HSPH 680 Syllabus: MPH First Year Seminar  
Monday 9:00 – 10:20 am; Room C4, GEC East (School of Public Health Building, East Campus)

Instructor  
Tabassum Insaf, MBBS, PhD, Research Scientist, Battelle Research Institute; Lecturer, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics; tinsaf@albany.edu,  
Office Hours: By appointment only.

Course Description  
This seminar is a two semester core foundation course for the MPH degree. Key modules will include public health overview, ethics, leadership, communication, career planning, and preparedness. The seminar is designed for students at all levels of prior training to solidify public health skills essential for academic and professional success. All MPH students are required to register for this 1 credit course. The class is graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. Students must attend all classes and sign-in before the class starts at 9:00 am. Classes will be cancelled due to weather only if UAlbany issues an East Campus closure. Students will receive an unsatisfactory grade if there have been more than two unapproved class absences.

Learning Objectives  
• Understand the multiple functions of public health and learn some of the unique characteristics of public health  
• Describe ethical issues in public health practice and research  
• Understand and adhere to guidelines for scientific integrity and plagiarism  
• Understand the critical role of public health leadership and integrity  
• Describe some of the historical achievements in the public health field  
• Explain the role of the institutional review board (IRB) in research; complete IRB certification  
• Develop a systems thinking and critical thinking approach to public health issues  
• Understand and critically evaluate the evidence for public health efforts  
• Develop effective scientific communication including presentations, posters, and papers  
• Understand how research and communication needs to respect boundaries and diversity

Association of Schools of Public Health Core Competencies emphasized in this class  
(Full list of MPH competencies is available at http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=851)  
• Describe the legal and ethical bases for public health and health services (Health Policy and Management 2)  
• Apply ethical principles to public health program planning, implementation and evaluation (Social and Behavioral Sciences 9)  
• Apply basic principles of ethical analysis (e.g., the Public Health Code of Ethics, human rights framework, other moral theories) to issues of public health practice and policy (Professionalism 2)  
• Promote high standards of personal and organizational integrity, compassion, honesty and respect for all people (Professionalism 5)  
• Describe the attributes of leadership in public health (Leadership 1)
- Demonstrate leadership skills for building partnerships (Health Policy 10)
- Apply evidence-based principles and the scientific knowledge base to critical evaluation and decision-making in public health (Professionalism 3)
- Use the basic concepts and skills involved in culturally appropriate community engagement and empowerment with diverse communities (Diversity 5)
- Explain how the contexts of gender, race, poverty, history, migration, and culture are important in the design of interventions within public health systems (Systems Thinking 6)

Assignments
All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date specified. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval of the course instructor. Students will receive an unsatisfactory grade if all assignments are not submitted by the last day of class, upon approval of course instructor.

Blackboard
The seminar is a blended course with announcements, course material, and class schedule on Blackboard http://www.albany.edu/its/. It is recommended that students save and review speaker slides and other materials prior to coming to class. By saving class materials, students can develop electronic and hard copy resource manual notebooks for future reference.

Class Schedule
The class will be divided into two sessions based on concentration. Each session will meet for 6 classes. Session I (Dates- August 26- October 21) will be offered to HPM and SBCH concentrations. Session II (Dates- October 28- December 2) is for the BMS, EHS, EPI, BST and PMR concentrations. The first class in each session is an online module. The other classes will be in-class meetings.

There is no required textbook for the seminar series. However, additional readings may be provided based on the instructor's discretion. These would be made available on Blackboard at least one week before the class discussion.

Session I - HPM and SBCH students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 26</td>
<td>No SPH 680 Class. Other classes in session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2</td>
<td>No class. Labor Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 9</td>
<td>What is Public Health? Online session- Explore Module 1 on Blackboard</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 16</td>
<td>History of Public Health-case study: immunization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>Convocation- All students from both sessions need to attend to get credit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 30</td>
<td>Ethics- CITI training Assignment: Submit 2 CITI certificates--basic Human Subjects Protection/Research course and financial conflict of interest. Both certificates are reached through CITI site (<a href="https://www.citiprogram.org/">https://www.citiprogram.org/</a>), although financial conflict of interest</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 14</td>
<td>Classes suspended</td>
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<tr>
<td>October 21</td>
<td>Risk: Voluntary and Involuntary risk: Public health approaches to intervention</td>
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</tbody>
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**Session II- BMS, EHS, EPI, BST and PMR concentrations**

