Health and Society in a Global Context

Class Code
UGPH-GU 9010

Instructor Details
Christine Linhart
c.linhart@nyu.edu

Consultations by appointment.
Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

Class Details
Fall 2017

Health and Society in a Global Context

Wednesday 9:00pm – 12:00pm
6 September to 20 December
Room 202
NYU Sydney Academic Centre

Prerequisites
None

Class Description
This course examines how social, behavioral, historical and political factors influence public health in community, national, and global contexts. We consider how health is influenced by factors such as age, gender, culture, race/ethnicity, social class, and geography. Public health problems and their solutions are analyzed in light of individual risk factors as well as larger structural forces, and we consider the rights of the individual versus the welfare of the public. We examine the ways our understandings of health and well-being shape, and are shaped by, the health care system, our own values, and our assumptions.

Desired Outcomes
• Introduce definitions of disease, illness, and well-being from various perspectives
• Introduce students to a population perspective on health and disease
• Define and describe the social determinants of health and explain how they differ from other (biological) determinants of health.
• Introduce the field of public health and its various dimensions
• Encourage debates on individual versus societal rights related to the promotion of health and prevention of disease.
• Deepen students’ understandings of the complex factors that shape health issues, and
the response of government, institutions, and policies to those issues

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<th>Assessment Components</th>
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<td>Class attendance and participation: 10%</td>
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<td>In-class exercises: 10% (2 exercises, Week 3 and 6)</td>
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<td>Midterm exam: 25% (Week 9)</td>
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<td>Case studies – debate/presentation: 25% (Week 13)</td>
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<td>Final exam: 30% (Exam Week – Wed 20 Dec 9:30 – 11:30am)</td>
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Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component will result in failure of the class.

For this course your total numerical score, calculated from the components listed above, is converted to a letter grade without rounding.

Extra Credit: Site policy does not allow grading of work outside of the assignments included in the syllabus. The final grade will only be calculated from the assessment components listed here and no other work, whether additional or substituted, is permitted.

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<th>Grade Expectations</th>
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<td><strong>Grade A:</strong> Excellent work showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics, with excellent use of scientific language, detailed analysis and clear logical explanations, showing insight, independent, original thought and reasoning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Grade B:</strong> Good work with good general knowledge and understanding of the topics, accurate use of scientific language, good general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade C:</strong> Satisfactory work, broadly correct both factually and analytically, with some explanation and reasoning: the work will typically demonstrate a basic understanding of the topic.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade D:</strong> Passable work, showing a general, superficial knowledge and understanding of the topic, lacking satisfactory use of scientific language or adequate analysis.</td>
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<td><strong>Grade F:</strong> Unsatisfactory work in all criteria. The minimum requirements for the course have not been met.</td>
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<th>Grade Conversions</th>
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<td>A 90 to 100</td>
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<td>A- 86 to &lt; 90</td>
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<td>B+ 82 to &lt; 86</td>
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Assignments (excluding in-class presentations and exams) must be submitted electronically via NYU Classes. It is the student’s responsibility to confirm that the work has been successfully been uploaded. In the unlikely event that a submission to Classes fails, students must immediately submit the work to the Academic Programs Coordinator via email before the original submission deadline accompanied by an explanation of the issue. All in-class presentations and exams must be completed during the scheduled class time. An assessment component is considered completed when the student has met all the terms for that assessment component as outlined by the instructor.

An assessment component completed after the deadline without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) for each day the work is late. Work completed beyond five weekdays after the due date without an agreed extension receives a mark of zero, and the student is not entitled to feedback for that piece of work. Because failure to submit or fulfil any required assessment component will result in failure of the course, it is crucial for students to complete every assignment even when it will receive a mark of zero.

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

It is a serious academic offense to use the work of others (written, printed or in any other form) without acknowledgement. Cases of plagiarism are not dealt with by your instructor. They are referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty (up to and including failure in the course as a whole) taking into account the codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges.

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a
single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students’ semester grades. The class roster will be marked in the first five minutes of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalised by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

Faculty cannot excuse an absence. Requests for absences to be excused must be directed to the Academic Programs Coordinator. Students must provide appropriate documentation for their absence. In the case of illness, students must contact the Academic Programs Coordinator on the day of absence. They must provide medical documentation to Academic Programs Coordinator within three days of the absence in order to be medically excused. The note must include a medical judgement indicating that the student was unfit to attend class/work on the specific day or dates of the absence. Faculty will be informed of excused absences by the Academic Programs staff.

**Classroom Expectations**

This is a seminar subject and requires the active participation of all students. It also requires engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Your behaviour in class should respect your classmates’ desire to learn. It is important for you to focus your full attention on the class, for the entire class period.

