



# Study Abroad: Geneva

PH506 Spring 2020

Principles of International Health

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dina Handan ([dhandan@bu.edu](mailto:dhandan@bu.edu))

## Introduction

Global health continues to expand in importance as existing, emerging and returning diseases confront our world. Whether the issue is communicable diseases like Ebola or pandemic flu, non-communicable diseases, climate change, health in crisis situations, or vaccine hesitancy, our understanding of the complex interactions between the conditions, causes, processes, actors, actions and priorities that determine health outcomes is also challenged to keep pace with this rapidly changing reality.

There have been many successes in global (and public) health and the lessons learned and the interpretation of the data arising from these advances are a necessary part of any global health practitioners' toolkit. Decreases in mortality for many causes and increases in life expectancies over the last 100 years are but one important and instructive example of this. However, because significant differences in health outcomes and associated quality of life persist both between and within countries and regions, there is still much work to be done before we can truly achieve the goal of 'Health for All' that underpin initiatives such as Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This course will examine many of the current issues facing global health, while simultaneously developing the technical knowledge and skills necessary to undertake work in global health. Loosely based on the top threats to global health identified by WHO in 2019, our study will incorporate lectures, group work and discussion, visits to various health organizations in Geneva, and guest lectures by global health experts.

## Course Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

1. Develop a global health vocabulary, which includes key definitions and concepts as they relate to current priorities in the global health domain.
2. Examine the 'global health landscape' both in Geneva and worldwide to articulate the roles and functions of various global health actors.
3. Describe key challenges facing global health, including but not limited to extreme poverty; communicable and non-communicable diseases; weak or failed health systems; humanitarian emergencies (conflict and natural disasters); increasingly mobile populations; and global climate change.
4. Describe how social determinants of health and health inequities impact on health outcomes, policy and programs in global health.
5. Interpret and use data and information arising from scientific journals, official data and reports (WHO, UN, etc.), and media with the aim of informing global health policy and practice.
6. Feel prepared to engage meaningfully with colleagues and peers on global health issues during internships at their respective health organizations.

## **Schedule of Sessions**

Each session during the semester will help form the basis of a 'global health toolkit' which can be applied to identified issues in global health. These tools or skills are identified at the outset of each session's description. Please note that some tools and issues are relevant to more than one session, and these are specified throughout the schedule.

Where homework is noted, it is to be completed after the session in preparation for the next class.

### **Session 1: Wednesday 15 January, 14:00-17:00 (Rm M2193)**

#### *An Introduction to International Health*

Global Health Toolkit 1: Definitions and Key Concepts

Global Health Issues 1: Fragile and Vulnerable Settings

Global Health Issues 2: Health in Humanitarian Crises

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

1. Understand the main course outcomes, expectations and how to get the most out of your learning.
2. Define health according to the most widely-accepted working definition established by WHO.
3. Define public health, global health and international health.
4. Discuss key global health concepts, including Health for All, Health in All, Universal Health Coverage, Leave No One Behind, Health Inequities, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the context of the human right to health.
5. Analyze a real-world health problem by applying the above definitions and concepts with the aim of understanding the inherent complexities of solving public/global health issues.

#### **Readings:**

1. [Towards a common definition of global health](#)
2. [Universal Health Coverage \(UHC\) - WHO Fact Sheet](#)
3. [70 years of human rights in global health: drawing on a contentious past to secure a hopeful future](#)

**Homework:** Short group activity to be presented at the beginning of the second class. Details will be shared during class and posted on BlackBoard.

### **Session 2: Thursday 16 January, 14:00-17:00 (Rm M2193)**

#### *A brief history of public health and its global impacts*

Global Health Toolkit 2: Understanding control, elimination, eradication and resurgence

Global Health Toolkit 3: Shifts in mortality and life expectancy (incl. epidemiological transition)

Global Health Toolkit 4: Social determinants of health (Dahlgren and Whitehead model)

Global Health Issues 3: Communicable Diseases (Smallpox, Polio)

#### **Learning Outcomes:**

1. Identify key events in the history of public health
2. Understand how communicable diseases, their treatment and eventual prevention programs shaped early public health efforts
3. Identify key successes in the history of public and global health, including disease eradications and eliminations, decreases in mortality and increases in life expectancies.

