COMMUNITY HEALTH 186/ SOCIOLOGY 186: SEMINAR IN INTERNATIONAL HEALTH POLICY
Version 1 (1/23/2017)

Health has become an issue of great personal and political significance, bound up as it is with the development of the welfare state and popular perceptions of well-being. This seminar examines health-related dilemmas faced by nations in the second half of the twentieth into the twenty-first century: how they become defined as a threat to the public’s health, and how political economy, social structure, and cultural myths about health and illness affect policy responses in different countries.

Nations also operate within a broader global political economy and a network of international organizations including WHO, WTO, the UN, and the World Bank. Developments at an international level shape the strategies individual nations can and do consider. We consider the role of wealthier donor nations, particularly the United States, in a global era. What are the possible connections between global actors and local governance systems? How does NGO involvement help or hinder solutions to health problems? How do states and regions mobilize to meet perceived threats to their citizens’ health as they debate the appropriate limits to government intervention and the demands of an international “health regime”.

The focus this spring will be on how nations and regions are coping with health threats that cross borders. What measures have been taken to meet emergent threats to the public health posed, or perceived to be posed, by both ‘products’ and ‘peoples’. Among the latter are “serious imported diseases” (such as SARS); HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, avian and “swine” flu and Ebola and zika. Many of these diseases are perceived to be carried by “outsiders”, thus the seminar is also an investigation of strategies of action towards migrants (including travelers, immigrants, refugees and displaced persons).
when disease enters the picture. Case studies of diseases carried by products may include blood products (which can carry Hepatitis C), and beef products, which can transmit vCJD (the human form of BSE “mad cow disease”).

We will also explore how public policy-making occurs in the context of health risks when scientific knowledge is salient to policy decisions. What dilemmas do policy-makers face when they must cope with issues that pose significant risks to the safety of the population in contexts where there are significant costs to addressing such risks and uncertainty surrounding them? How is scientific evidence interpreted and used in political decision-making?

Throughout the seminar we will analyze various theoretical explanations for how and why countries choose divergent strategies to cope with the same substantive health problems. The ultimate object is to explore the character of those explanations and their hidden dimensions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

To ensure continuity, attendance at all seminar sessions is required of seminar participants. Material should also be read before each class session because the instructor will lead a discussion rather than lecture. Commentary/questions on the readings should be posted each week on the trunk class forum by midnight of the day before the seminar (usually a Sunday) – guidelines for these posts will be discussed at the first session. Because we meet only once a week, a participant’s absence will affect the group, his/her contribution to the seminar and understanding of the material. If you must miss a session (supported by a dean’s or doctor’s note), you will be required to complete a short paper on the missed week’s readings (after consultation with the instructor). More than one absence will affect your final grade.

All seminar participants will be asked to complete a short assignment at the end of the first 5 weeks of the seminar which is designed to help you absorb the theoretical perspectives we have discussed to that point by applying them to case study.

The major requirement for the seminar will be to complete a paper that analyzes the approaches of one nation to a health problem. A series of paper proposals which develop your topic, including a literature review, will be submitted at regular intervals (to be determined after the first meeting of the seminar). Presentation of your ideas and arguments will take place at the last class session on May 1. The final paper, no longer than 15 pages, is due on Friday, May 5, no later than midnight, and should be submitted via “Turn it in” technology.

Contribution of these assignments to your final grade are as follows:

- Contribution to discussion/posts: 35%
- First assignment: 25%
- Final paper (including proposals): 40%

Accessibility

If you need accommodation as a result of a documented disability, you should register with the Disability Services Office. You can find out how to do so here: http://students.tufts.edu/student-accessibility-services. And even if you do not have a documented disability, remember that other support services are available to all students.

Academic integrity: Please familiarize yourself with Tufts’ Academic Integrity Handbook
Academic dishonesty can take many forms and I don’t propose to list all the things you should not do – the handbook is clear about definitions of plagiarism, copying exams etc.

Use of technology
- All phones, ipods, kindles etc. should be turned off during class; emailing, texting or recording is not permitted.
- Many of my colleagues do not permit the use of laptops etc. because it is distracting to both fellow students and the instructor. I propose the following contract, that laptops and tablets can be used but only for the purpose of taking class notes. Please do not come to class and try to skim through the readings on your laptop – print out your notes or bring a handwritten version.

