**Course Title:** Health and Human Rights: an Interdisciplinary Approach

**Course #:** Cross Listed/Shared Resource: HHPM 486/586 and RPOS 486/586

**Term:** Fall 2014

**Day/Time:** Wednesdays, 5:45 PM – 8:35 PM

**Location:** Lecture Center 3A (uptown campus)

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

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**Office Hours:** Wednesdays, 3:30 – 5:30 PM in BA 365 (uptown campus); also available by appointment

**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 DESCRIPTION**

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 the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to public health;
- have the skills to develop an effective health intervention and construct a persuasive grant proposal.

It will also prepare students with the following American Schools of Public Health (ASPH) Competencies:

Health Policy and Management:

D. 2. Describe the legal and ethical bases for public health and health services.
D. 3. Explain methods of ensuring community health safety and preparedness.
D. 4. Discuss the policy process for improving the health status of populations.
D. 5. Apply the principles of program planning, development, budgeting, management and evaluation in organizational and community initiatives.
D. 10. Demonstrate leadership skills for building partnerships

Social and Behavioral Sciences:

E. 2. Identify the causes of social and behavioral factors that affect health of individuals and populations.
E. 3. Identify individual, organizational and community concerns, assets, resources and deficits for social and behavioral science interventions.
E. 4. Identify critical stakeholders for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.
E. 5. Describe steps and procedures for the planning, implementation and evaluation of public health programs, policies and interventions.
E. 9. Apply ethical principles to public health program planning, implementation and evaluation.

Diversity and Culture:

G. 5. Use the basic concepts and skills involved in culturally appropriate community engagement and empowerment with diverse communities.
G. 6. Apply the principles of community-based participatory research to improve health in diverse populations.
G. 7. Differentiate among availability, acceptability, and accessibility of health care across diverse populations.
G. 8. Differentiate between linguistic competence, cultural competency, and health literacy in public health practice.
G. 9. Cite examples of situations where consideration of culture-specific needs resulted in a more effective modification or adaptation of a health intervention.
G. 10. Develop public health programs and strategies responsive to the diverse cultural values and traditions of the communities being served.

Leadership:

H. 4. Engage in dialogue and learning from others to advance public health goals.
H. 5. Demonstrate team building, negotiation, and conflict management skills.
H. 8. Apply social justice and human rights principles when addressing community needs.
H. 9. Develop strategies to motivate others for collaborative problem solving, decision-making, and evaluation.

Program Planning:

K. 2. Describe the tasks necessary to assure that program implementation occurs as intended.
K. 4. Explain the contribution of logic models in program development, implementation, and evaluation.
K. 5. Differentiate among goals, measurable objectives, related activities, and expected outcomes for a public health program.
K. 6. Differentiate the purposes of formative, process, and outcome evaluation.
K. 7. Differentiate between qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods in relation to their strengths, limitations, and appropriate uses, and emphases on reliability and validity.

GRADING

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

**Undergraduate Students**
Reading Response Essays 30.00%
Planning assignments 25.00%
Attendance/Participation 10.00%
Midterm 15.00%
Grant Proposal 20.00%
100.00%

**Graduate Students**
Reading Response Essays 30.00%
Case Study Presentations 5.00%
Attendance/Participation 10.00%
Midterm 15.00%
Grant Proposal 40.00%
100.00%

ASSIGNMENTS

**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. Papers turned in after 5 pm but before class are accepted and will receive feedback, but will automatically receive a grade of 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.

**Additional requirements for graduate students:** Graduate students will facilitate one case study for a guest lecture. Students will be responsible to be prepared for the case study by reading some additional material and being well-versed in the subject matter prior to conducting the study. Students will be evaluated on the depth, effectiveness, and direction of the case study.
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, measured by in-class tasks, including the case studies.

Midterm: The midterm will be in-class, open-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 5 points each, graded 0-5. Students will receive comments and will have the opportunity to revise these sections for their final submission of the grant proposal. Graduate students will be assigned additional readings or trainings to prepare for these planning assignments to give them the technical knowledge that they will need to complete their 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 fifteen pages. While there is no page limit minimum, if a proposal were significantly shorter than fifteen 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. Undergraduate students will work on a general grant proposal with guidelines that will be provided by the professors.

Additional requirements for graduate students: Graduate students, in groups of four, will choose one out of three to four calls for proposals by suggested grantmaking organizations with specific guidelines. They will be expected to research the organizations and the types of initiatives currently funded by them. Then, they will frame their proposal according to the criteria of the actual proposal guidelines. They will be graded on the content of their proposed intervention, and also on their ability to meet the expectations and priorities of the chosen funder in the final project.

The Grant Proposal will be submitted through Blackboard on December 17, 2014. Please note that the Grant Proposal is to be submitted in full, in one single document, as an attachment through Blackboard.

ATTENDENCE

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

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:

8/27  First day: Introduction and Orientation

Unit 1: Theoretical Basis of Health as a Human Right

9/3   Introduction: Health as a Human Right  
      *Institute for Health and Human Rights - Kamiar/Arash Alaei*

9/10  Political Science Approach to the Protection of Right to Health  
      *Department of Political Science - Victor Asal*

9/17  Philosophical Foundations of Human Right to Health  
      *Department of Philosophy - Kristen Hessler*

*NO CLASS*

9/24  Classes Suspended as of 2:35 pm for Rosh Hashanah

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

10/1  Developing Project Ideas: Setting Goals, Objectives, and Defining the Target Group  
      *Institute for Health and Human Rights - Kamiar Alaei*

10/8  Gender, Sexuality, and Public Health  
      *Department of Women’s Studies - Vivien Ng*

10/15 Health as a Question of Social Justice  
      *School of Social Welfare - Robert Miller*  
      Midterm Review

*MIDTERM EXAM*

10/22 IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM

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

10/29 Application of Intervention Design, Programming, and Adaptation  
      *Institute for Health and Human Rights - Arash Alaei*

11/5  Social and Cultural Determinants of Health  
      *Center for Global Health – John Justino*

11/12 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

11/19 An Overview of International Human Rights Law  
      *Institute for Health and Human Rights – Alexandra Harrington*

*Thanksgiving Break* 11/26

12/3  Legal Defense of Human Rights  
      *Albany Law School – Peter Halewood*