




Controversies in International Health

 Study Abroad: Geneva

October-December 2013

Course Description and Syllabus

Course dates: 24 October – 12 December 2013	
Venue : TBD	
Mandate: This course, jointly organized by the Boston University Study Abroad-Geneva and the Division of International and Humanitarian Medicine of the University Geneva	
Organizers:	
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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 Blackboard prior to each session in specific folders.

Reading assignments for a particular class sessions 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 they 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%

Final presentation: 40%

- Shiffman framework – 1-page: 5%
- Presentation – 35%

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.

Exams:

Two exams based on the readings, lectures and visits will be given at mid-term and the end of the course. The purpose of the exams is to review key material.

Presentation: Building on the paper from the Introduction Class students will develop the response to the health challenge chosen from a policy perspective using Shiffman's framework.

Grading:

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

A	93-100
A-	89-92
B+	85-88
B	81-84
B-	77-80
C+	73-76
C	69-72
C-	65-68
D	60-64
F	Below 60

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/>

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: david.beran@unige.ch

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 also includes any group or individual presentations that are given throughout the course.

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 courteously.
- The participant states informed comments and opinions 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 visiting 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.

Midterm and final exams:

Both the midterm and final exams are take home exams. Students can refer to course material during their exam, but it is expected that students will not work together on these.

The mid-term exam is due 22 November 23:59 Geneva Time

The final exam is due 6 December 23:59 Geneva Time

These exams will be comprised of two sections. Section 1 worth 60% of the mark will be based on material from the readings, presentations and class discussions. Section 1 will be graded on quality of answer. Section 2: will be an essay type question, comparing or contrasting issues, asking students for their opinion, etc. Section 2 will be graded on clarity and quality of answer.

Indications will be given in the exams as to the expected length of answers.

Final presentation:

1-pager due: 2 December at 09:00 Geneva time

Final presentations will take place during class on Thursday 25 April. You will have 10 minutes to present with a possibility of up to 5 minutes of questions. You will be stopped after 10 minutes.

The presentation should take the specific health challenge you chose in the Introduction course (not more than 10 minutes) and develop a policy response to this challenge using Shiffman's framework. This assignment will focus on the ability of the student to prepare a short presentation of a specific health problem in a specific context building on material from the course as well as additional research when necessary. The presentation should highlight the how the specific problem in the country chosen can be addressed from a policy perspective.

A 1-pager of the Shiffman Framework is to be submitted on the 17 April and will make up 5% of the grade of the final presentation.

The presentation will include references from peer reviewed journal articles/WHO documents, websites, the lecturers' presentations as well as authoritative class discussions. Sufficient references of adequate quality are required to support arguments. However, as this is not extensive, in-depth research, it is not expected that there will be a large number of references. Extra credit will not be provided based on the total number of references.

As a general rule, a good presentation should convey to the audience that the selected problem is an important one, and that the solution is supported by internationally recognized experts and organizations, is evidence-based, is relevant for the country, feasible to implement, will have or lead to an impact on the lives of a large number of beneficiaries, and will be successful, making the investment of time and effort by the senior official worthwhile.

The presentation should show that the student understands the Shiffman framework and applies it to the country situation related to the problem addressed by the global program.

Clarity, accuracy and completeness of information and analyses, and provision of relevant authoritative evidence/sources to support arguments, will be considered when grading the presentation. In addition, as part of the semester abroad learning experience, it is expected that the student will look into an area of international health new to him/her, building on the topics covered during this course, rather than repeat a topic covered in previously prepared papers.

An electronic version (MS Word document) of the 1-page must be submitted through the Blackboard Digital Drop Box. The following formatting of the paper is required:

- Heading at the start of the paper includes student name, full paper title, the number of words, the date, and the course name (Principles of International Health-PH 506e).
- When submitting the paper electronically, include your name and a short summary of the title of the paper in the filename (e.g. DavidBeran-TB-Ethiopia) and also in the subject of the Blackboard Drop Box submission. This makes it easier for the instructor.

The above information and description aims to assist students in preparing their paper and is not intended as a "roadmap" or an outline for the paper. It is expected that all course participants have substantial experience with preparing course papers, so that the above information is complementary to what has been studied before.

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.

Grading:

Letter grade	Quality	GPA (grade point average)
A	Excellent	4
A-		3.7
B+		3.3
B	Very good	3.0
B-		2.7
C+		2.3
C	Satisfactory	2.0
C-		1.7
D+	Low pass	1.0
F	Fail	0

A

This exceptional grade is assigned only to work that has persistently outstanding quality in both substance and presentation. The student must demonstrate a sustained capacity for independent thought and extensive study, producing rigorous and convincing analyses in well-ordered prose.