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 23</td>
<td>Convocation- All students from both sessions need to attend to get credit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 28</td>
<td>What is Public Health? Online session- Explore Module 1 on Blackboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 4</td>
<td>History of Public Health-case study: immunization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 11</td>
<td>Ethics Assignment: Submit 2 CITI certificates--basic Human Subjects Protection/Research course and financial conflict of interest. Both certificates are reached through CITI site (<a href="https://www.citiprogram.org/">https://www.citiprogram.org/</a>), although financial conflict of interest certificate can also be reached at <a href="http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/policy/coi/tutorial2011/fcoi.htm">http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/policy/coi/tutorial2011/fcoi.htm</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 25</td>
<td>Risk: Voluntary and Involuntary risk: Public health approaches to intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2</td>
<td>No class.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: More details on specific assignments will be provided in the Course Information folder on Blackboard. Slides and other class handouts will be made available in the Learning Modules folders on Blackboard.

**Class courtesy**

Please be courteous and respectful of the opinions and views of others. Do not be shy about asking questions or expressing your views. Participation in discussions and activities will supplement your learning experience and the experience of your classmates. Because many issues will be covered,
students' learning will be maximized by active involvement in the class during class time, avoiding side conversations, working on other class work, and use of computers or other electronic equipment for activities not related to the class.

To avoid distractions, as a general rule cell phones should be turned off during class. If the student is a caretaker or needs to keep a phone turned on for emergencies, the phone should be set to vibrate and the student should sit near the door to exit without disrupting class.

**Academic Honesty**
Students are expected to be ethical and honest in carrying out all assignments and course requirements. As per University policy on plagiarism, cheating on exams, multiple submission of the same work, forgery, sabotage, unauthorized collaboration with other students, falsification of work, bribery or use of purchased research service reports without appropriate notation, and theft, damage, or misuse of library or computer resources are considered forms of academic dishonesty. Attempts to commit such acts shall also constitute academic dishonesty.

Defining plagiarism can be complex and interpretations may vary by academic campus. To ensure familiarity with the UAlbany perspective, students are required to complete the University’s Plagiarism online course, “Plagiarism 101 Tutorial”, and submit proof of completion (i.e., scanned copy of “Course Credit Acknowledgement”). Access the tutorial at: [http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html](http://library.albany.edu/usered/plagiarism/index.html).
INSTRUCTORS
Mary P. Gallant, PhD, MPH  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
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Susan Bernardi-Bain  
Program Coordinator  
PHLOT & Certificate in PH Fundamentals  
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Office Hours for Instructors:  By Appointment

CLASS MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION

Mondays, 9:00am-10:20am, Room C4 of GEC (unless otherwise indicated)

The course will be primarily in-person with a limited number of out-of-class assignments. Outside of class, communication will be via email and Blackboard.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The theme of the second semester of the MPH First-Year Seminar is career and professional development. The goal of the course is to prepare you to become a public health professional. Class sessions will focus on the development of various skills related to leadership development, preparing resumes and cover letters, interviewing and networking, and maintaining work-life balance. An introduction to the internship process and to poster day will also be included.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe effective public health leadership attributes and skills
- Develop a targeted resume and cover letter
- Demonstrate effective interviewing and networking skills
- Identify important aspects of professionalism in the public health workplace
- Describe effective stress reduction skills and demonstrate an understanding of the importance of work-life balance
- Explain the internship selection process
- Describe the elements of an effective poster presentation

CORE COMPETENCIES

(codes in parentheses refer to ASPH Cross-Cutting Competencies)

Students will demonstrate increased competence in their ability to:

- Describe the attributes of leadership in public health (Leadership 1).
- Promote high standards of personal and organizational integrity, compassion, honesty and respect for all people (Professionalism 5).
- embrace a definition of public health that captures the unique characteristics of the field (Professionalism 9)
- appreciate the importance of working collaboratively (Professionalism 10)
TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS

There is no required textbook for SPH 680. There will be a limited amount of reading for the course. Any reading/viewing assignments required for specific weeks will be posted on the Blackboard site for this course.

ATTENDANCE AND GRADING

**Students will sign-in before the start of each class no later than 9:00am.** Any student who misses more than one face-to-face session without permission from the instructors will be given an incomplete and will need to retake the entire course. Lateness to class will result in being counted as absent. Classes will be cancelled due to weather only if UAlbany issues an East Campus closure.

The course is graded as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory. Attendance (as described above), active engagement in class discussions and submission of all assignments will be required to pass the class with a Satisfactory grade. *Because failing a required seminar is grounds for dismissal from the University, all students need to achieve a Satisfactory (passing) grade.*

Due dates/times for assignments are indicated on the course schedule on p.3. Guest speaker feedback forms are to be submitted via Blackboard before the next class session. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval. The due date for approved late assignments will be discussed with the instructor and arrangements will be made to accommodate the needs of the student to the extent possible.

