

CONTROVERSIES IN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH

Spring Semester 2009

Instructor: Donna M. Denno, MD, MPH
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Credits: 4

Schedule: Tuesdays, Mar 10-April 28 (see class schedule)

Course Description

This course provides an overview of important problems, interventions, intervention delivery strategies, and socio-political-economic policies and events that impact intervention delivery and health. We will explore controversies related to these areas, often through the examination of case studies in maternal and child health (MCH). Issues that impact mothers and children affect the health of others in society, especially other vulnerable populations (e.g. pregnant women, elderly, racial and ethnic minorities). Measures of child health (such as child mortality rates and reductions in these rates) are used as a barometer to examine the health of a nation or community as a whole because the effects of global health activities and policies are often magnified among children due to their biologic, societal, and political vulnerabilities. The problems that impact mothers and children (for example, lack of access to care due to poverty, geographic or cultural barriers), also impact the health of a population as a whole. Similarly, if the public health and health care climate supports MCH, it generally is conducive to an overall healthier population. We will not exclusively focus on MCH, but by examining trends in child health and reasons for trends, for example, we can not only gain an understanding of the issues that drive international child health but international public health as a whole.

The course will explore the prominent causes of global mortality and the geographic and distribution of these deaths. We will examine the underlying causes of health and illness. We will examine trends and progress in global health and explore potential explanations for these trends. We will learn about programmatic interventions, both prevention and treatment, used to respond to health problems and learn how these interventions are delivered and the pros and cons of various delivery strategies. We will learn about major groups involved in global health and how they may take away from and/or promote global health. We will consider whether an ethical framework can be developed by which individuals and groups involved in global health can operate.

Site visits to a few important and diverse international health organizations will offer the opportunity to examine how different international health organizations operate, prioritize their interventions and implement interventions in the field. These visits will also provide an operational context within which to consider the controversies that we study in class.

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.

Course Objectives

- Understand the major causes of childhood mortality worldwide and the scope and geographic distribution of these problems
- Understand the major underlying determinants of health
- Understand considerations in implementing interventions (e.g. delivery strategies, cultural considerations) in a given community
- Understand major trends in child mortality over the past half century and the socio-political-economic factors that impact health
- Understand the major groups working in the global health field

Learning Objectives

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

1. List the 6 leading causes of death among children worldwide.
2. Describe how causes of mortality vary regionally.
3. List 5 underlying causes of mortality.
4. State the percent of childhood deaths that can be prevented with interventions that are currently available.
5. Describe the major prevention and treatment interventions are recommended for reducing the burden of disease related to major causes of mortality worldwide.
6. Define strategies for delivering interventions to combat global health problems. Give examples of interventions that are being or have been delivered via these methods.
7. Describe at least 3 important considerations that impact the efficacy of intervention delivery in a community.
8. Describe the major “actors” in global child health.
9. Describe trends in child mortality over the past half century.
10. Describe socio economic and political factors that influence trends in global health.
11. List potential ethical considerations in working in global health.

Methodology:

1. Weekly readings
2. In class lectures
3. Viewing of global health documentaries to assist in better understanding the realities of the field (in lieu of field trips to developing countries!)
4. In class interactive discussions—class participation is a vital element of this class. Discussions will be based on weekly reading and materials presented during class. Some discussion will be led by guest public health experts.
5. Site visits to international organizations

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

Class participation	30%
3 quizzes	30%
3 brief site visit reports	20%
Paper on recommendations for improving global health and debriefing in class on related readings and paper	20%

Class Participation: Class participation is a crucial part of this seminar course. All students are expected to raise questions and discuss issues raised by the readings, the lectures, the documentaries, site visits and comments from other students, the instructor, or guest experts. Relevant comments or questions based on past work or academic experiences or your internships are encouraged.