- Arrive to class on time.
- Once you are in class, you are expected to stay until class ends. Leaving to make or take phone calls, to meet with classmates, or to go to an interview, is not acceptable behaviour.
- Phones, digital music players, and any other communications or sound devices are not to be used during class. That means no phone calls, no texting, no social media, no email, and no internet browsing at any time during class.
- Laptop computers and tablets are not to be used during class except in rare instances for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor.
- The only material you should be reading in class is material assigned for that class. Reading anything else, such as newspapers or magazines, or doing work from another class, is not acceptable.
- Class may not be recorded in any fashion – audio, video, or otherwise – without permission in writing from the instructor.

**Diversity, Inclusion and Equity**

NYU is committed to building a culture that respects and embraces diversity, inclusion, and equity, believing that these values – in all their facets – are, as President Andrew Hamilton has said, “...not only important to cherish for their own sake, but because they are also vital for advancing knowledge, sparking innovation, and creating sustainable communities.” At NYU
Sydney we are committed to creating a learning environment that:

- fosters intellectual inquiry, research, and artistic practices that respectfully and rigorously take account of a wide range of opinions, perspectives, and experiences; and
- promotes an inclusive community in which diversity is valued and every member feels they have a rightful place, is welcome and respected, and is supported in their endeavours.

### Religious Observance

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Academic Programs Coordinator in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

### Provisions to Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see [Study Away and Disability](#).

### Required Texts

It is a course expectation that you have done the required reading and have prepared sufficiently to discuss them in class.

- Journal articles and other readings that appear on the syllabus will be posted under the “Resources” tab in NYU Classes.

### Week 1 Course Introduction and Public Health

**Wednesday 6 September**

This session will provide you with a course overview and an outline of assessments. You will then be introduced to key terms and given a summary overview of the history of public health, current challenges and the role played by public health professionals.

**Required Reading:**


- Chapter 1: Public Health: Science, Politics and Prevention
- Chapter 2: Why is Public Health Controversial?
**Week 2 Epidemiology in Context**

**Wednesday 13 September**

This session will introduce you to epidemiologic methods used to identify and investigate: (1) causes of disease; (2) trends in disease incidence and prevalence; and (3) to evaluate the effectiveness of individualized and population-wide public health interventions.

**Required Reading:**
- Chapter 4: Epidemiology: The Basic Science of Public Health
- Chapter 5: Epidemiologic Principles and Methods
- Chapter 6: Problems and Limits of Epidemiology

**Week 3 Measuring Public Health: Statistics and Data**

**Wednesday 20 September**

This session will help you to understand the role and value of data in public health, examine different types of public health data sets, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their use. Ethical and logistical limits to the types of data that can be obtained from human populations will be discussed.

**Required Reading:**
- Chapter 7: Statistics: Making Sense of Uncertainty
- Chapter 8: Role of Data in Public Health

**Week 4 Infectious Diseases and Vaccination**

**Wednesday 27 September**

This session will focus on infectious diseases and the role played by public health in identifying and helping to control diseases ranging from smallpox to HIV/AIDS. We will discuss the role of global advances in access to clean drinking water, adequate sewage disposal, nutrition, vaccination and antibiotics in dramatically reducing mortality from infectious disease epidemics.

**Required Reading:**
- Chapter 9: The “Conquest” of Infectious Diseases
- Chapter 10: The Resurgence of Infectious Diseases

**Week 5 Field Trip 1 – Quarantine Station North Head Sydney**

**Wednesday 4 October**

North Head Quarantine Station was used from the 1830’s to isolate people suspected to be carrying contagious diseases such as Spanish Influenza, Smallpox or Bubonic Plague. This strict quarantine was enforced in the hope that these deadly diseases would not reach the general population in Sydney.
Week 6  Chronic Diseases and Behavioural Risk Factors
Wednesday 11 October

This session will focus on chronic diseases and the role played by public health in the prevention and control of cardiovascular disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes mellitus and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. We will discuss the role of population risk factors including tobacco smoking, obesity, elevated blood sugar, physical inactivity, and elevated blood cholesterol.

Required Reading:
- Chapter 11: The Biomedical Basis of Chronic Diseases
- Chapter 15: Public Health Enemy Number One: Tobacco
- Chapter 16: Public Health Enemy Number Two and Growing: Poor Diet and Physical Inactivity

FALL BREAK: 16 – 20 October (Week 7)

Week 8 The Social Determinants of Health
Wednesday 25 October

This session will move away from examination of the biomedical basis of health and illness, and consider how aspects of health and illness can be viewed as social constructions rather than objective realities. Students will be given an understanding of the dynamics of this process and the role of Health Professionals. Particular focus will also be given to the issues of race, gender and social inequality.