WEBSITE

Assignments, and other course materials will be posted on the Blackboard Learning System course website. Students registered for the class can access the course material by logging on to the Blackboard Learning System on the MyUalbany home page.

Academic Integrity and Class Courtesy

Please refer to the University at Albany Graduate Bulletin and the pledge you signed when becoming a student in this school for policies on academic dishonesty, course withdrawal, etc. Please note that academic dishonesty, in any of its forms, will not be tolerated. Please review the policy in the link below:


In accordance with University policy, any instance of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failing grade for the course and potential sanctions by the school and university. Students are strongly advised to avoid placing themselves in any situation for which an instance of academic dishonesty is suspected by the instructor. There will be no exceptions.

Finally, many of the classes will consist of outside speakers. Please respect your fellow students, faculty and guest lecturers by conducting yourselves in a professional manner. Students should refrain from using cell phones (including text messaging) during class time. As a general rule, cell phones should be turned off during class, or set to vibrate in case an emergency may arise. Since class participation is encouraged, it is expected that students will be courteous and respectful of the opinions and views of others. Active participation in discussions and activities will supplement your learning experience and the experience of your classmates. Please refrain from working on outside coursework, conducting side conversations, or using computers/other electronic devices during class.
## Class Schedule: Spring 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Session #</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, January 27th</td>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Overview: Becoming A Public Health Professional &amp; Leader -- Where Do We Start?</td>
<td>Gretchen Moore-Simmons, Alzheimer’s Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, February 3rd</td>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Auditorium</td>
<td>Public Health Leadership &amp; Professional Development: The Bigger Picture</td>
<td>Bruce Tamlyn &amp; Hannah Duncan, Silver Bay Leadership Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, February 10th</td>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Intro to the Internship Process/2nd Year Students Panel</td>
<td>Katrina Chamberlain/2nd year students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, February 17th</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NO CLASS - PRESIDENT’S DAY</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, February 24th</td>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>What Employers Want: How to Create Targeted Resumes &amp; Cover Letters</td>
<td>Cathy Parker, Associate Director, UAlbany Career Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, March 3rd</td>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Resume Critiques</td>
<td>Assignment #1: Draft resume due March 3, start of class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, March 10th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, March 11th</td>
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<td>Midterm Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri, March 14th - Sun, March 23rd</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spring Break (Classes Suspended)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, March 24th</td>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Interviewing Skills: How to Ace the Interview</td>
<td>Ed Hallenbeck, Careers By Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, March 31st</td>
<td>#7</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Networking Without the Net</td>
<td>Robert Shutt, RA Solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, April 7th</td>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Career Panel: Public Health Careers—What’s Out There?</td>
<td>Assignment #2: Questions for panel due April 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, April 14th</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NO CLASS: MUST ATTEND POSTER DAY ON FRIDAY, APRIL 25TH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun, April 20th – Mon, April 21st</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Easter (Classes Suspended)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, April 25th</td>
<td>#9</td>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>Poster Day (held in Cancer Research Center, starts at 8:00am)</td>
<td>Assignment #3: Poster critique due April 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, April 28</td>
<td>#10</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Professionalism in the Workplace—What You Need to Know</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, May 5th</td>
<td>#11</td>
<td>Room C4</td>
<td>Stress Reduction and Maintaining a Work-Life Balance</td>
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</table>
As the capstone in the MPH degree, this course encourages students to reflect on the competencies they have acquired during the academic and internship phases of the MPH program, and it helps them to integrate their knowledge from all the public health disciplines and apply it to public health issues. Students will use this capstone class to think critically and to synthesize information at a higher level. In addition, we will incorporate this information into the job search and career development process. Faculty and students will discuss and provide joint feedback on identifying job opportunities, developing cover letters and resumes and preparing for interviews.

The course will be primarily in person with some out-of-class work and writing assignments. Communication will be via Blackboard and email.

