

Call for papers

Valuations of Life: Birth defects, prenatal diagnoses, and disability

International workshop at Uppsala University, Sweden, 25-26 September 2018.

Definitions of what counts as a valuable life implicitly and explicitly saturate both historical and contemporary narratives about birth defects, prenatal diagnoses, and disability. The aim of this workshop is to contribute knowledge of how life has been valued and by what means. We are interested in both historical and contemporary studies.

We are particularly interested in how different technologies, historically and currently, have guided, aided, or informed the valuation process. How, for example, have methods such as amniocentesis, ultrasound, new abortion methods, blood marker tests, but also prosthesis-technologies, bio-engineering methods, and economic calculation models, influenced the valuations? Which value scales, old or new, have collided in the processes, and with which consequences? How has the valuing and evaluation of life and its relation to different technologies been discussed and negotiated by scientists, medical professionals, lobbyists, policy makers, media, economists, pregnant women, individuals, parents, families, interest groups, or political and religious organizations?

We welcome proposals for papers or presentations of work-in-progress that analyze these questions from different perspectives.

Of special interest may be, for example, studies of:

- Concepts of life value and evaluation in history, law, science and medicine.
- Biopolitics and the making of life value as measurable and objective.
- Technologies that help, change, or in other way affect the definition of value of life, or the evaluation of it.
- Mathematical methods to calculate life value in economic terms, and their implementation.
- Conflicts and negotiations around life value between different actors and/or interest groups, such as the medical professions, patient organizations, religious organizations, private/corporate actors, and nation states or the equivalent.
- Visual cultures of a life worth living.
- Birth defects and the value of life.
- Normalization and medicalization.

Keynote speaker: Professor Susanne Klausen, Carleton University, Canada.
“Contesting Eugenic Abortion: The Legacy of the 1960s Thalidomide Tragedy for the Ongoing Struggle for Women's Reproductive Freedom”

We welcome perspectives from history, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, science and technology studies, and other relevant fields. Abstracts for papers *or* for work-in-progress presentations, of a maximum of 250 words, should be submitted no later than June 1, 2018, to helena.franzen@idehist.uu.se.

Please provide your full name, institutional affiliation, and contact details. The format of the workshop will not allow for more than c. 15 papers. We will evaluate the abstracts based on the originality of the research and the relevance to the theme of the workshop. Applicants will be notified if their papers have been accepted or not by June 17, 2018. The conference language is English.

The workshop is two full days, i.e. morning to late afternoon, September 25–26, 2018. Registration, lunches, workshop dinner and accommodation (two nights at the conference hotel) are free of charge for participants presenting papers. It may also be possible to obtain limited economic support for travel expenses. Please indicate in the application if such support is required for attendance and what level of support is needed.

If you would like to attend without a paper, or a presentation, the application deadline is also June 1, 2018. Please email helena.franzen@idehist.uu.se and indicate your reasons for wanting to take part in the workshop. Please note that only attendees who present a paper are eligible for economic support.

The workshop is organized by Maria Björkman, Ph.D., and Annika Berg, Ph.D., both working within the research program “Medicine at the Borders of Life: Fetal Research and the Emergence of Ethical Controversy” which is funded by the Swedish Research Council and hosted by the Department of History of Science and Ideas at Uppsala University, Sweden (medicalborders.se).