Class participation is not only graded on a “yes/no” / “participated/did not participate” basis but also with quality of content in mind. A-level participation is based on the following criterion:

- The participant has insightful comments and questions that prompt on-topic discussion.
- Varying opinions bring richness to discussion. If disagreeing with another class member’s ideas, the participant states his or 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 references, readings, lectures, documentaries, internship and/or other experiences, etc. The student’s participation helps clarify or synthesize issues raised via these forum.
- The student’s participation demonstrates that s/he has read/viewed the assigned readings/documentaries with a “critical eye”. In other words, participation demonstrates not just a mastery of the content of the assigned materials but an ability to critically analyze and compare to other opinions expressed by others via lecture, other readings, other documentaries, etc.
- The student seeks and shares information sought out beyond assigned readings to answer questions s/he has or develops in response to lectures, discussions, readings, documentaries.

Reading assignments for a particular class session should be read before class as we will discuss the reading in class and/or the session content will take off from where the reading started. Evidence of having read the weekly assignment during the class discussion will count toward the participation grade. Readings for some of the sessions will be divided up among students. You will be expected to succinctly explain your reading to the rest of the class.

Quizzes: 3 quizzes containing multiple choice, true/false, short answer questions, and short essay will be administered. The purpose of the quizzes is to review key material. Please note that all class material is “fair game” for quizzes—not just the lectures but material in the documentaries and readings as well as information presented at site visits.

Site visit reports: see separate handout explaining parameters of this assignment. These are due by hard copy, handed in to instructor at the beginning of class one week after the site visit. We will visit 5 different organizations. You may chose to write about 3 of them or 2 of them and your internship organization.

Paper: Recommendations for improving global health. see separate handout explaining parameters of this assignment. You will be assigned papers proposing different solutions to

problems in global health and suggesting various remedies to improve global health. You will critically consider some of the reports and share the author's views as well as your own opinions in class. You will submit a paper articulating your own recommendations.

PLEASE NOTE THAT TIMELY ATTENDANCE IS A GIVEN! Each late arrival will result in a point taken off the final grade. 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 Donna and approved by Carla. Arrangements should be made with a fellow student to assist in obtaining missed materials and notes in cases of excused absences.

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": I am available to meet with students by appointment who have questions or concerns related to the course or their internship during the lunch hour of class, before class, some days after class, and sometimes on non-class days. Please send me an email to set up an appointment.

Tentative Course Schedule

Please note that there are variations in the exact time that we will meet from week to week depending on timing of site visits and guest lectures. The below schedule is preliminary as a couple of guest lectures are still being confirmed.

Mar 10

Session 1

AM: 9:30-12:00

- ❖ Introductions, orientation to the course
- ❖ Overview of global health problems
 - How and why are child health indicators used as a proxy for health of a population in general? Child and maternal health as a framework for understanding problems, controversies and issues in global health in general.
 - What are the major causes of mortality globally? What are the differences in age specific mortality rates between different parts of the world? What are the major causes of child specific mortality?
 - Review of important indicators of health, especially child health—these will be part of the vocabulary we use for the rest of the classes. How do we critically utilize these indicators to assess health of a given population?
 - Childhood deaths—what is the scope of the problem (how many kids are dying?) What are they dying from? Where are the deaths occurring? What can be the major interventions to treat and prevent childhood illness.
 - What are the major prevention and treatment interventions in global child health?

PM: 13:30-15:30p

- ❖ Determinants of Health
 - What are the underlying causes of health/morbidity/mortality?

- How much should these factors, as opposed to direct causes of death, be taken into account when planning public health interventions?

Mar 17

Session 2

AM: 9:30-12:30

- ❖ Health Systems in Intervention Delivery
- ❖ Intervention Delivery
 - How are interventions delivered?
 - What are the pro's and con's of intervention delivery methods?
 - Vertical vs. horizontal
 - Comprehensive/PHC vs. Selective/SPHC
 - Integrated care
 - Continuum of care concept
 - Community vs. Facility based care
 - Case study—maternal and newborn care

