BOSTON UNIVERSITY GENEVA PROGRAM
PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL HEALTH (PH 506E)
Fall Semester 2011

Instructor: Alan Schnur
Email: aschnur@bu.edu
Credits: 4
Schedule: 1 September to 6 October 2011 (see provisional course schedule)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION
Globalization has increased the ability of people and diseases to travel more widely and rapidly so that a health problem or an outbreak of a new disease, even in a remote country, can rapidly become a global problem. Many examples of this exist, such as the spread of HIV, influenza, drug resistant malaria and tuberculosis, and the SARS outbreak. As a result, the field of International Health is assuming increasing importance. International Health is a complex area with a broad range of factors affecting whether countries (and areas within countries) have better or worse health outcomes, higher or lower life expectancies or are at increased risk of being the source of a new pandemic. An easily prevented or treated condition in one country can be a life threatening condition in another. Differences in health conditions (both between and within countries) are affected by many factors, including level of economic development, differences in climate, lifestyle and communications. This course provides an overview of international health issues mainly from a global perspective, with a focus on selected major topics (such as health systems, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, emergency response, and maternal, reproductive and child health), and their effect on vulnerable populations. Students will gain an understanding of the main issues in international health based on presentations by experts working in the field.

The course consists of 20 sessions, comprising at least 40 contact hours with lecturers. Many sessions are led by global experts who are currently working with, or have worked with, the World Health Organization and other international health agencies. The sessions are intended to be interactive, with the aim of not merely providing facts, but of stimulating exchange of ideas on important international health issues. The guest lectures will present an opportunity for students to gain the perspective of experts with a wealth of field experience, going beyond the facts available in textbooks and journal articles. Course meeting times will be in the afternoon of the specified days, although the exact timing may vary for some days depending on the schedules of guest lecturers.

Background reading for each session will be assigned (relevant journal articles, fact sheets and other documents), to enable students to come to each session with some background on what will be discussed and with points that they would like to explore. Copies of the textbook International Public Health: Diseases, programs, systems, and policies, Merson, MH, Black, RE, and Mills, AJ (Second Edition, 2006) will also be available for students.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. Understand the major components of international health.
2. Understand the major factors affecting international health.
4. Understand the complexity of the international health context and interaction between major international health actors/organizations.
LEARNING OBJECTIVES
By the end of the course students should be able to:
1. List the major causes of mortality and morbidity affecting vulnerable populations worldwide.
2. Describe how and why mortality varies by region and between and within countries, including socio-economic factors that influence health.
3. Define strategies for delivering interventions to combat major international health problems and give examples of interventions delivered using these strategies.
4. Describe the major prevention and treatment programs that are recommended for reducing the global burden of disease morbidity and mortality.
5. Describe how global public health security is being fostered.
6. Describe trends in international health over the past fifty years.

METHODOLOGY:
1. Readings.
2. Class lectures.
3. Discussions with the instructor and guest expert lecturers to better understand the realities of international health at global level and in countries.
4. Interactive class discussions based on readings and presentations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, on which evaluation of the student is based, are as follows:
   Class participation: 15%
   Quiz: 15%
   Presentation on selected regional topic (prepared in small working groups): 15%
   Course paper for a selected country and program area: 25%
   Final exam: 30%

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Class participation is a vital element of this course. All students are expected to raise questions and discuss issues based on the readings, the lectures, and comments from guest lecturers or the instructor. Relevant comments or questions based on past work or academic experiences are encouraged.

Class participation is graded on the quantity and quality of content. Participation at “A” level is based on the following criteria:

• The participant has insightful comments and questions that prompt on-topic discussion.
• Varying opinions bring richness to discussions. If disagreeing with another class member’s ideas, the participant states his/her disagreement or objections courteously.
• The participant states informed comments and opinions (whether original or in response to another comment, whether in agreement or disagreement) which draw upon relevant readings, lectures, class discussions and/or other experiences. The student’s participation helps clarify or synthesize issues.
• The student’s participation demonstrates that s/he has read the assigned readings with a “critical eye”. Participation should demonstrate not only mastery of the content of the assigned materials but an ability to critically analyze.

Please note that the lecturers are taking time from their busy work schedules to share their expertise, so sessions need to start on schedule. Students are expected to attend each session, but if there are circumstances that will result in an absence or tardy attendance please notify the instructor in advance. Excused absences will only be granted under special conditions and must be
pre-arranged ahead of time with the instructor and approved by the Program Director. Any unexcused late arrival or absence will be taken into account when grading class participation. Students who do not participate effectively will be given feedback during the course.

Reading assignments for each class session, as mentioned in the syllabus, need to be completed before class. Evidence of having read the assignment will count toward the participation grade.

**EXAMS:** A quiz and a final exam using short answer and short essay format will be administered. The purpose of the exams is to show the student’s grasp of the issues and materials. Please note that all class material, such as information covered during lectures and discussions, may be included in the quiz/exams and not just the reading materials.

**GROUP PRESENTATION:** Working in small groups and preparing and presenting summaries of discussions to others is an important part of international health work. Groups of three or four students will be formed (assigned by the instructor) to each prepare a 12-minute presentation on a selected program area problem with a focus on this program for a selected region and present it to “a plenary session”, followed by 10 minutes discussion “in plenary”. (See separate handout providing additional details and explaining the parameters of this assignment).

**PAPER** covering a particular program area in a selected country (not more than 1500 words): Each student will prepare a briefing paper, with an advocacy section, for a specific country on a program area/topic agreed beforehand with the instructor. The paper will review and analyze the most relevant issues for the selected country, considering the reading materials and the lecturers’ presentations as well as class discussions and other reference materials selected by the student. It is expected that the student will look into a country and area of international health new to him/her, building on the topics covered during the course, rather than repeat a topic covered in previously prepared papers. The country and topic will be agreed with the instructor at latest by 12 September 2011, with the completed paper handed in by the last day of the course. (See separate handout providing additional details and explaining the parameters of this assignment).

**ACADEMIC CODE OF CONDUCT:** Please make sure that you are familiar with the BU Academic Conduct Code. [http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/](http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/)

Instructor “Office Hours“: I am pleased to meet with students, by appointment, concerning questions related to the course or any other international health matters (e.g. internships at WHO) before or after class. Please speak to me after class or send me an email to set up an appointment.

*Version: 18 August 2011*