Course Description

This course complements the NSLC program on Medicine and Health Care by utilizing an international perspective on health issues. Students will receive an overview of important issues and actors in the historical development of global public health and discuss current and future issues that are likely to be of concern in the 21st century world. The course focuses on health issues of relevance in both the global North and South. Emphasis is placed on the transmission and management of infectious diseases, with particular attention on the political, social, economic and technological underpinnings of health concerns and solutions. Instruction sessions and post-course follow-up will include multimedia approaches to learning: students will watch films, access websites, read popular and scholarly articles and have in-class and online debates and discussions about major health issues affecting the world today.

Course Objectives

Students will learn to:

1. Discuss health issues of relevance to countries in the global North and South.
2. Locate current health issues in political, historical, economic and societal contexts.
3. Discuss disease transmission and management.

Course Topics

1. What is Global Public Health and why does it matter to us?
• A Brief History of Global Public Health
• Who are the main actors and institutions?
• What are the key issues
• Why study public health?

2. Local Health Issues into Global Health Problems: How do pandemics happen?

• Types of Disease Transmission: Vertical and Horizontal Modes
• The Role of Social and Economic Life in Disease Transmission
• The Role of Technology in Disease Transmission
• The Case of Swine Flu

3. Managing the Transmission of Disease: Surveillance and Intervention

• Who watches for the transmission of disease?
• How is disease transmission managed interpersonally, intra-nationally and internationally?

Required readings

All the following readings are available on Blackboard and some are available on the Class Website

General Readings


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

Readings on Infectious Disease and Transmission

Eugenia Wickens and Sevil Sonmez. 2007. “Casual Sex in the Sun Makes the Holiday: Young Tourists’ Perspectives,” in Population Mobility and Infectious Disease, ed. Yorghos
Apostolopoulos and Sevil Sonmez. New York: Springer.


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/


CDC, on Malaria: http://www.cdc.gov/malaria/control_prevention/prevention.htm

WHO’s Global Malaria Programme: http://www.who.int/malaria/


WHO, Management and Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases: http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/en/

Using DNA to identify and trace infectious diseases. Review http://www.koshland-science-museum.org/exhibitdna/inf01.jsp

Recommended Sites

The Gates Foundation: http://www.gatesfoundation.org/default.htm

Primer on Health Statistics: http://www.dsf.health.state.pa.us/health/cwp/view.asp?a=175&q=202135

World Health Organization: http://www.who.int/en/


Assignments

FOR ALL STUDENTS

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 papers (400-500 words each)**

Students will complete two short papers. One paper 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?

The second paper will research a particular health care and health management system of a country you have visited (or would like to visit). Pick a health issue of concern to this country. What is being done to manage it? How is the issue you are writing about understood and communicated to the public?

Both papers should demonstrate an understanding of the topic and its place in the broader issue of global public health. Please discuss the contents and presentations of both papers with me before you start writing anything.

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. If you prefer, you can choose one health concern to focus upon and structure your report accordingly. Please discuss the content and scope of your report with me before beginning your project.

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

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!

TWO CREDIT OPTION:

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

1) International Health Article (500 words)

Students will write an article on a current public health concern. The article may be in the form of a traditional news piece, an op-ed, a letter to the editors, or a short review of a recent publication. Articles are expected to comment on relevant global public health issue(s).

2) Disease Presentation (1500-2000 words)

Students will compile an informational presentation on a particular disease or health issue. It is recommended that you expand upon the issue you picked for your Health Article for this assignment. 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.

Presentations are to be created either using powerpoint or in the form of an informational packet, which may be constructed using a series of informational brochures. 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 (15%), the country report (35%), the health article (10%), and the disease presentation (30%).

**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, as the course readings and assignments will be available through Blackboard.