4. Apply the `social determinants of health` model to help explain how differences in health status and outcomes have emerged around the world (between and within countries).

**Readings:**

1. [WHO commemorates the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of smallpox eradication](#)
2. [Two out of three wild poliovirus strains eradicated](#)
3. [Uneven access to health services drives life expectancy gaps](#)
4. [Social Determinants of Health \(SDH\) – Dahlgren and Whitehead 1991](#)

**Homework:** Read this 2016 [article](#) about life expectancies in Switzerland. Try to understand this in the context of the social determinants of health model. We'll go over this together briefly at the beginning of the next class.

**Session 3: Monday 20 January, 14:00-17:00 (Rm M2193)**

*Global Actors in Health; Communicable Diseases*

Global Health Toolkit 5: Global health actors

Global Health Toolkit 6: Global health decision-making (priorities and/or initiatives)

Global Health Issues 3: Communicable Diseases

Global Health Issues 4: Vaccine hesitancy

Global Health Issues 5: Antimicrobial resistance

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Identify key actors in global health, including international organizations, national agencies, donors, foundations, civil society, private sector, etc. and describe how their mandates differ.
2. Explain how actors at every level (local, national/regional, international) help to shape health priorities and/or outcomes.
3. Describe why communicable diseases continue to be an issue in global health with reference to vaccine hesitancy, antimicrobial resistance, and global travel.

**Readings:**

1. [Governance Challenges in Global Health](#)
2. [Rethinking herd immunity](#)
3. [Antimicrobial resistance; an emerging crisis](#)

**Session 4: Tuesday 21 January, 14:00-17:00 (WHO, details to be shared later)**

*Visit to and Lecture at the World Health Organization (WHO)*

Global Health Toolkit 5 & 6 (cont'd): Global health actors; global health decision-making

Global Health Toolkit 7: Data collection, analysis, interpretation and use

Global Health Issues 6: Ebola

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Describe the role and functions of the WHO in global health.
2. Describe how country, regional and international data is obtained and how it is used by global health practitioners and policymakers.
3. Understand the global response to Ebola, including contextual factors and lessons learned.

**Readings:**

1. [WHO \(About Us\)](#)

**Homework:** To be assigned on BlackBoard.

**Session 5: Friday 24 January, 14:00-17:00 (UNIGE M1160)**

*Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Simulation Game*

Global Health Toolkit 6 (cont'd): Global health decision-making (priorities and initiatives)

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Explain how the SDGs intersect with global health, as well as how indirectly health-related policies/initiatives may influence health.
2. Develop an understanding of how decisions shape and influence health outcomes in both intentional and unintentional as well as positive and negative ways.
3. Articulate the importance of collaboration amongst different actors in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and in achieving positive health outcomes.

**Readings:**

1. [Health in the SDG era](#)

**Homework:** None

**Session 6: Monday 27 January, 14:00-17:00 (Rm MR040)**

*The Science of Public/Global Health*

Global Health Toolkit 6: Global health decision-making

Global Health Toolkit 7: Data collection, analysis, interpretation and use

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Identify relevant and useful sources of data in policy-making and program planning contexts.
2. Describe the differences between quantitative and qualitative data and their uses in global health.
3. Interpret epidemiological studies and identify basic strengths, weaknesses and limitations.
4. Explain how priorities and resource limitations contribute to gaps in data.

**Readings:**

1. [Hyped-up science erodes trust. Here's how researchers can fight back.](#)

Further readings will be assigned on BlackBoard before this session.

**Homework:** None

**Session 7: Tuesday 28 January, 14:15-17:00 (Rm MR040)**

*Health Systems and Financing*

Guest Lecturer: Dr David Beran, Université de Genève (UNIGE)

Global Health Toolkit 8: Understanding Health Systems and Financing

**Learning Outcomes:** To be shared

**Readings:** To be shared on Blackboard before the class

**Homework:** None

**Session 8: Friday 31 January, 10:00-12:00 (Rm MR040)**

*Midterm Test (25% of final grade)*

The test will include a combination of multiple-choice, short answer and long answer questions on topics covered up to and including the lecture on 28 January (Health Systems and Financing).

