

Interdisciplinary perspectives on health and disability, 7.5 credits

Tvärvetenskapliga perspektiv på hälsa och funktionshinder, 7,5 hp

Course Code/Codes	70HV087
Subject Area	Disability Research
School/equivalent	School of Health Sciences
Valid from	Spring semester 2027
Approved	2022-03-31
Revised	2026-10-02
Approved by	Head of School
Translation to English, date and signature	2022-09-09 CHK

1 Course content

This interdisciplinary introductory course on health and disability is grounded in a biopsychosocial perspective. The course examines key perspectives in the philosophy of science, with particular emphasis on critical realism and its implications for interdisciplinary knowledge production. It addresses ontological and epistemological issues, the relationships between research questions, methodological choices, and levels of analysis, and explores how biological, psychological, and social perspectives can be integrated in research on health and disability.

The course also examines the interaction between impairments and the environmental, social, and structural barriers and facilitators that may hinder or promote individuals' full participation in society. In addition to the biopsychosocial perspective, the course introduces and critically discusses other approaches to disability, including the medical model and the social model of disability.

Research on health, impairment, and disability constitutes an interdisciplinary field in which knowledge from multiple academic disciplines is integrated to address complex phenomena related to human functioning, participation, and well-being.

The course includes:

- ontological and epistemological questions in relation to knowledge production in an interdisciplinary context on health and disability,
- critical review and analysis of the role of science in understanding health and disability,
- identification and formulation of interdisciplinary research questions, and
- describing health, functioning and disability from a biopsychosocial perspective.

2 Outcomes

2.1 The course in relation to the doctoral program

The course shall primarily refer to the following intended learning outcomes for third-cycle courses and study programmes as described in the Higher Education Ordinance, i.e. the doctoral student shall demonstrate:

Knowledge and understanding

- broad knowledge and systematic understanding of the research field (part of outcome 1)
- advanced and up-to-date specialised knowledge in a limited area of this field (part of outcome 1)
- familiarity with research methodology in general (part of outcome 2)
- familiarity with the methods of the specific field of research in particular (part of outcome 2)

Competence and skills

- the capacity for scholarly analysis and synthesis (part of outcome 3)
- the capacity to review and assess new and complex phenomena, issues and situations autonomously and critically (part of outcome 3)
- the ability to identify and formulate issues with scholarly precision critically, autonomously and creatively (part of outcome 4)
- the ability to plan and use appropriate methods to undertake research and other qualified tasks within predetermined time frames (part of outcome 4)
- the ability to review and evaluate research and other qualified tasks (part of outcome 4)
- through a dissertation the ability to make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge through his or her own research (outcome 5)
- the ability in both national and international contexts to present and discuss research and research findings authoritatively in speech and writing and in dialogue with the academic community and society in general (outcome 6)
- the ability to identify the need for further knowledge (outcome 7)
- the capacity to contribute to social development both through research and education and in some other qualified professional capacity (part of outcome 8)
- the capacity to support the learning of others (part of outcome 8)

Judgement and approach

- intellectual autonomy and disciplinary rectitude (part of outcome 9)
- the ability to make assessments of research ethics (part of outcome 9)
- specialised insight into the possibilities and limitations of research, its role in society and the responsibility of the individual for how it is used (outcome 10)

The intended learning outcomes are listed in the same order as in the program's general syllabus.

2.2 Intended course learning outcomes

To obtain a passing grade, the doctoral student shall demonstrate:

- understanding of the relationship between ontological and epistemological assumptions and research practice in interdisciplinary research.
- ability to position their own doctoral research within a philosophy of science tradition and reflect on the implications for research design and methodological choices.
- ability to identify and analyze interactions between biological, psychological, and social levels of analysis in research on health and disability.
- understanding of theories of health, functioning, disability, and disabling structures.
- ability to formulate and justify interdisciplinary research questions and relate these to appropriate methodological approaches.
- ability to independently produce a scientific text, critically review, discuss, and defend scientific texts, as well as critically appraise the scientific work of others.
- ability to formulate research problems from an interdisciplinary perspective relevant to health and/or disability.

3 Reading list and other teaching material

The following course readings and teaching material will be used on the course:

Course readings for module 1, Theory of Science, 2.5 credits

Allen, C., & Mehler, D. M. (2019). Open science challenges, benefits and tips in early career and beyond. *PLoS biology*, 17(5), e3000246. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3000246>

Andreasson, J., & Johansson, T. (2020). *Vetenskapsteori: Grunder och tillämpning*. Studentlitteratur.

Bhaskar, R., & Danermark, B. (2006). Metatheory, interdisciplinarity and disability research: A critical realist perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*, 8(4), 278–297.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15017410600914329>

Bhaskar, R., Danermark, B., & Price, L. (2017). *Interdisciplinarity and wellbeing: A critical realist general theory of interdisciplinarity*. Taylor & Francis.

Chalmers, A. F. (2013). *What is this thing called science?* (4th ed.). Open University Press.

