Course Description

This American University course on Global Public Health is closely linked with the NSLC program on Medicine and Health Care as it utilizes an international perspective to examine concepts and issues in global public health. Throughout this course, students will receive an overview of important issues and actors in global public health and learn about the interconnectedness of health, politics, economics and culture. The course focuses on health issues of relevance in both the global North and South and emphasises the social, cultural and economic underpinnings of health concerns and solutions. Each session and post-course follow-up will include multimedia approaches to learning as students watch films, read popular and scholarly articles and have in-class and online debates and discussions about major health issues affecting the world today. Case studies and in-class participatory exercises, based on discussions of existing and emerging health issues, will be drawn upon to explore important concerns to global public health. Complementing the NSLC-led trips to medical facilities, simulation exercises about disease-containment and lectures, this course will inform students about the major actors and issues in global public health while challenging them to design effective and innovative solutions for problems likely to arise in the 21st century world.

Course Objectives

Students will learn to:

1. Discuss health issues of relevance to the global North and South
2. Recognise major actors and issues in the field of Global Public Health
3. Consider the social, political, cultural and economic dimensions of health issues.
4. Design innovative and effective solutions.
Course Topics

1. What is Global Public Health and why does it matter to us?
   - A brief history of GPH: main actors and issues
   - Introduction of health issues in the Global North and South
   - Why study public health?

   *Questions to think about: Is “global” public health truly global? How can we make it more so?*

2. It’s not just about medicine: Poverty, War, Human Rights, Environment, Security
   - Diseases and public health in the developing world.
   - Complex emergencies


3. Current topics in Global Public Health: 21st century challenges in Global Public Health
   - Different types of health concerns: infectious and chronic diseases, environmental health, biohazards.
   - New and emerging health issues
   - Health care: Costs and benefits

   *Questions to think about: what makes an issue of concern to global public health? Are these issues the same for everyone around the world?*

4. Designing innovative solutions: programs for the future
   - The Players: Communities, firms, states, NGOs, international organisations
   - The Mechanisms: local, regional, global monitoring and communication
   - The Programs: case studies.

   *Questions to think about: Think of some innovative ways we can facilitate global access to healthcare and health information. How would you improve delivery of health services to low-income people and people living in remote areas? Also think about the differences between population-based and clinical approaches to health management.*

Readings

*All readings will be available online. Some of the readings may change during the course.*

General readings on Global Public Health:

● “When Worlds Collide” (a video on microbes): http://www.hhmi.org/biointeractive/museum/index.html

Readings on Infectious Diseases (in class, we will be focusing mainly on HIV/AIDS; Influenza; Malaria and waterborne diseases):

● WHO web site on “Infectious Diseases”: http://www.who.int/topics/infectious_diseases/en/
● PBS site on the 1918 influenza epidemic: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/influenza/
● Malaria:
  o CDC: http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/control_prevention/prevention.htm
  o WHO’s Global Malaria Programme: http://www.who.int/malaria/

Readings on Economic, Social, Cultural links to Global Health:

Assignments

FOR ALL STUDENTS

Please email me at pdixit05@gmail.com if you have any questions about your assignments. Communicating health information effectively is among the learning objectives for the course and so you will need to think creatively about how best to convey your ideas and results.

1) Two short assignments (400-500 words each)

Students will complete two short assignments. One assignment will be in the form of a “field report” and will describe a particular health issue you have observed or been part of during the course of your life. This paper should be in the form of a journal or a diary, detailing your experiences with one (or more) health-related issue(s). Such issues should be everyday issues that you know about—eating disorders, flu, mental health, allergies, children's health, use of pesticides, and so on. Think about somewhere you have visited or where you were sick—how were you sick? What was done about it? How is this particular health issue of concern to public health? Write this up in the form of a journal.

The second assignment should be in the form of an Op-Ed article. An Op-Ed article is an opinion or editorial piece that you can find in newspapers and magazines. First, pick a public health concern (this may be the same one as the one you wrote your journal assignment on) and then write to a newspaper about why this issue is important to public health, what is being done to address it effectively and what your own recommendations for raising awareness of this issue are. Examples of Op-Ed articles will be provided on our web site.

Both papers should demonstrate an understanding of the topic and its place in the broader issue of global public health.

2) Country (or Region) Report (1500-2000 words)

Students will write a country (or region) report for this assignment. These reports should be similar to those published by international organizations or states. For examples, see the World Health Organisation website for Country and Region Reports. Instead of country reports, you may write regional (e.g. “South-east Asia” or “Eastern Europe”) health reports.

Each report should have a 1-2 paragraph Introduction, which provides an overview of the country (or region) you are focusing on. This should be followed by the main part of the report, with well-defined sections on key health issues, overview of healthcare facilities, current interventions and future policy recommendations. Please discuss the content and scope of your report with me before beginning your project.

Questions addressed should include:
• What is the nature and magnitude of the problem in the country/region?
• Who is affected by it?
• What are the risk factors for the problem?
• What are the economic and social consequences of the problem?
• What solutions do you recommend for this problem? (give reasons for your recommendations)

Outside research will be necessary to complete these reports and citations are mandatory.

3) Participation

Students are also expected to participate in class discussions. Engaged discussion, curiosity and a desire to interact and challenge your classmates are all required. Participation grades will be part of your overall grade so please come prepared to ask questions, debate and discuss solutions to public health concerns.

TWO CREDIT OPTION:

Students who take the course for two credits will submit additional work.

1) Disease Presentation (1500-2000 words)

Students will compile an informational presentation on a particular disease or health issue. Students will research major questions regarding their particular health issue, including epidemiology and transmission, affected population(s), potential treatments, public health programs to address the health issue and propose ways of managing it.

You have the choice of writing your report as a written report or as a video (at least 5 minutes long; not more than 10 minutes) or as a poster. Examples of these three formats will be provided on our web site. Citations are required. Students will be graded both on the accuracy of the information presented and the effectiveness of the presentation itself.

Grading

Grades for the one credit option will be based on participation (15%), short papers (30%), and the country report (55%). Grades for the two credit option will be based on participation (10%), short papers (20%), the country report (35%), and the disease presentation (35%).

Introduction to Blackboard

The first class session will include instructions on logging in to the American University Blackboard system, and the course page. Students will need to be comfortable with the system before they finish classes.