It is hoped that, among the learning objectives set by the Sociology department and the Community Health Program, this seminar should have encouraged participants by the end of the semester to:

- examine social structures analytically and critically;
- develop a comparative perspective on cultures, social structures, institutions, and practices;
- read and understand original research published by sociologists;
- engage in a major piece of writing that reviews published sociological research, develops a sustained argument, and uses theory and research to support the argument;
- understand how multiple disciplines bring unique perspectives to cross-cutting questions of health and societies;
- evaluate complex arguments related to the formation of public policy.
Readings will be available on-line at Trunk. The instructor may make changes to the syllabus in response to participants’ interests and feedback, my sense of how things are going or world events. These adjustments may involve altering assignments or adding, removing, or modifying readings. Any changes will be discussed in class and announced via email, so please check your inbox for this class even if you live the rest of your life on your smartphone. The current syllabus version number is on the front page.

Week 1 (January 23): Introduction and the Comparative Method

Current events; Prevention in the UK, Italy and the United States; Testing immigrants

Week 2 (January 30): Why states (and health professionals) do what they do: Interests and Rational Decision-Making in Democracies

Rational Actors?

Clips from The Fog of War, film by Errol Morris on Robert McNamara


Week 3 (February 6): Theories of Policy Construction continued: Culture and Institutions

Culture as values? beliefs? ideas?
Lynn Payer, Medicine and Culture (New York: Penguin, 1988): chapters 1,2 and part of 3

A critique of cultural explanations and the argument for institutional factors

Culture, institutions and politics – how do they shape the stories we accept and the policies that follow?

Week 4 (February 13): Theories continued: Politics, Science - and a Case Study


A Case of East meets West
First assignment due no later than Sunday, February 19th at midnight

Week 5 (February 20): President’s Day - NO CLASS. Class will be held on February 23, a Tufts Monday though a Thursday in real time: The Global Context of International Health Policies


OR


Week 6 (February 27): Writing a Comparative Paper

Finding data – session on sources with librarian

Discussion of your paper topics in the context of the articles:

Week 7 (March 6): Science and Tradition: Cancer in Different Contexts

2 films. Please watch at least one BEFORE the seminar

The Cancer Detectives of Lin Xian (on oesophageal cancer in China, 1981): *link on trunk*

Well-Being (on cervical cancer in Britain): *on reserve, Tisch library*


..... AND one of the following


The press on efforts to prevent cervical cancer in different countries

Week 8 (March 13): Closing Borders, Controlling Peoples: Tuberculosis


….. AND one of the following


Mette Sagbakken, Jan C Frich, Gunnar A Bjune and John DH Porter, “Ethical aspects of directly observed treatment for tuberculosis: a cross-cultural comparison”, BMC Medical Ethics, 14:25 (2013)

Week 9: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Week 10 (March 27): AIDS in a Global Era


Ethan B. Kapstein and Joshua W. Busby *AIDS Drugs For All: Social Movements and Market Transformations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013): chapter 4

Ann Swidler, talk: “Who’s Afraid of Circumcision?”


OR


..... AND one of the following


Jane Kramer, "Bad Blood", The New Yorker (October 11, 1993)

Week 11 (April 3): The Emergence and Reemergence of Disease in an International Context: Implications for Global Governance of Health Threats

* SARS

**Avian Flu**


Kevin Freking, “Bird flu planning: A prudent idea or overreaction by government?” Associated Press (November 5, 2005)

Kevin Freking, “States plot their strategies for battling bird flu: Local response seen critical, but resources tight”. Boston Globe (November 5, 2005)

….. AND one of the following

**SARS**


**Avian Flu**


**Swine Flu**


Crosier, Adam, Dominic McVey, and Jeff French. 2015. ‘By failing to prepare you are preparing to fail’: lessons from the 2009 H1N1 ‘swine flu’pandemic. The European Journal of Public Health 25 (1):135-139.
Week 12 (April 10): The migrant crisis: disease and public health


..... AND one of the following


Week 13 (April 17): NO CLASS – Patriot’s Day

Week 14 (April 24): Cross-border health threats: Ebola and zika

Zika Readings TBA


OR


**Week 15 (May 1): Conclusion- Paper Draft Presentations**