Danermark, B. (2006). Socialt arbete och kunskap: Tre metateoretiska mönster. I B. Blom, S. Morén, & L. Nygren (Red.), *Kunskap i socialt arbete* (s. 33–48). Natur & Kultur.

Fletcher, A. J. (2017). Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method. *International journal of social research methodology*, 20(2), 181–194.

Hacking, I. (1999). *The social construction of what?* Harvard University Press.

Price, L. (2014). Critical realist versus mainstream interdisciplinarity. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 13(1), 52–76.

Repko, A. F. & Szostak, R. (2021). *Interdisciplinary Research: Process and Theory* (4:e uppl.).

Course readings for module 2, Interdisciplinarity, Health and Disability, 5 credits

Bickenbach, E.J., Chatterju, S., Badley, E.M. & Üstün, T.B. (1999). Models of disablement,

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). *The bioecological model of human development*. I W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Red.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (6:e uppl., s. 793–828). John Wiley & Sons

Engel, G. L. (1977). The need for a new medical model: A challenge for biomedicine. *Science*, 196(4286), 129–136.

Goodley, D. (2025). *Disability studies: An interdisciplinary introduction*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Holland, D. (2014). *Integrating knowledge through interdisciplinary research: Problems of theory and practice*. Routledge.

Kuper, H., Shakespeare, T., & Mpanju-Shumbusho, W. (2025). Announcing The Lancet Commission on Disability and Health: Creating disability-inclusive health systems that leave no one behind. *The Lancet*, 406(10500), 215–216.

Rowe, J. W. (2008). Introduction: Approaching interdisciplinary research. In F. Kessel, P. L. Rosenfield, & N. B. Anderson (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary research: Case studies from health and social science* (pp. 3–10). Oxford University Press

Rönnberg, J. (2004). Cognition, communication and disability. In W. Östreng (Ed.), *Synergies* (pp. 13–15). Centre for Advanced Study at the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters.

World Health Organization. (2001). International classification of functioning, disability and health (ICF). <https://iris.who.int/server/api/core/bitstreams/83e1c3e0-cf9e-4063-a424-71ccc9a84ded/content>

World Health Organization. (2022). Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240063600>

Additional course readings

Additional literature may be assigned in the form of journal articles.

4 Teaching formats

Teaching in the course takes the following format:

Lectures, independent study, and seminars.

5 Examination

The course is assessed through the following examinations which will be graded separately:

1.1 Theory of Science 2.5 credits. Individual written hand-in assignment on ontological and epistemological questions in relation to interdisciplinary research. Code: 0100

1.2 Interdisciplinarity, health and disability, 5 credits. Individual written hand-in assignment as well as defense of and discussion on another course participant's work regarding interdisciplinary research on health and disability. Code: 0200

For examinations consisting of several examination components, the following applies:
If during the course it is concluded that a doctoral student is unable to complete a certain examination component, the examiner may set a substitute assignment provided that circumstances do not reasonably allow for the course component to be completed at a later date during the run of the course.

6 Grades

Examinations on third-cycle courses and study programmes are to be assessed according to a two-grade scale with either of the grades 'fail' or 'pass' (local regulations).

The grade shall be determined by a teacher specifically nominated by the higher education institution (the examiner) (Higher Education Ordinance).

To obtain a passing grade on examinations included in the course, the doctoral student is required to demonstrate that he/she attains the intended course learning outcomes as described in section 2.2. Alternatively, if the course consists of multiple examinations generating credit, the doctoral student is required to demonstrate that he/she attains the outcomes that the examination in question refers to in accordance with section 5.

A student who has failed an examination is entitled to a retake.

If an examination consists of several examination components, and a student fails an examination component, the examiner may, as an alternative to a retake, set a make-up assignment with regard to the examination component in question.

A doctoral student who has failed an examination twice for a specific course or course element is

entitled, upon his/her request, to have another examiner appointed to determine the grade.

7 Admission to the course

7.1 Admission requirements

To gain access to the course and complete the examinations included in the course, the applicant must be admitted to a doctoral program at Örebro University.

7.2 Selection

Selection between applicants who have been admitted to doctoral programs at Örebro University and who otherwise meet the admission requirements as listed above is made according to the following order of precedence:

If no other selection criteria are specified in this section, priority shall be given to applicants with a lower number of course credits left before the award of their degree over applicants with a higher number of remaining course credits. Should two or more students have equal number of credits, selection will be done through the drawing of lots. This also applies within any selection groups listed unless otherwise stated.

7.3 Other applicants than doctoral students admitted at Örebro University

Other applicants than doctoral students admitted at Örebro University may be given access to the course on the grounds of provisions for and/or agreements regarding contracted courses, joint degrees, national graduate schools or cooperation in other respects with other universities.

Any decisions on what such other applicants may be given access to the course are made separately and based on the provisions and/or agreements that occasion the student to apply for the course.

8 Transfer of credits for courses, study programs and other experience

Provisions on the transfer of credits are set out in the Higher Education Ordinance and on the university's webpage.

9 Other information

The course is offered in English, alternatively in Swedish, and is a distance learning course.

Transitional provisions