**Session 9: Monday 3 February, 14:00-16:30 (Rm M3389)**

*Issues in Non-Communicable Diseases*

Global Health Toolkit 5: Global health actors

Global Health Toolkit 7: Data collection, analysis, interpretation and use

Global Health Issues 7: Non-communicable diseases

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Describe the impact that non-communicable diseases have on global disease burden.
2. Compare the differences in rates of non-communicable diseases in LMIC and HI countries.
3. Describe opportunities for the pharmaceutical sector in non-communicable diseases.

**Readings:**

1. [Healthy Lifestyle and life expectancy free of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and type 2 diabetes: prospective cohort study](#)
2. [Tackling Global Health Problems: Non-communicable Diseases](#)

**Session 10: Tuesday 4 February, 14:00-17:00 (Rm M3389)**

*Youth engagement for health and SDGs*

Guest Lecturer: Barbara Bulc, President, [Global Development](#)

Global Health Toolkit 6: Global health decision-making (priorities and/or initiatives)

Global Health Toolkit 5: Global health actors (civil society)

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Identify opportunities for youth to engage in global health.
2. Develop core messages on youth engagement in global health.

**Readings:**

1. [Engaging Young People for Health and Sustainable Development](#)
2. [Commentary: Changing the narrative: responsibility for youth engagement is a two-way street](#)
3. [Commentary: Urgency for transformation: youth engagement in global health](#)

**Session 11: Monday 10 February, 14:00-16:00 (UNICEF tbc)**

*Visit to UNICEF*

Global Health Toolkit 5: Global health actors

Global Health Toolkit 8: Funding sources in global health

Global Health Issues: Maternal and Child Health

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Describe the role and functions of UNICEF with regards to maternal and child health.
2. Describe the role of private fundraising and partnerships in global health.

**Readings:**

1. [What we do: health](#)
2. [A day with a mobile health team in Aleppo: Protecting children against diseases](#)

**Homework:** To be assigned on BlackBoard

**Session 12: Tuesday 11 February, 9:00-12:00 (ICRC tbc)**

*Visit to and Lecture at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

Global Health Toolkit 5 (cont'd): Global health actors

Global Health Issue 2: Fragile and vulnerable settings

Global Health Issue 5: Health in humanitarian crises

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Describe the work of the ICRC and its role in the global health domain.
2. Differentiate between the roles and functions of the ICRC and the IFRC.
3. Identify key opportunities and obstacles facing the work of the ICRC.

**Readings:**

1. [Who we are](#)
2. [What we do: Health](#) (please browse through the links on this page to get an idea of how ICRC works in health).

Homework: None

**Session 13: Friday 14 February, 10:00-13:00 (WMO tbc)**

*Visit to World Meteorological Organization (WMO)*

*Climate change and health: Innovation and collaboration in data*

Global Health Toolkit 5: Global health actors

Global health Toolkit 7: Data collection, analysis, interpretation and use

Global health Issues 8: Climate change and health

**Learning Outcomes:**

1. Describe how satellite data can be used to track health and related outcomes of climate change.
2. Appreciate the inherent interdisciplinarity and collaboration that plays an increasingly important role in global health.

**Readings:**

1. [What we do](#)
2. [Public Health at WMO](#)

Session 14: Wednesday 19 February, 14:00-15:30 (MR040)

*Wrap-up session*

**Readings:**

1. [Global public health starts at home: upstream approaches to global health training.](#)

Session 15: Friday 21 February, 9:00-11:00 (2 hours to complete the exam) (PM01)

*Final Exam, details outlined below under assignments and grading.*

**Assignments and Grading:**

Your overall course grade will be determined through the following modes of assessment:

Midterm Test	(25%)
Global Health Portfolio	(40%)
Final Exam	(25%)
Class Participation	(10%)

**Assessment details:**

- **Midterm Test (25%)**
  - This exam will cover course materials (lectures, readings, visits) up to and including the lecture on Health Systems and Financing taking place on Tuesday 28 January.
  - The exam will be composed of multiple choice, short answer and long answer questions.
  - Date of test: Friday 31 January 10:00-12:00 (2 hours to complete the test)

