SYLLABUS AND OVERVIEW
P11.1831 Introduction to Global Health Policy

Course Description:
Why are some people in some countries so much healthier than others? This course will explore the factors that explain the unequal distribution of health and disease in the world. The course will begin with an introduction to the language of global health: the burden of disease, epidemiology, cost-effectiveness, and health systems. It will then analyze the rationale for and modes of intervention to improve global health by exploring a number of high-profile topics, including the HIV/AIDS epidemic, access to pharmaceuticals, human resources for health, and maternal and child health. The course will incorporate knowledge and views from multiple academic disciplines (public health, economics, politics, management, sociology, etc) and does not require any background knowledge. It is open to students in all degree concentrations.

Objectives:
• To introduce key concepts and frameworks used in examining global health issues
• To understand the distribution of health and disability around the world and to understand the individual, social, and institutional factors that affect the burden of disease
• To explore issues and controversies in global health in an interdisciplinary manner
• To introduce the key actors in the global health system
• To learn to articulate the policy relevance of complex global health issues

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Office Hours: Email me to schedule a time to meet

Meeting time and location: Monday, 4:55-6:35 p.m., Room 208

Grading:
• Four policy memos (10% each for a total of 40% of final grade)
• Final in-class exam (40%)
• 2 blog postings (5% each for a total of 10% of final grade)
• Class participation (10%)

Assignments:

Policy memos:
An important skill for anyone interested in working in public policy is the ability to summarize complex issues and to articulate concise arguments. During the semester you will be asked to write four - 2 page (max!) policy memos (minimum 11 point font, minimum 1.5 spaced, reasonable margins). The policy memos will be due throughout the course, approximately one
every 3 weeks. Memo assignments will be posted online 1-2 weeks before they are due at the start of the assigned class.

**Blog postings:**
Our course has its own blog and you are the bloggers. At the beginning of the term, I will circulate a list of the classes and topics for each class. Students will sign up in advance for two sessions. During your assigned week, and by midnight Sunday night before class, you must upload one blog posting broadly related to the week’s theme. You could explore one of the readings, talk about recent developments in this area, or express a viewpoint. Your grade will depend on how useful the posting was and either how informative or how well articulated the posting. A one page overview of how to post will also be circulated at the beginning of class and will be available on the course website. Students must each post at least twice for full grades but there is no maximum number of postings. Your grade will be based on the two sessions you signed up for in advance.

**In-Class Final Exam:**
There will be a final exam for this course during the December exam week. The exact date and time will be announced during the semester. The in-class examination will test key concepts learned during the early parts of the course, your knowledge of the assigned readings, and your ability to summarize the policy relevance of complex global health issues. The exam will comprise a combination of short answer and short paragraph response questions.

**Class participation:**
I reserve 10% of your grade to reflect the general effort you put into the course, including your participation in class, your discussion on the blog, your demonstrated enthusiasm for the subject matter and attendance. I realize that you are all busy adults and sometimes things come prevent you from attending class, but I hope you can try to minimize such events, and generally appreciate an explanation for your absence.

**Textbooks:**
There is no official textbook for this course. Instead the course will use chapters from textbooks that have been available and free of charge online and readings from the academic literature. All of the readings will be made available on the course blackboard website, however, you are responsible for all printing of the readings.
Section One: Introduction to Global Health Policy

1. September 14: An Introduction to Global Health Policy and Course Specifics

Topics covered:
• What is global health?
• Do global health policies have impact?
• Why should the world care about improving global health?
• Introduction to epidemiological and demographic concepts
• Overview of course requirements
• How is this course different from other courses available at Wagner?

Key learning concept: Basic epidemiological and demographic concepts

Readings:

2. September 21: How healthy (or sick) is the world?

Topics covered:
• What is the global burden of disease?
• What are the major patterns of distribution of disease in the world?
• How is health defined and measured at the population level?
• What are some of the normative implications of how we measure health?

Key learning concept: Population health summary measures

Readings:
3. September 28: Why is there such an unequal distribution of health in the world?

Topics covered:
• What contribution do income, education, and other factors make to health?
• What are the social determinants of health?
• What explains the variation in the global burden of disease across countries?
• How do we attribute causation in health?

Key learning concepts: Correlation vs. causation and observational vs. experimental studies

Readings:

4. October 5: What are the priorities in global health policy?

POLICY MEMO #1 IS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS

Topics covered:
• How are priorities in global health defined?
• How are global health priorities set?
• What is cost-effectiveness and how can it be used to define priorities?
• What other frameworks have influenced global health priorities?

Key learning concept: Cost-effectiveness analysis

Readings:

Section Two: The Organization of Global Health Delivery

5. October 12: Introduction to health systems

Topics covered:
• What is a health system?
• How do we measure health system performance? What are limits of this approach?
• Why do some health systems perform so much better than others?
• What does it mean to strengthen a health system?

Readings:

6. October 19: Options for improving health service delivery at the national level

Topics covered:
• Individual vs. population health services
• The role of primary health care vs. tertiary health care
• Horizontal vs. vertical health service delivery
• Public vs. private health care

Readings:

7. October 26: The role of international actors in the delivery of health services

POLICY MEMO #1 IS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS

Topics covered:
- What role do international actors play in health service delivery in developing countries?
- How are national priorities influenced by international priorities?
- How has development assistance for health evolved?
- What is the role of non-governmental actors (both international and domestic) in health service delivery?

Readings:

8. November 2: Health service delivery - demand side issues

Topics covered:
- What factors affect the demand for health services in developing countries?
- How do households select among health care providers?
- How does quality affect the demand for health care services in developing countries?

Readings:

9. November 9: Guest Lecture: John Gershman

10. November 16: Health service delivery – supply side issues

POLICY MEMO #3 IS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS

Topics covered:
• The distribution of human resources for health
• Incentives of health care providers
• Quality of health care providers
• The migration of health care providers

Readings:
• Das, J, Hammer, J. “Location, Location, Location: Residence, Wealth, and the Quality of Medical Care in Delhi, India.” Health Affairs: w338. March 27, 2007.

11. November 23: Health service delivery – Access to pharmaceuticals and technologies

Topics covered:
• The concept of access: Frost and Reich Framework
• Intellectual property law
• The global intellectual property regime

Readings:
• Reich, MR “The Global Drug Gap.”

Section 4: Analysis of current global health efforts

12. November 30: Why are some diseases so successful at getting global health attention?
Topics covered:
• HIV/AIDS

Readings:

13. December 7: Why are some diseases often overlooked or neglected?

POLICY MEMO #4 IS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS

Topics covered:
• Neglected tropical diseases
• Maternal mortality

Readings:

14. **December 14: Culminating case discussion**

The readings and instructions for this case will be distributed a few weeks before the session.