

**UNIV 275**  
**Introduction to Public Health**  
**Tuesdays 7-9:50pm**  
**Fall 2015**

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office hours: W 12:30-2pm & TH 4-5pm or by appt.

**Introduction**

This course is designed to introduce the basic tenets, applications, and foci of public health, including integrating public health with other health professions. It will provide a history of public health, an overview of the core disciplines, current events and issues in the field. This course is intended to serve as an introduction to the major issues of public health with a focus on the United States as well as global contexts. We will examine what those issues are, what determines them, and how they can be altered. As a survey of the entire field of public health, the course provides a broad overview for students wishing no more than an introduction to the field, as well as good grounding for students who wish to pursue additional coursework in public health.

**Course Objectives**

The specific course objectives are expressed within the following competencies:

1. Students will be able to explain what public health is, what distinguishes it from the other health sciences, and what unique contributions it has to make to the health of the public.
2. Students will be able to identify the principal determinants of health and disease, as well as the principal determinants of, and explanations for, inequalities in the health of groups differentiated by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
3. Students will understand when (and why) governments should intervene in matters pertaining to the health of the public and when (and why) they should not. They will be able to describe the major formal organizational structures within the United States responsible for monitoring and improving the public's health.
4. Students will be able to describe the basic approaches and purposes of the two major analytical methods of public health, epidemiology and biostatistics, without achieving mastery of the methods (i.e., this is not a methods course; that is the subject of other

courses).

5. Students will be able to explain the biomedical basis of infectious and chronic diseases and congenital abnormalities, again without developing detailed expertise on these subjects.
6. Students will be able to identify the principal social and behavioral determinants of health and demonstrate how they influence the most important behavior-related health problems of the day.
7. Students will be able to identify the principal environmental determinants of health and describe the major environmental health issues of the present time.
8. Students will be able to explain the role of public health in medical care and identify the principal problems in the U.S. health care system. As well, students will become familiar with the features of and arguments about the Affordable Care Act.
9. Students will be able to itemize critical issues in global health, with a special focus on health in poor countries.
10. Students will be able to describe important future issues in public health and explain their origins.

### **Course Materials**

**Required Text:** Introduction to Public Health. Mary-Jane Schneider, ed. Fourth Edition.  
[http://www.amazon.com/Introduction-Public-Health-Mary-Jane-Schneider/dp/1449697364/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1440961777&sr=1-1&keywords=schneider+introduction+to+public+health](http://www.amazon.com/Introduction-Public-Health-Mary-Jane-Schneider/dp/1449697364/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1440961777&sr=1-1&keywords=schneider+introduction+to+public+health)

**Additional Materials** (articles, case studies, interesting current events, etc.) will be provided on Moodle or via email

### **Course and University Policies**

#### **Attendance**

I expect you to attend class and to attend class prepared. We meet just once a week so we want to make the most of our time together and to do so, we need to be well prepared. Therefore, participation and attendance are very important to your success in this course. Remember, you cannot participate if you are not there! If you are going to be absent, contact me before class. It is your responsibility to get all information you missed on any days you were absent. Acceptable reasons for an excused absence include family emergency, serious illness, religious holiday, and participation in college athletic competitions. Please note that excessive absences, even when excused, will negatively impact your participation grade and your final course grade at the professor's discretion. Students with unexcused absences will receive no participation credit for the days they are absent. Typically, no more than one excused absence

in a once-a-week course is permitted over the course of the semester. If you have more than two absences, you may not be eligible to continue in the course whether these absences are excused or unexcused. Extensions on written assignments must be requested at least 24 hours prior to a deadline and are subject to instructor consideration. I will accept late material without prior extension approval but will lower the final grade by a letter grade for each day it is late in order to be fair to all. My goal is your success and learning about public health, I recognize that emergencies arise – I ask that you communicate with me so that I can help you succeed in this course in the best ways possible.

