Course Title: Health and Human Rights: an Interdisciplinary Approach; TSPH272/TPOS272

Term: Spring, 2014

Day/Time: Wednesday, 5:45-8:35 pm

Location: BA 210

Professor: Kamiar Alaei, MS, MD, MPH; and Arash Alaei, MD

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Office Hours: Wednesday 3:30-5:30, BA 365

Course Description: This course takes an interdisciplinary approach to health and human rights and the contemporary challenges and solutions associated with them. The course will be taught by physicians and human rights champions, with guest lectures from experts in public health, philosophy, social welfare, law, gender studies, and public administration, among others. Through lectures, discussion, and case studies, students will develop a broad theoretical understanding of health as a human right, become familiar with legal and policy frameworks to support public health, and acquire skills in the application of these concepts and the implementation and evaluation of solutions to our modern health challenges.

Course Structure and Requirements: Students will be assigned readings in preparation for weekly lectures and will be expected to submit a short response to the readings. Each week there will be a one-hour lecture followed by a facilitated discussion. Students will then be assigned a relevant case study, where they will work in small groups to analyze the challenges of the case and develop applicable solutions. Students will present their findings to the class at the end of each meeting. There will also be two major evaluations, a midterm exam and a grant proposal, designed to assess understanding and application of course material. Near the start of the semester students will choose the topic of their grant proposal, and students will prepare this proposal throughout the semester through periodic planning assignments related to the skills presented in each class meeting.

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, students should:

- Define and recognize the theoretical, moral, sociological, practical, and legal considerations that relate to promotion of public health as a human right;
- Have the skills to critically analyze public health challenges, and develop concrete, implementable, adaptable, evaluable solutions;
- Identify and describe how human rights law can be an important tool in addressing current global health challenges in specific contexts;
- Assess the right to health through other human rights, as framed by international treaties and covenants, in particular in the context of places of deprivation of liberty;
- Be familiar with contemporary domestic and international public health concerns;
- Appreciate and contribute to an interdisciplinary approach to public health;
- Have the skills to develop an effective health intervention and construct a persuasive grant proposal.
Fulfillment of General Education Requirements:

General Education

- Offers explicit understandings of the procedures and practices of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields;
- Provides multiple perspectives on the subject matter, reflecting the intellectual and cultural diversity within and beyond the university;
- Emphasizes active learning in an engaged environment that enables students to be producers as well as consumers of knowledge;
- Promotes critical inquiry about the assumptions, goals, and methods of various fields of academic study and the interpretive, analytic, and evaluative competencies central to intellectual development.

Social Science

Through a multi-disciplinary approach drawing from an array of social science perspectives; an emphasis on discussion, reflection, and evaluation; and critical analysis of theoretical concepts and application of material to novel concrete circumstances; students will gain:

- An understanding that human conduct and behavior more generally are subject to scientific inquiry
- An understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena
- An understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions
- Knowledge of the major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences
- An understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, such as observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, employment of mathematical analysis, employment of interpretive analysis

Challenges for the 21st Century

- Knowledge and understanding of the historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and potential future courses of important challenges students may encounter as they move into the world beyond the university;
- Familiarity with these challenges in areas such as cultural diversity and pluralism, science and technology, social interaction, ethics, global citizenship, and/or others;
- An integrated understanding of how challenges often affect individuals and societies simultaneously in many of these areas;
- An appreciation for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding contemporary and future challenges.
Grading:

This course is A-E graded and the grades are determined based on the following criteria:

Reading response essays: 30%
Planning assignments: 20%
Attendance/Participation: 10%
Midterm: 15%
Grant proposal: 25%

**Reading Response Essays:** In preparation for each lecture students will be expected to complete readings assigned by the lecturer found in the reading list below and to write a short (250-500 word) response summarizing and reflecting upon the readings. All readings will be posted on Blackboard, and any changes or additions to the readings will be posted at least one full week before the response essay is due. Papers that are submitted through Blackboard at 5pm the evening before the class meeting will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Satisfactory essays receive full credit, and one unsatisfactory grade may be dropped. There will be 11 of these assignments total, worth 3 points each. One essay can be dropped, or students can earn 3 points extra credit if they successfully complete and receive a grade of satisfactory on every assignment during the semester. Please note that response essays should be typed directly or copied and pasted into the submission box, not attached as a file.

**Case Studies:** Each week students will receive a case study and a set of associated questions. Students will work together as a group to answer these questions, which will involve an assessment of the public health challenge and potential solutions. Active participation in these in-class case study group assignments will be factored into the participation grade.

