

# **Controversies in International Health October-December 2016**

## **Course Description and Syllabus**

19th October- 7th December 2016  
Geneva, Switzerland

# Content

- Course dates ..... 3
- Course Organiser ..... 3
- Course description: ..... 3
- Learning Objectives: ..... 4
- Format: ..... 4
- Teaching material: ..... 5
- Class discussions: ..... 5
- Site visits: ..... 5
- Absences and punctuality: ..... 5
- Class attire : ..... 6
- Course requirements ..... 6
- Assignments and Grading ..... 6
  - Assignment 1 (25% of overall course mark) ..... 6
  - Assignment 2 ( 25% of overall course mark)..... 7
    - 2.1 Written ..... 7
    - 2.2 Presentation ..... 8
  - Grades for the Written AND Presentation component for Assignment 2 ..... 8
  - Assignment 3 (25% of over all course mark)..... 8
- Grading: ..... 9
- Academic code of conduct ..... 10
- Instructor “Office Hours”: ..... 10
- Class Participation: ..... 10
- Teaching material: ..... 11
- Class discussions: ..... 11
- Grading: ..... 11
  - Course Schedule ..... 13

## Course dates



19 October- 7 December 2016  
Geneva, Switzerland

## Course Organiser



**Dr. Sunoor Verma MD MS**  
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www.sunoor.net

## 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 programs 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 the complexity and diversity of the range of actors and their interests in guiding global health policies and thinking.
- 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 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.
- **Media monitoring done independently by students on current global events.**
- **Social media monitoring done independently by students based on topics identified in the class and on current affairs.**
- 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 experts from the arena of international development and humanitarian relief 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.
- Appreciate an operational context within which to consider the controversies that we study in class.
- Appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of development work



### Absences and punctuality:

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

**Class attire :**

Business casual.

You are expected to dress the way you do for your internship.

**Course requirements**

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



1. Class participation 25%
2. Assignment 1: Written Fact sheet 25%
3. Assignment 2 (composed of two components): 25%
  - a. Written local issue brief: 12.5%
  - b. In class presentation: 12.5%
4. Assignment 3: Written global issue brief 25%

**Assignments and Grading**

In the first class on **19th October 2016** each student will be assigned a topic that has been perceived as a controversy in local/regional/national context as well as international context.

The assignments are interdependent and build on each other.

**Assignment 1 (25% of overall course mark)****Task**

On the assigned topic collect facts available in the public domain with the aim of putting together evidence- in a fact sheet format. Students are expected to be able to differentiate between scientific evidence and anecdotal pieces of information.

**Output**

1. A collection of references, tables, graphs, pictures and narrative that you think are evidence on the assigned topic (both local and global).
2. A reference list for the gathered evidence.
3. You may divide the evidence that you have collected in ways that are convenient for use in Assignment 2.1, 2.2 and Assignment 3.

**Format**

1. Font Calibri size 12 should be used for the text body of the document.
2. Single line spacing should be used for the text body of the document.
3. Written submission as an electronic MS Word document.
4. Document should not exceed more than four sheets of A4.
5. The MS Word file should be named and saved using the following structure;  
*Surname-First Name-Assignment1-2016.doc*

## Grades

The assignment will be graded for effectively demonstrating the following:

1. Understanding of what is 'evidence'?
2. Appreciation for the variety of sources for gathering 'evidence'
3. Appreciation for the different stakeholder groups e.g. government, civil society, corporate sector, media, UN agencies in presentation of 'evidence'
4. Ability to segregate 'evidence' into sub-categories for building a policy advocacy case. E.g. prevention, diagnosis, differential diagnosis, treatment, care, advocacy etc.

## Deadline

Submission: By email by **26th October 2016** by 23:59 hrs Geneva Time.

Feedback : You may receive feedback on your submission by 30th October 2016 and asked to revise and resubmit.

## **Assignment 2 ( 25% of overall course mark)**

This assignment has two components:

1. Written submission (12.5%)
1. Class presentation (12.5%)

### **2.1 Written**

#### **Task**

Using Walt's triangle (Which would have been taught in class)- frame the assigned topic in the context of your city or state.