### **Laptops, phones, iPads, etc.**

Use of electronic devices is not permitted during class-time. While I regret the inconvenience for students who like to use laptops for note taking, the frequent uses during class time, checking email, texting friends, surfing the Web, working on other assignments, create distractions for both users and their neighbors alike and are disrespectful to one's fellow students and to the instructor and guest lecturers. In addition, research has in fact indicated that students learn better without having such technology in use at the time of lecture, discussion and thinking about concepts at hand. Use of electronic devices creates a literal as well as virtual barrier too during discussion or lecture and it is important that we work together, not in isolation throughout the semester. If you have documented accommodations that allow the use of particular technologies, by all means, just let me know.

I will be certain to post any powerpoint slides on our Moodle site for you to access.

### **ADA~STATEMENT:**

DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and University administered activities and reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA). Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services, for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Academic Success and Student Disability Services is located in the Memorial Student Union Building. Their telephone: 765-658-6267. It is the responsibility of the student to share the letter of accommodation faculty and staff members. Accommodations will not be implemented until the faculty or staff member has received the official letter. Accommodations are not retroactive. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with each faculty and staff member receiving the letter.

### **Readings, Assignments, Exams and Grading**

Some of the material in the readings will not be covered in lecture or discussion, depending upon our time on any given day and some material is intended to supplement what is covered in class. Anything included in the assigned readings is fair game for exams, whether or not it is discussed in class. This will also include information provided by guest lecturers.

Some readings go into a great deal of detail (e.g., a listing of all the chemical compounds

covered by governmental drinking water standards). The objective is for students to gain a good general understanding of the phenomena of interest, not to require students to memorize the details. All of your reading should be focused on learning basic relationships, principles, and major concepts and how they are applied. This does not mean that you will not be expected to recall some specific facts, but when such is requested of you, the facts will relate to critical aspects of our consideration of public health. For example, I consider it pretty “basic” that you know that two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese. This is one of those very important facts that everyone interested in public health should know. Another such fact is that U.S. health expenditures account for 18% of the nation’s gross domestic product, dramatically more than any other country in the world.

**Course grades will be based on two exams, each covering half of the course, two writing assignments, one graded presentation at the end of the course and an overall grade for participation. See below:**

\* Each of the two exams (midterm on October 13<sup>th</sup> and final on December 14<sup>th</sup>) will count 25% of the course grade (a total of 50%). The final will cover the entire semester but will primarily focus on material since the midterm.

\* Each of the two writing assignments, essays of no more than 5 pages each, will count 10% (a total of 20%).

\* You will prepare a final oral presentation in groups of three. The presentation topic will illustrate a contemporary global or environmental health case study. It should provide background and context information, demonstrate the public health problem at hand and implications of the problem if not addressed. More details will follow in an assignment document I will post to Moodle during the semester. You will receive a group grade as well as an evaluation of your work by your teammates. (This will be explained at the time of the assignment.) This will count 15% of the course grade.

\* Participation will count 15% of the course grade. Again, participation means attendance, preparedness and actively moving the discussion forward during the class period.

Some grade-related observations should be emphasized:

\* Each of the two major writing assignments must be typed double-spaced in an 11- or 12-point font with margins of one inch (or slightly larger). Each of the two writing assignments must not exceed 5 pages (not including bibliographic references). A paper that exceeds this page limit – by running over 5 pages or using a smaller font or failing to have adequate margins (or some combination) – will lose one grade, as above. Thus, for example, an otherwise A paper that runs 5.5 pages will be reduced to an A-. The reasons for this strict requirement are two-fold: The first is to help you learn to follow precise directions, including learning how to edit your essays to fit required limits. (Such limits pervade professional practice. For example, if faculty members submit a grant application to certain grant-giving agencies and their description of the grant’s purposes and methods exceeds the agency’s page limits, their application will be returned unread.) The second reason for this strict requirement

regarding the length of papers is to ensure that you receive graded, written materials back as soon as possible.

