

# PHIL 291: ADVANCED SEMINAR IN EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

## PHILOSOPHY OF MEDICINE



Spring 2025  
Mondays, 6:00-8:00 PM  
Sweeney Hall 241

Dr. Riana Betzler ([riana.betzler@sjsu.edu](mailto:riana.betzler@sjsu.edu))

Medicine is among our most powerful institutions. It is tasked with uncovering the causes of disease, curing illness, enhancing well-being, and caring for people when they are at their most vulnerable. But a whole host of (often unrecognized) philosophical questions underlie medical practice and the biomedical sciences. In this course, we will consider some of the following topics (and why they matter for ethics and society!):



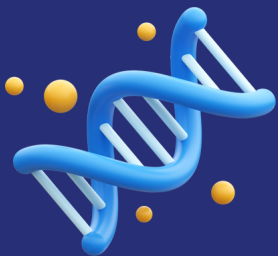
### HEALTH AND DISEASE

What is health? Is it just the absence of disease? Or something more (such as flourishing or well-being)? And what is disease?



### CAUSES AND EVIDENCE

Does drinking alcohol cause cancer? Does Tylenol reduce the duration of the common cold? Medicine is full of causal claims. But what kind of evidence licenses these claims?



### HOLISM AND REDUCTIONISM

Can diseases be reduced to their biological mechanisms? If we find a gene for schizophrenia, for example, is that all there is to it? What about lived experiences?



### OBJECTIVITY AND VALUES

Is medical knowledge objective? What might this mean? Is it possible to talk about health and disease without making reference to values? Whose expertise matters?

**Prerequisites:** At least one upper-division course in epistemology or metaphysics, or instructor consent. This course satisfies graduate-level GWAR in this master's program

**Materials:** Stegenga (2018), *Care and Cure*; additional key texts in the Philosophy of Medicine