## Controversies in International health

**Fall Semester, 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course dates:</th>
<th>Tuesdays, October 18- December 6 2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venue:</td>
<td>Boston University Geneva program, 30 rue des Vollandes, 1207 Genève</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Mandate:
This course, jointly organized by the Boston University International Programs-Geneva and the Division of International and Humanitarian Medicine of the Geneva University Hospitals, follows the signature of a collaborative formal agreement between BU and the University of Geneva.

### Organizers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boston University Geneva Programs</th>
<th>Division of International and Humanitarian Medicine, HUG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Carla Rachman, PhD</td>
<td>Dr Slim Slama, MD, MPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Director</td>
<td>Course Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email: <a href="mailto:crachman@bu.edu">crachman@bu.edu</a></td>
<td>email: <a href="mailto:slim.slama@hcuge.ch">slim.slama@hcuge.ch</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Alexandra Garcia,</td>
<td>Dr. Atti-La Dahlgren, MD, MPH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Assistant</td>
<td>Course Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>email: <a href="mailto:asgarcia22@gmail.com">asgarcia22@gmail.com</a></td>
<td>email: <a href="mailto:atti-la@dahlgren.ch">atti-la@dahlgren.ch</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boston University Geneva Programs
30 Rue des Vollandes
CH-1207 Genève
Tel. +41 22 700 9461
Fax. +41 22 700 9644

Division of International and Humanitarian Medicine
Geneva University Hospitals (HUG)
4, rue Gabrielle Perret-Gentil
CH-1211 Geneva 14
Tel: + 41 22 372 96 72
Fax: + 41 22 372 95 05
Course description:

Numerous controversies have marked the evolution of modern public health. The use of quarantines to prevent the spread of certain infectious diseases, mass campaigns of immunization, development of modern contraceptives, and the use of seatbelts to prevent car accidents, to name but a few, are examples that have spurred heated debates in the global public health arena.

Despite the major improvements in science and technology in the 21st century, health improvements are unevenly distributed with many countries in the world showing little, uneven, or no progress at all. Understanding why such health disparities have arisen and persist requires us not only to analyze how health systems are organized, but also to consider broader economic, social and political issues that impede the achievement of health and wellbeing and influence living conditions of populations around the world. Central to the inherent complexity of the issues at hand is the analysis of the policy making process, i.e. how issues get on to the policy agenda, who decides and why certain programmes are implemented or not.

Policies are the results of interactions among different stakeholders (organizations, groups, networks or individuals) who share certain beliefs about which courses of action should be taken. The sum of these interactions forms what we call the policy process, which itself takes place in a wider social and political context. The distribution of power, the range of actors involved, their interests, and the formal and informal arrangements that govern the interactions among them are important factors to consider.

Through this course, students will be introduced to contemporary issues and controversies in international health. In addition to public and international controversies, we will also look at various public health issues usually kept secret from public scrutiny (e.g. the strategies of the tobacco industry) or which are particularly sensitive (e.g. corruption in the health sector). Various analytical frameworks will be presented to assist students in a critical analysis the issues being covered.

Course Objectives:

- To expose students to a variety of controversies in international health
- To assist students in using critical thinking to analyze international health issues
- To introduce students to various health policy analytic frameworks and tools
- To expose students to the work of various international health and humanitarian organizations

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Critically appraise a wide range of international health controversies, identifying the main actors, analyzing their respective arguments, interests, power and positions
- Articulate a particular controversy and build a case for their position on the issue, drawing on the various course materials and their own individual work and experiences.
- Work in groups to summarize, present and debate a given controversial issue during classroom discussions or through written assignments, expressing their opinions in a clear and convincing way.
· Examine how different organizations operate, prioritize their activities, and carry out their work in line with the controversies that will be studied in class.

**Format:**

This course relies on a variety of supports:

- Weekly readings
- In class lectures
- Viewing of global health documentaries
- In class interactive discussions. Discussions will be based on weekly reading and materials presented during class.
- Some discussion will be led by guest public health experts in person or through recorded material
- Site visits to international organizations

All of the above are a mandatory part of the course, which consists of at least 40 contact hours with the instructor. Course meeting times vary based on scheduling of site visits and guest lectures.

**Teaching material:**

Most of the teaching material will be made available on the blackboard prior to each session in specific folders. Reading assignments for a particular class session should be completed before class as we will discuss the reading in class and/or the session content will take off from where the text ends. We will usually limit the number of compulsory readings to one or two articles per session. Additional references/websites links/audio-visual material will be provided allowing those willing to deepen their understanding of the issues to do so. These references will also be useful to students to build their arguments for the group discussions and the written assignment. Evidence of having read the weekly assignment before the class discussion will count toward the participation grade.

**Class discussions:**

This course is meant to foster debates and interactions. Students will be asked to work in groups, to synthesize and comment the content of the assigned materials. Individual contributions will also be encouraged and assessed. Students should bring insightful comments and questions that prompt on-topic discussion. Varying opinions bring richness to discussion. This said, we expect students, to state any disagreement or objections to another class member’s idea in a respectful and courteous manner. The class will also provide a forum to share information amongst students on the work their are doing in their internships and a place to reflect on the course material as it relates to the internships. Students are encouraged to ask questions and raise discussion points about their internship work within the larger context of global public health.

**Site visits:**

Site visits to a few international health organizations will offer the opportunity to examine how different organizations operate, prioritize their activities, and carry out their work. These visits will also provide an operational context within which to consider the controversies that we study in class.
Absences and punctuality:

Planned absences should be notified to the instructor in advance and should have previously been discussed with Mrs Carla Rachman. Please note that punctual attendance is a given!

Course requirements, on which evaluation of the student is based, are as follows:

Class participation 20%
Midterm Quiz 20%
Final Quiz 20%
Paper 40%

Class Participation: See Class discussion above.
The class participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

- The participant has insightful comments and asks questions that stimulate on-topic discussion.
- The participant states comments and opinions (whether original or in response to another comment, whether in agreement or disagreement) which draw upon relevant references, readings, lectures, documentaries, internship and/or other experiences, etc.
- The student’s participation demonstrates that the assigned readings/documentaries have been studied with a “critical eye”. This means, participation not only demonstrates knowledge of the content of the assigned materials but a capability to analyze and compare to other opinions expressed in lectures, reading material, or site visits, etc.
- The student looks for and shares information beyond assigned readings to answer questions she or he has or developed in response to lectures, discussions, readings, documentaries.

Quizzes:

Two quizzes containing will be given at mid-term and the end of the course. The purpose of the quizzes is to review key material.

Paper: The paper should present a topic in international health that is subject to controversy. It should be focused on one issue in one country of your choice. The paper should contain an analysis following one of the frameworks presented in the course. The paper should be between 1500 - 2000 words long.

Grading:
Grading system is based on a standard A/F and 4.0 grading system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Low pass</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Academic code of conduct:** Please make sure that you are familiar with the BU Academic Conduct Code which covers cheating, plagiarism and other related topics. [http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/](http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/)

**Instructor “Office Hours”:** For questions that cannot be resolved by email, the course instructor is available to meet with students by appointment to discuss questions or concerns related to the course during the lunch hour of class, before class, some days after class, and sometimes on non-class days. Please send an email to set up an appointment: atti-la@dahlgren.ch