PM : 14:00-16:00 SITE VISIT—WHO and UNAIDS www.unaids.org/

YOU MUST BRING YOUR PASSPORT TO THIS SITE VISIT

Dr. Antonio Carlos Gerbase

WHO HIV/AIDS Department and UNAIDS work on the HIV/AIDS epidemic

Mar 24

Session 3

AM : 9:30-12:00

QUIZ 1

- ❖ Trends in Global Health (aka How are we doing at improving health globally?)
 - Key trends in global health (with emphasis on child health) over the past decades
 - Millennium Development Goals
 - Where has child health improved? Where has child health worsened?
- ❖ Reasons for Trends PART I (aka What are the reasons for the changes seen over time? What are factors that lead to declines and improvements in health in a population over time?) We will cover this topic over 3-4 sessions. Here are the various factors we will examine over the 3-4 sessions. Plan is to discuss 1st four items in this session.
 - HIV/AIDS epidemic
 - Country level commitments
 - Economic factors
 - Donor Aid
 - Debt
 - International economic policies—structural adjustment/poverty reduction policiess
 - Weakened health systems
 - Human resource shortage
 - Trade policies
 - Conflict and arms trade

PM: 13:30-15:30p

Tentative--PHC and Alma Ata, guest speaker Dev Ray (formerly with WHO and former Controversies in Int'l Health course instructor)

Mar 31

Session 4

AM: 9:30-12:00

Considerations in Intervention Delivery/Health Programs

Guest speaker and role play facilitator--Julia Fortier, expert on health care for culturally diverse populations; former staff member, US Congress and the US Department of Health and Human Services; principal author of *National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care*.

PM: 13:30-15:30

Debriefing on internships

Reasons for Trends in Global Health—continued

- Debt
- International economic policies—structural adjustment/poverty reduction initiatives
- Weakened health systems
- Human resource shortage
- Trade policies

April 7

Session 5

AM: 9:30-11:00

SITE VISIT: UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) www.unhcr.org

UNHCR's mandate and activities in dealing with refugees and displaced persons

PM: 12:30-15:30

Quiz 2

Debriefing on internships cont'd

Reasons for Trends in Global Health—continued

- Conflict and arms trade

April 14

Session 6

AM: 9:00-11:30

Major players in Global Health

- Who are the major actors involved in global health?
- What impact do they have?
- Who should be responsible for what aspects of global health?
- Who should set priorities?

PM: 12:00-2:00 BROWN BAG LUNCH* AND SITE VISIT: International AIDS Society (IAS): case studies in delivering HIV/AIDS interventions. Discussion leader—Dr. Jacqueline Bataringaya, Senior Policy Advisor.

*Don't forget to pack a lunch and bring it with you to class in the morning. We will leave directly from class as a group in order to make it in time to IAS.

April 21

Session 7

AM: 9:30-13:00

Class paper due

✚ Reasons for Trends in Global Health—continued—Debt, international economic policies and trade policies.

Guest discussion leader--attorney Marsha Lougheed, expert in public sector law with legal experience working in Caribbean governments

- Discuss film "Life or Debt" set in Jamaica
- View and discuss "People or Profits"--film on trade and pharmaceutical industry

✚ What can be done to improve global health?

- What are the key areas that need the most urgent attention?
- What are the solutions that are most likely to help achieve the MDGs and bring about improvements in global health.

PM: 14:30-16:30 SITE VISIT: MSF (Medecins sans Frontière) "[About MSF](#)" webpage also see <http://www.msf.org/>

View film outlining MSF work, presentation by Ms Aurelie Grémand and Ms Emma Amadò, MSF Communications Officers

Quiz 3—take home—due at start of class April 28

April 28

Session 8

Quiz 3—tentatively scheduled as take home examination to be distributed by email on April 22 and to be handed in on April 28.

AM: 9:00-12:00 Joint SITE VISIT with IR students--International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) www.icrc.org/eng

YOU MUST BRING YOUR PASSPORT TO THIS SITE VISIT

ICRC Introduction and ICRC Film: (~15 minutes)

The ICRC Mandate, Lecture by an ICRC Legal Advisor (~1 hour)

The ICRC and its Activities in the Field, Lecture by an official from Field Operations Department (~1 hour)

PM: 13:30-15:30

Ethical and impact considerations in global health work and advocacy

- What role can we, as individuals, have in impacting global health?
- What are the ethical considerations that should be thought-out when engaging in global health activities?

Course wrap up

Course evaluation

APRIL 30—last paper on ICRC site visit due by email to ddenno@u.washington.edu by 10PM (22:00)