In framing the topic, focus on local stakeholders, local power structures and influences.

#### **Output**

A **local/regional issue brief** that showcases an understanding and application of Walt's triangle on a real life local issue.

#### **Format**

1. Font "Calibri" size 12 should be used for the text body of the document.
2. Single line spacing should be used for the text body of the document.
3. Written submission as an electronic MS Word document.
4. Word limit: up to 2500 words excluding the reference list.
5. The MS Word file should be named and saved using the following structure;  
*Surname-First Name-Name of city or state or region under focus-2016.doc*

#### **Deadline**

**Submission:** By email by **3rd November 2016** by 23:59 hrs Geneva Time.

**Feedback :** You may receive feedback on your submission by 6th November 2016, however you may **not** revise and resubmit.

## 2.2 Presentation

### Task

Make a presentation to the class of your issue brief showcasing the complexity of the assigned topic and the intersections of conflict.

### Output

A fifteen minute presentation is made in-front of the class.

### Format

Support of MS Power Point may be used under the following conditions:

- Text is permissible only if it is an integral part of a photo, diagram, table, or chart or is an attention-grabbing quote.
- The maximum number of slides should not exceed 10 (excluding Title slide and Closing slide).
- Maximum of 7 minutes will be available for presentation followed by a 8 minutes Q&A from the audience. Timing will be strict.
- Submit by email your presentations in MS Power Point format prior to presentation.

## Grades for the Written AND Presentation component for Assignment 2

The grading criteria are identical for both segments of assignment number two.

The local issue brief and presentation of students will be graded on how well they capture the framing of the assigned issue and how well they demonstrate an understanding of:

1. The importance of context when reviewing a local health issue:- local information incl- demographics; governance, power, democracy; economy; human rights etc
2. The diversity and interests of stakeholders that shape a local/regional health discussion – relationships; power; interests etc.
3. The intersection of interests where conflicts arise and health becomes controversial.
4. Presentation skills and ability to engage the audience.

### Deadline

Presentations will be made on **Wednesday 9th November 2016** and onwards.

## ***Assignment 3 (25% of over all course mark)***

### Task

Using Walt's triangle- frame the assigned topic in the global context. In framing the topic focus on international stakeholders, global power structures, influences, mechanisms and international media.

### Output

A **Global Issue Brief** on the assigned topic.



## Format

1. Font “Calibri” size 12 should be used for the text body of the document.
2. Single line spacing should be used for the text body of the document.
3. Written submission as an electronic MS Word document.
4. Word limit: up to 3000 words excluding the reference list.
5. The MS Word file should be named and saved using the following structure;

*Surname-First Name-Topic-2016.doc*

## Note:

*The issue brief should carry a separate reference list. These will include references from peer reviewed journal articles/international 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.***

## Deadline

**Submission:** By email by 24th Nov 2016 by 23:59 hrs Geneva Time.

**Feedback :** You may receive feedback on your submission by 30th November 2016 however you will **not** be invited to revise and re-submit.

## Grading

The submitted issue brief would be graded on how clearly it conveys to the audience that the assigned topic:

1. Is complex and multi-dimensional. How and Why?
2. There is a context to the problems be they local and/or international.
3. May have a variety of stakeholders involved. Who, Why and How are they impacted?
4. Is characterised by power struggle between different stakeholders.
5. May or may not be resolved through potential compromise.
6. May offer certain entry points for compromise and resolution and what those are?

The issue brief should demonstrate an ability to frame issues globally.

**Clarity, accuracy and completeness of information and analyses, and provision of relevant authoritative evidence/sources to support arguments, will be considered when grading the essay.**

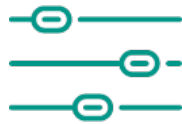


### Grading:

Grading system for all assignments 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: [sunoor@bu.edu](mailto:sunoor@bu.edu)



#### **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.

The following minimum is expected of all students enrolled in this course:

- The participant demonstrates awareness of current global issues and their interdependence and impact.
- 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.