**Participation:** Active reflection, sharing and defending of ideas, and intellectual collaboration are essential to the progress and development of health and human rights. As such, students are expected to engage with lecturers and fellow students, participate in discussion, work cooperatively in-group work, and orally present and defend their findings. This will be assessed by readiness and productivity, and measured by in-class tasks, including the case studies.

**Midterm:** The midterm will be in-class, closed-book exam focused on the application of relevant material. Students will be expected to be familiar with general theories, concrete concepts from lectures and be able to meaningfully apply these concepts in a practical context.

**Planning Assignments:** The skills developed in the case studies will be applied to the students’ chosen public health intervention and they will be asked to do planning assignments throughout the semester based on those skills acquired toward their grant proposal. There will be five (5) of these assignments throughout the semester worth 4 points each, graded 0-4. Students will receive comments and will have the opportunity to revise these sections for their final submission of the grant proposal. Optional readings or trainings may be made available to prepare for these
planning assignments to provide technical knowledge that will help to complete the grant proposal (i.e. USAID’s Training e-modules on How to Work with USAID).

**Grant proposal:** For the final assessment, students will be asked to work individually to write a grant proposal applying the concepts learned throughout the semester. Given that concise and persuasive writing is an essential skill used in writing grant proposals, and that most grant guidelines indicate a strict page limit, the proposal may not exceed ten pages. While there is no page limit minimum, if a proposal were significantly shorter than ten pages it would be unlikely that sufficient information and discussion had been included. The grant proposal will be on a topic of the students’ choice (some suggestions will be provided), and will follow standard grant proposal guidelines. Students will be graded on the content of their proposed intervention, and also on their ability to meet the expectations and priorities of the funder in the presentation of their proposed intervention. The Grant Proposal will be submitted through Blackboard on (TO BE DETERMINED). Please note that the Grant Proposal is to be submitted in full, in one single document, as an attachment through Blackboard.

**Attendance Policy:** Since this course is based heavily on discussion, in-class group work, and application of concepts to concrete case studies, good attendance is essential. We understand that things may come up that prevent students from attending class and so one absence is allowed, with prior notice, for any reason. Students are still expected to complete reading and response essay on time, and to review and respond to case study questions before the following class meeting so as not to fall behind. If more than one class is missed, or if the absence is not pre-arranged, student will lose 5 points from the participation grade for each absence, up to two times. If there are any additional absences the student will fail the course. For documented illness (i.e. with doctor’s note) students may miss class with no penalty, but are expected to catch up on missed work within a reasonable time frame.

**Disability Policy:** Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

**Academic Dishonesty Policy:** Students are expected to comply with the University at Albany’s Community Rights and Responsibilities. An incident of unethical conduct (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) or classroom disruption will result in a Fail and referral to the appropriate Departmental and University Committees. More information on academic integrity is available at the following website: http://www.albany.edu/reading/academic_integrity.php. Students will be asked to sign a statement of honor, promising to act with academic integrity.
Lecture Schedule:

Unit 1: Theoretical Basis of Health as a Human Right

1/22  First day: Introduction and Orientation

1/29  Introduction: Health as a Human Right

   Institute for Health and Human Rights - Kamiar/Arash Alaei

2/5   Philosophical Foundations of Human Right to Health

   Department of Philosophy - Kristen Hessler

2/12  Political Science Approach to Protection of Right to Health

   Department of Political Science - Victor Asal

Unit 2: Defining Goals and Objectives and Understanding the Target Group

2/19  Introduction

   Institute for Health and Human Rights - Kamiar/Arash Alaei

2/26  Gender, Sexuality, and Public Health

   Department of Women’s Studies - Vivien Ng

3/5   Health as a Question of Social Justice

   School of Social Welfare - Robert Miller

*MIDTERM EXAM*

3/12  IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

*SPRING BREAK*

3/19  *Classes Suspended*

Unit 3: Design, Implementation, Evaluation, and Work in the Field

3/26  Introduction

   Institute for Health and Human Rights - Kamiar/Arash Alaei

4/2   Social and Cultural Determinants of Health

   Center for Global Health – John Justino

4/9   From Principles to Practice

   School of Public Health – Russ Altone

Unit 4: Legal Frameworks for the Promotion and Protection of Health as a Human Right

4/16  Introduction

   Institute for Health and Human Rights - Kamiar/Arash Alaei

4/23  Legal Defense of Human Rights

   Albany Law School - Alicia Ouellette

4/30  Prisoners’ Health and Wrongful Conviction

   School of Criminal Justice - Allison Redlich
Closing Remarks and Reflection
Institute for Health and Human Rights - Kamiar/Arash Alaei