\* As noted above, the second (final) exam is scheduled for December 14<sup>th</sup> (from 6-9 pm). Please plan your holiday travel accordingly. (The same holds for the midterm exam, scheduled October 13<sup>th</sup> during class time.)

\* This class does not meet Tuesday the 24<sup>th</sup> of November in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday.

**Schedule of Events & Topics [this course schedule/syllabus is subject to change by the instructor] – In addition to each of the assigned readings noted below, you are responsible for knowledge of Weekly Case Studies that will be posted on Moodle.**

- **A note about the case studies: each week students should read the assigned case studies posted to Moodle. These case studies are based on real events and problems. They demonstrate how professionals across various disciplines tackle public health challenges. The topical areas run the gamut from cardiovascular disease to clean water, from obesity to asthma, from vaccination to mental health, from pharmaceutical policy to environmental regulation. In learning through these cases, students apply a wide range of knowledge and skills relevant to public health outbreak and investigation, policy analysis, regulatory decision making, ethics, program development, program evaluation, research synthesis, screening programs, working with stakeholders, social marketing health risk communication, lab management, emergency preparedness and more. These case studies add to our textbook in ways that give our study of the discipline a great deal of depth. These cases are not merely stories that related compelling public health issues, problems or accomplishments, and then sum up the lessons learned. Rather, they are carefully constructed narratives, most of which put learners in the seat of a protagonist who has a problem to solve. The Cases fall into roughly three categories: Assessment cases, Policy Development cases and Assurance cases.**

As you read the case studies for each week, keep in mind the following questions:

- **What is the problem to be resolved or decision to be made?**
- **Who are the decision makers, and what is motivating each of them?**
- **Who are the other stakeholders? What are their objectives?**
- **What questions must be addressed or issues must be resolved in order to solve the problem or come to a decision?**
- **What contextual issues might affect the decision? These may include health issues, social and political environment, technical barriers, or any other constraints and opportunities.**
- **What are the upsides and downsides associated with alternative actions?**
- **What would you do? Why?**

9/1 Introduction to Public Health

Read: Prologue, Chps. 1-3  
Case Study # 1

9/8 Measuring and Methods in Public Health

Read: Chps. 4 – 8  
Read: International Policy Network “Diseases of Poverty and the 10/90 Gap”  
Case Study # 2 & # 3

9/15 Determinants of Disease ~ Biomedical

Read: Chps. 9 – 12  
Case Study # 4 & # 5

9/22 Determinants of Disease ~ Social/Behavioural

Read: Chps. 13 – 16  
Case Study # 6 & # 7  
**Writing Assignment # 1 Handed out**

9/29 Public Health Ethics & Inequality

Read: Chp. 17, 28  
Case Study # 8 & # 9  
**Due: Writing Assignment # 1 Due**

10/6 Global Health in practice

[Dr. Paul Farmer, Penrod Lecture Series at University of Indianapolis 7pm]

Read: TBD (selections from Paul Farmer)

10/13 **MIDTERM EXAM 7-9:50pm**

10/20 **No Class ~ Fall Break**

10/27 Environmental Health

Read: Chps. 20 – 24  
Case Study # 10 & # 11

11/3 Maternal & Child Health, Mental Health as Public Health

Read: Chp. 18 – 19  
Case Study # 12 & # 13

11/10 Public Health and Aging

Read: Chp. 25 & 29 Schneider  
Case Study # 14 & # 15  
**Writing Assignment # 2 Handed Out**

11/17 Medical Systems and Care (U.S.)

Read: Chps. 26 – 27  
Case Study # 16 & # 17  
**Due: Writing Assignment # 2 Due**

11/24 **No Class ~ Thanksgiving**

12/1 Public Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ~ the Future of Global Public Health

Read: Chps. 30 & 31 in Schneider  
Case Study # 18 & # 19 # 21

12/8 Group Presentations & Final Evaluation/Wrap Up

Due: Group ppt due prior to 7pm (sent electronically to [rupton@depauw.edu](mailto:rupton@depauw.edu))

12/14 **FINAL EXAM 6-9pm**