Learning objectives
By the end of this course, students will be able to approach a public health problem from a multi-disciplinary perspective. They will be able to:

- describe the contributions of behavior, biology, environmental conditions, epidemiology, statistics, and policy to a health problem
- organize evidence into a usable format
- communicate a public health message in writing (press release or lay summary)
- demonstrate ethical choices, values and professional practices implicit in public health decisions
- be familiar with the job search process, including job search, cover letters, resume development, application and interview

Competencies
(codes in parentheses refer to ASPH Cross-Cutting Competencies)
Students will demonstrate increased competence in their ability to:

- develop strategies to motivate others for collaborative problem solving (Leadership 9)
• embrace a definition of public health that captures the unique characteristics of the field (Professionalism 9)
• appreciate the importance of working collaboratively (Professionalism 10)
• determine how social, behavioral, environmental, and biological factors contribute to health outcomes (Program Planning 1)

Textbook and materials:
1. There will be no required textbook. However any reading/viewing assignments that are required for specific weeks of the course will be posted on the Blackboard site for this course

Pre-requisites
This course can be taken only in the student’s final semester in the MPH program. Students will also need access to Blackboard.

Grading
Students will sign in at the beginning of each class. Any student who misses more than one face to face session without permission from the instructor will be given an incomplete and will need to retake the entire course. Lateness to class will result in being counted as absent.

Late assignments will not be accepted unless arrangements are made prior to the due date. The due date for approved late assignments will be discussed with the instructor and arrangements will be made to accommodate the needs of the student to the extent possible.

The course is graded pass/fail. Attendance (as described above), active engagement in class discussions and submission of all assignments will be required to pass the class. Because failing a required seminar is grounds for dismissal from the University, all students need to achieve a passing grade.

Web-site:
Assignments, and other course materials will be posted on the Blackboard Learning System course web-site. Students registered for the class can access the course material by logging on to http://bls.its.albany.edu/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct or through the MyUalbany link to Blackboard Learning System. Notes and readings will be posted as Adobe Acrobat files (i.e., with .pdf extensions).

Academic Integrity
Please refer to the University at Albany Graduate Bulletin and the pledge you signed when becoming a student in this school for policies on academic dishonesty, course withdrawal, etc. Please note that academic dishonesty, in any of its forms, will not be tolerated. Please review the policy in the link below:
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Finally, please respect your fellow students, faculty and guest lecturers by conducting yourselves in a professional manner. Please refrain from using your cell phone (including text messaging) during class time.
Course Schedule

Week 1: 1/24/2013: Beginning Discussion

How to tie it all together: What is Public Health, what are my career goals, how does my training help me meet my career goals?

We will discuss the development of a single paragraph summary of public health career goals to use in the job search and evaluation processes (to be discussed further in class).

Week 2: 1/31/2014: Networking and Job Search

Discussion on the use of various tools and resources for networking and job searches. We will discuss how to identify good job prospects, how to develop a good cover letter and resume, how to identify good references. By the next class session students will provide an updated resume and summary paragraph. Submit completed assignment electronically through Black Board to instructor by 2/7/2014.

Week 3: 2/7/2014: Discussion and Feedback

Discussion of public health in the news. Students should come to class prepared to discuss current public health issues.

By the next class students will provide a list of 3-5 job prospects and a draft cover letter for one of the job postings. Submit completed assignment electronically through Black Board to instructor by 2/14/2014. BRING A PAPER COPY OF THE COVER LETTER and RESUME TO CLASS ON 2/14/2014 FOR REVIEW.

Week 4: 2/14/2014: Discussion and Feedback

Discussion of public health in the news. Students should come to class prepared to discuss current public health issues.

Feedback on resumes, cover letters and paragraphs will be provided.

Week 5: 2/21/2014: Winter Break, No Class

How do the different disciplines in Public Health work together to inform Public Health?

**Week 7: 3/7/2014:** Bringing it all Together

Mock interviews with feedback.

**Week 8: 3/14/2014:** Poster Presentations

We will discuss preparations for poster day and the mechanics of putting together a poster.

**Week 9: 3/21/2014:** Spring Break, No Class

**Week 10: 3/28/2014:** How to get the point across succinctly

Using BPA as an example, we will review/discuss how the different disciplines in Public Health work together to inform policy. We will develop a “one pager” in class to review the pertinent issues.

**Week 11: 4/4/2014:** Poster Review

Please submit your posters to the blackboard site for review during class time (logistics to be discussed on March 14)

**Week 12: 4/11/2014:** No class, Dr. Bell will be available in Room 155 for assistance with job searches and other questions.

**Week 13: 4/18/2014:** Current Topics in Public Health

Discussion of public health in the news. Students should come to class prepared to discuss current public health issues.

**Week 14: 4/25/2014:** Poster Day

We will not meet in the classroom, we will be attending Poster Day.

**Week 15: 5/2/2014:** Current Topics in Public Health and Wrap-up

Discussion of public health in the news. Students should come to class prepared to discuss current public health issues.