

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

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

**Term:** Fall 2015

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

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

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

**Assistant:** Sarah Leitner; [sleitner@albany.edu](mailto:sleitner@albany.edu)

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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:

### *Undergraduate Students*

Reading Response Essays	25.00%
Planning Assignments	10.00%
Case Study Presentation	10.00%
Attendance/Participation	10.00%
Midterm	15.00%
Grant Proposal	30.00%
	100.00%

### *Graduate Students*

Reading Response Essays	25.00%
Case Study Presentations	10.00%
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 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 week before the response essay is due. Papers that are submitted through Blackboard at 5PM the evening before the class meeting will be graded on a scale of 0-2.5. Papers turned in after 5PM will automatically receive a grade of unsatisfactory (0). There will be 11 of these assignments total, worth 2.5 points each. The essay with the lowest grade will be dropped.

*Case Studies:* Each week students will receive a case study and a set of associated questions from the group facilitating the case study. 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:* In pairs, graduate students will facilitate two case studies throughout the semester. 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. Further instructions for the case study will be available on Blackboard.

*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. *At the end of the semester, students who have exceeded our expectations in terms of active participation may earn up to 2 points of extra credit on their final grade.*

*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 (Undergraduate):* The skills developed throughout the course will be applied to the students' chosen public health intervention. Students 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 2 points each, graded 0-2. Students will receive comments and will have the opportunity to revise these sections for the final submission of the grant proposal.

*Grant proposal:* For the final assessment, students will be asked to work in pairs 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 total proposal (including citations and the appendix) may not exceed twenty pages. While there is no page limit minimum, if a proposal were less than fifteen pages it would be unlikely that sufficient information 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:* Working individually, graduate students will choose one call for proposals by suggested grant making 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. Graduate students should aim to write 10 pages, *not* including citations and the appendix.

The Grant Proposal will be submitted through Blackboard on **December 16, 2015**. Please note that the Grant Proposal is to be submitted in full, in one single document, as an attachment through Blackboard. The Logic Model, however, will be submitted as a separate attachment.

## **ATTENDANCE**

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 the readings and response essays on time. 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 half class that they miss, 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](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:

**8/26 First day: Introduction and Orientation**

### Unit 1: Theoretical Basis of Health as a Human Right

**9/2 Introduction: Health as a Human Right**

*Global Institute for Health and Human Rights* - Arash Alaei  
(Triangular Clinics)

**CASE STUDY 1** - Facilitated by Arash Alaei (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)  
(Mohammed and the Matchmaker)

**9/9 Health Disparities and Public Policy**

*Department of Public Administration & Policy* - Stephen Weinberg

**CASE STUDY 2** – Facilitated by Arash Alaei (7:10 PM -8:35 PM)  
(Mohammed and the Matchmaker)

**9/16 Political Science Approach to the Protection of the Right to Health**

*Department of Political Science* - Victor Asal

**CASE STUDY 3** – *Develop case for this week* (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)

**9/23 \*NO CLASS\***

**Classes Suspended as of 2:35 PM for Yom Kippur**

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

**9/30 Developing Project Ideas: Setting Goals, Objectives, and Defining the Target Group**

*Global Institute for Health and Human Rights* - Kamiar Alaei

**CASE STUDY 4** - (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)

**10/7 Gender and Public Health Disparities**

*Department of Women's Studies* – Rajani Bhatia

**CASE STUDY 5** - (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)

**10/14 Maternal Mortality as a Human Rights Issue**

*Department of Philosophy* – Kristen Hessler

**CASE STUDY 6** - (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)

**\*MIDTERM EXAM\***

**10/21 IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

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

**10/28 Application of Intervention Design, Programming, and Adaptation**

*Global Institute for Health and Human Rights* - Arash Alaei

**CASE STUDY 7** - (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)

**11/4 HIV/AIDS and Public Health Resource Allocation**

*Department of Public Administration & Policy* – Erika Martin

**CASE STUDY 8** – (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)

**11/11 Environmental Practices and Disproportionate Risks of Disease**

*Department of Environmental Health Sciences* – Beth Feingold

**CASE STUDY 9 - (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)**

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

**11/18 International Treaty and Organization Based Structures for Human Rights Protections**

*Global Institute for Health and Human Rights* – Alexandra Harrington

**CASE STUDY 10 - (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)**

**\*Thanksgiving Break\* 11/25**

**12/2 Legal Defense of Human Rights**

*Albany Law School* – Peter Halewood

**CASE STUDY 11 - (7:10 PM - 8:35 PM)**

**12/9 Prisoner Health and Human Rights**

*School of Criminal Justice* – Giza Lopes

**CLOSING REMARKS AND REFLECTION**

**12/16 Finals due**