Required Reading:

Week 9  Midterm Exam
Wednesday 1 November

The midterm exam will be an in-class exam that will require students to demonstrate their understanding of the key concepts and ideas discussed in the first half of the course. Students will be required to answer multiple choice and short-answer questions within an exam setting, with questions drawn from material covered during the first eight weeks of the course.

Week 10 The role of Government in Delivering Public Health Services
Wednesday 8 November
This session will focus on the means by which public health services are delivered. Within a framework of comparative analysis you will be given an overview of how public health services operate in the United States and Australia, facilitating a discussion of the underlying drivers as well as highlighting the central similarities and differences between the two systems.

Required Reading:
- Chapter 3: Powers and Responsibilities of Government
- Chapter 13: Do People Choose Their Own Health
- Chapter 27: Why the US Medical System Needs Reform

Week 11  Public Health Policy and Legislation: Alcohol, Tobacco and Sugar
Wednesday 15 November

This session will help you to develop an understanding of how regulatory and legal instruments have been used alongside public health policy and prevention/treatment programs to minimize harm to individuals and populations from alcohol, tobacco consumption and illicit drug use. We will also explore the current debate regarding the extent to which regulatory and legal instruments should be implemented to reduce the negative health outcomes associated with high sugar intake.

Required Reading:

Week 12  Field Trip 2 – Medically Supervised Injection Centre, Kings Cross
Tuesday 21 November 3:30 – 6:30pm (Note: date and time change from regular class)

The Medically Supervised Injection Centre in Kings Cross (Sydney) seeks to connect with people who inject drugs and welcome them into a non-judgmental, person-centered health service which recognizes that drug dependence is chronic, and relapse is an in-built part of the process. The center aims to reduce the negative consequences of drug use on a person’s health and well-being by supporting people in a holistic way, with dignity and respect. The center does not support or promote drug use; it acknowledges that it is part of the community and seeks to provide assistance that is practical and sound. The service offered by the clinic is grounded in medical evidence, with independent evaluations showing that the service is saving lives and helping to make the community a healthier, safer environment for all.

Week 13  Case Study Presentations/Debates
Wednesday 29 November
In this session students will be required to individually deliver a fifteen-minute presentation to the class on a public health topic that has had significant regulatory and legal components in the public health approach to its prevention and control. Students will be required to discuss the key stakeholders, both proponents and opponents, affected by the regulation/legislation, and the methods used by different stakeholders to frame the debate. Students should compare and contrast the current approach in Australia with the United States.

Topics will include:
- Tobacco smoking: particularly plain packaging; taxation; and smoke-free areas.
- Alcohol consumption: particularly the Sydney lock-out laws.
- Sugar consumption: particularly the proposed introduction of a sugar tax.
- Safe injecting rooms: particularly the Kings Cross Centre

**Week 14  The Importance of Healthy Minds and Social Relationships**

**Wednesday 6 December**

This session will focus on the importance of healthy minds and the main components of mental illness in populations. We will discuss the rapidly evolving understanding of how social relationships can have a major impact on an individual’s mental and physical health status and well-being. The session will also cover theoretical approaches to structural disadvantage.

**Required Reading:**


**Week 15  Challenges for Public Health in the 21st Century**

**Wednesday 13 December**

In this final session you will be given an overview of the major opportunities and challenges facing public health in the United States and Australia this century. An overview of the political, economic and legal framework for public health will be set out. The final part of this session will be an informal open discussion where students will consolidate the knowledge they have acquired through the course to each outline what they see as the biggest opportunity to improve the health of the population.

**Required Reading:**

- Chapter 31: Public Health in the 21st Century: Achievements and Challenges

**Final Exam**
Wednesday 20 December (9:30 – 11:30am)

The final exam will be an in-class exam that will require students to demonstrate their understanding of the key concepts and ideas discussed throughout the course, with a particular focus on topics covered from Week 10 through to Week 15. Students will be required to answer multiple choice and short-answer questions within an exam setting.

Your Instructor

Christine Linhart is a PhD candidate in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). Her current research focuses on trends in non-communicable disease (mainly cardiovascular disease) risk factors in the Asia-Pacific region, and predictive modelling of effects on cause-specific mortality from inaction or intervention. In addition to her research Christine is an Associate Lecturer at UNSW and teaches a variety of courses in the Master of Public Health and Master of International Public Health programs including: reproductive, maternal and child health; public health ethics; and foundations of public health.