- **Global Health Portfolio (40%)**

- For this assignment, you will choose from **one** of the five current global health issues listed below. For your chosen issue, you will construct a global health portfolio by:
  - Undertaking a literature review on the issue to determine the angle you would like to focus upon. For example, for measles you may wish to look at it from the perspective of vaccine hesitancy, or look at the recent outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), or from the roles of various health actors, etc. You are being given the freedom to explore what is interesting to you from the defined list of topics, but your assignment must relate to the global health perspective.
  - Select five key articles from a variety of sources, incl. media, organizational publications (e.g. WHO factsheets, CDC publications, etc.), academic journals, reputable blogs, tweets from reputable sources, etc. Please note that you must include at least one academic or scientific journal article (viewpoints and editorials are acceptable). These topics have all been `news` in recent months, so it should not be difficult to find relevant materials.
  - For each source, explain why the article is interesting or important to the issue from a global health perspective, or what it adds or detracts to the discourse on your chosen topic and angle. Maximum half-page per article or approx. 300 words.
  - Include an introduction to your literature review, outlining your chosen issue/angle and summarizing what you have found during your review/research and propose further areas for research. Maximum two pages or approx. 750 words.
- List of current global health issues to choose from. Please choose from **one** of the following:
  - Measles resurgence
  - Malnutrition and overnutrition
  - Climate change (and health)
  - Ebola
  - Vaping
- Format as follows:
  - Your assignment should be presented in a single Word or PDF document, single or double-spaced (your choice). Your introduction will be the first two pages of the document, followed by a separate page for each of your chosen sources. Please include the citation of the article at the top of each article summary.
  - Please name your file as follows:
    - PH506 S20 SA LAST NAME first name  
(e.g. PH506 S20 SA JENNER Edward)
  - Please submit your assignment via email to myself, copying Carla Rachman
  - Due date: Wednesday 17 February 23:59pm.

- Notes on grading of the global health portfolio:  
 You will be assessed as follows  
 50% = Introduction  
 50% = 5 articles and corresponding summaries (10% per article)
  - The objective of this assignment is to convince your reader that you have grasped the selected issue and angle and that you understand the current discourse surrounding it as it relates to global health. It may be helpful to imagine that you are working in an organization and as a health expert, have been asked to do a short briefing on your selected topic (you can also safely assume that your colleagues do not know much on your topic). What do your colleagues need to know? Which sources of information should they be aware of and why? How would you explain the overall state of knowledge on your topic, and what further questions does that raise?
  - Please select and justify your articles carefully, as you will be graded on the quality of your selections and critical assessment of each article. Top marks are reserved for work that goes beyond taught course concepts and global health issues, showing evidence of critical thought and analysis.
  
- **Final Exam (25%)**
  - This will be an essay exam format, requiring you to apply and integrate the knowledge/skills gained from your global health toolkit to a concept or issue in global health. The exam question will be released on Wednesday 19 February in the late afternoon to allow you to prepare in advance for the exam.
  - Exam date: Friday 21 February 9:00-11:00 (2 hours to complete the exam)
  
- **Class Participation (10%)**
  - This grade will be determined by your consistently active and meaningful participation in class and assigned BlackBoard and homework activities. You are expected to come to class prepared by having kept up-to-date with readings and ready to ask questions and make comments on the materials we are studying.

## **Course Expectations**

### **Classes:**

- Students are expected to be prompt for all classes and site visits so that lectures can begin on time.
- Business casual dress is required during site visits and guest lectures.
- Please be respectful and supportive towards your classmates and any staff members at all times.

### **Logistics:**

- All course materials will be posted on BlackBoard. Any announcements and materials updates will also be posted there also.
- I can be reached by email at [dhandan@bu.edu](mailto:dhandan@bu.edu) for any personal academic queries related to the course. I will also be available before or after class for queries.



- Submission dates are strictly enforced. Requests for late submission due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g. illness supported by a medical certificate, emergencies), must be submitted to both myself and the Programme Director Carla Rachman for approval.
- Feedback on your assignments will be returned via email.
- Grades will be uploaded to the Grade Centre for the course on BlackBoard.

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

- The participant demonstrates awareness of current global health 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 her/his 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 effort to critically analyze it.