### 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. The student must consistently demonstrate a **firm grasp over current affairs**.

## **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*

<b>Date:</b>	19.10.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-12:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Course Introduction, Expectations, and House rules. Determinants of Health, their measurements and how they contribute to controversies? Drivers of international controversies in health- poverty, corruption, the marginalised, the girl child- Dr. Sunoor Verma

<b>Date:</b>	19.10.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	13:00-15:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Education, Health, Poverty and Development Kerala Case study Dr. Sunoor Verma

### *Week 2*

<b>Date:</b>	26.10.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-12:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Policy windows & actors Simulation- Introducing Harm Reduction in a middle income country. Dr. Sunoor Verma

<b>Date:</b>	26.10.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	13:00-15:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Human Rights & Global Health Dr. Sunoor Verma

### *Week 3*

<b>Date:</b>	02.11.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-12:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Hunger, Nutrition, Children and Global Health Dr. Sunoor Verma

<b>Date:</b>	02.11.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	13:00-15:00
<b>Topic:</b>	The girl child and women in Global Health Dr. Sunoor Verma

#### Week 4

<b>Date:</b>	09.11.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-12:00
<b>Topic:</b>	09:00- 10:00 Marginalised, Invisible and minority groups & health Dr. Sunoor Verma 10:00- 12:00 Guest speaker: Dr. Bronwyn Lay, Founder, Dirt Foundation – 'Land Rights, Water & Health'

<b>Date:</b>	09.11.2016 <b>Field Visit to the United Nations Geneva</b>
<b>Time:</b>	13:45-Meeting at the main entrance of the Palais <b>To Be Confirmed</b>
<b>Topic:</b>	14:00- 16:00 Guided tour of the UN

#### Week 5

<b>Date:</b>	16.11.2016 at Rue des Vollandes/ <b>Campus Biotech</b> <b>TBC</b>
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-11:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Guest speaker: Eduardo Pisani, Director General, IFPMA 'Experiences of IFPMA in Private-Public Partnerships'

<b>Date:</b>	16.11.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	13:15-15:30
<b>Topic:</b>	13:15- 13:30 Debriefing 13:30- 16:15 <b>Presentation of Assignment 2 and discussion</b>

#### Week 6

<b>Date:</b>	23.11.2016 at Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-12:00
<b>Topic:</b>	09:00 – 10:00 NCDs and Global Health: Dr. Sunoor Verma 10:00- 11:00 <b>Presentation of Assignment 2 and discussion</b> 11:00- 12:00 Guest speaker: Dr. David Beran, Hospitals of the University of Geneva "The politics of insulin: the search for scalable solutions"

<b>Date:</b>	23.11.2016 at <b>Muzy Underground</b>
<b>Time:</b>	13:30-15:30
<b>Topic:</b>	13:30-13:45 Debriefing 13:45- 15:30 <b>Presentation of Assignment 2 and discussion</b>

#### Week 7

<b>Date:</b>	30.11.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-12:00
<b>Topic:</b>	09:00- 10:00 NTDs ; Global Health governance- the case of Mycetoma Dr. Sunoor Verma 10:00- 11:00 <b>Presentation of Assignment 2 and discussion</b> 11:00-12:00 Guest speaker: Dr. Caroline Hunt, ex-UNHCR "Seeking justice within the UN- A whistleblower's perspective"

<b>Date:</b>	30.11.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	13:00-15:00

<b>Topic:</b>	13:00- 14:00 Presentation of Assignment 2 and discussion 14:00-15:00 Guest speaker: Tania Dhakwa, Communications Officer, UNICEF “Communication for Development & Health Programs”
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**Week 8**

<b>Date:</b>	07.12.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	09:00-12:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Making health technology available at low cost. Politics of innovation and low cost innovation Dr. Sunoor Verma

<b>Date:</b>	07.12.2016 at Rue des Vollandes
<b>Time:</b>	13:00- 15:00
<b>Topic:</b>	Wrap-up Class evaluation

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