same time it is a fundamental part of every health profession. On the other hand the term well-being rests somehow abstract and meaningless. Every individual has its own perspective on well-being. Personal perspectives on well-being even can oppose the society's perspective.

To explore this issue, the students form project groups. Starting from their own personal views and ideas on social well-being they look for social phenomena they would like to reflect on. As a group they chose a phenomenon and work on a creative multimedial impulse to improve the respective social well-being (e.g. a video, a performance, a podcast, an app, a painting or a narration). To extend their range of social perception and creativity there will be lectures on the phenomenology of the body accompanied by exercises on bodily social perception.

The work of the project groups is accompanied by theoretical lectures that start by reflecting our beliefs and attitudes on the basis of a narrative approach. We proceed on the assumption that we normally have a narration of ourselves as a social being. We hold concepts of our own, that frame our social interaction - we are the heroes of our life story. In a next step we reflect on norms we share with others. We apply norm-critical thinking to reflect the rules of our social perception. As norm-critical reflection normally is accompanied by the willingness to change something (e.g. injustices), we will finally discuss pedagogical issues. How can critical thinking be transformed into an impulse or guidance for other people to reflect the phenomenon in the same way and/ or change their behavior?

The tool for sharing and discussing the different topics will be the online whiteboard collaboard. The live sessions will be held in a hybrid form (online per zoom & in presence).

If you want to join the course, please contact [Eckart.Seilacher@hs-bremen.de](mailto:Eckart.Seilacher@hs-bremen.de).

**Learning outcomes:**

The students deepen their reflection on the connection between personal views and scientific working methods. They learn, that critical thinking is not only a scientific technology adapted to their respective specialized field, but includes an ethical stance.

**Requirements:**

The students should have finished the first third of their studies and should have reflected on the basic standards of scientific working.

**Assessment method**

In the final session every group will present its outcomes on the chosen topic. The presentation can be a normal lecture with powerpoint, but it can also be a video, a performance, a podcast, an app, a painting, a narration, etc. Important for any form of presentation is some kind of critical, scientific reflection on the content presented. This might be e.g. a handout accompanying a painting. Afterwards everybody hands in the presented material accompanied by a short scientific essay on the topic.

**Hybrid meetings (personal or via zoom) take place every Wednesday in November and December 14:00 – 17:15. Following the meeting, there will be a group work session every Wednesday evening for the individual project groups.**

**Schedule 2025:**

- 1) 5<sup>th</sup> November 14:00 – 17:15
- 2) 12<sup>th</sup> November 14:00 – 17:15
- 3) 19<sup>th</sup> November 14:00 – 17:15
- 4) 26<sup>th</sup> November 14:00 – 17:15
- 5) 3<sup>rd</sup> December 14:00 – 17:15
- 6) 10<sup>th</sup> December 14:00 – 17:15
- 7) 17<sup>th</sup> December 14:00 – 17:15 (presentation of the projects)

The deadline for submission of the project materials and the scientific essay is 11<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

**References:**

- Böhme, G. (2014). My Body—My Lived-body. *Dialogue and Universalism*, 24(4), 44–53. <https://doi.org/10.5840/du201424489>
- Hühn, P., Pier, J., Schmid, W. & Schönert, J. (Hrsg.). (2013). *the living handbook of narratology*. <https://www-archiv.fdm.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/contents.html>
- Maani, N., van Schalkwyk, M. C., Petticrew, M. & Buse, K. (2022). The pollution of health discourse and the need for effective counter-framing. *BMJ*, 377, o1128. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.o1128>
- Pelters, B. (2018). On mountains and prophets: targeting majorities to support minorities by using norm-critics in health education. *International journal of qualitative studies on health and well-being*, 13(sup1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2018.1522203>
- WHO. (2006). *Constitution of the world health organization*.