A-

Awarded to work that is clearly focused and analytical, and based on wide reading. The student must cover all the principal points of a question and systematically develop a persuasive overall thesis, allowing for one or two venial omissions or infelicities of expression.

B+, B, B-

This range of grades indicates that the student has shown some evidence of original thought and intellectual initiative. The student has cited sources beyond the class materials, and shown a degree of originality in perception and/or approach to the subject. The work will show thoughtful management of material, and a good grasp of the issues. The differences between a B+, a straight B and a B- may reflect poor presentation of the material, or mistakes in punctuation, spelling and syntax.

C+, C, C-

Work in this grade range is satisfactory, but uninspiring. If the work is simply a recitation of class materials or discussions, and shows no sign of genuine intellectual engagement with the issues, it cannot deserve a higher grade. Should an essay fail to provide a clear answer to the question as set, or argue a position coherently, the grade will fall within this range. Quality of presentation can lift such work into the upper levels of this grade range. Work of this quality which is poorly presented, and riddled with errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation, will fall into the lower end of the range. To earn a passing grade, the work must demonstrate that the student is familiar with the primary course material, be written well enough to be readily understood, be relevant to the assignment, and, of course, be the student's own work except where properly cited.

D-F

Work that is fatally flawed in one or more ways, such as: so poorly written as to defy understanding; so insubstantial or irrelevant that it fails to address the subject; is guilty of plagiarism.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Date:	24.10.2013
Time:	09:30-12:30
Topic:	Course Introduction, different frameworks for policy analysis
Assignments:	Choose an article, blog, website highlighting a policy issue Readings

Date:	24.10.2013
Time:	14:00-16:00
Topic:	Working through a Shiffman Framework – the example of gun control
Assignments:	Readings and read up on the issue of gun control in the US

Week 2 – Joint session with UNIGE

Date:	31.10.2013
Time:	09:30-10:15 – Group presentations; 10:15-12:00 – Lecture
Topic:	Humanitarian Action
Assignments:	Readings

Date:	31.10.2013
Time:	TBD
Topic:	ICRC - TBC
Assignments:	Visit ICRC website

Week 3 – Joint session with UNIGE (AM only)

Date:	07.11.2013
Time:	09:30-10:15 – Group presentations; 10:15-12:00 – Documentary
Topic:	Tobacco
Assignments:	Readings and Group presentation

Date:	07.11.2013
Time:	14:00-16:00
Topic:	Tobacco
Assignments:	Group presentations using a policy framework on tobacco Discussion about internships

Week 4 – Joint session with UNIGE

Date:	14.11.2013
Time:	09:30-10:15 – Group presentations; 10:15-12:00 – Lecture
Topic:	Migration and Health
Assignments:	Readings

Date:	14 March 2013
Time:	14:00-16:00
Topic:	Migration and Health – IOM presentation
Assignments:	Visit IOM website and Readings Mid-term – due 22 November at 23:59

Week 5 – Joint session with UNIGE (PM only)

Date:	21.11.2013
Time:	09:30-10:15 – Group presentations; 10:15-12:00 – Documentary
Topic:	Over and under nutrition
Assignments:	Readings

Date:	21.11.2013
Time:	TBD
Topic:	GAIN presentation - TBC
Assignments:	Readings and visit GAIN website

Week 6 – Joint session with UNIGE

Date:	28.11.2013
Time:	09:30-12:30
Topic:	09:30-10:15 – Group presentations; 10:15-12:00 – Lecture
Assignments:	Readings

Date:	28.11.2013
Time:	14:00-16:00
Topic:	Access to Medicines – Presentation by MSF Access Campaign
Assignments:	Readings and visit MSF Access Campaign website 1 pager due 2 December at 09:00 Final exam due 6 December at 23:59

Week 7 – Joint session with UNIGE (AM only)

Date:	05.12.2013
Time:	09:30-12:30
Topic:	Responding to Guatemala's Drug Problem
Assignments:	Readings

Date:	05.12.2013
Time:	14:00-16:00
Topic:	Role of academia as a Global Health actor and presentation by the BU School of Public Health Revision session and discussion about 1-pagers
Assignments:	Prepare any questions

Week 8

Date:	11.12.2013
Time:	09:30-12:30 and 14:00-16:00
Topic:	Final presentations – Group A

Date:	12.12.2013
Time:	09:30-12:30 and 14:00-16:00
Topic:	Final presentations – Group B