

EPID 691: Contemporary Issues & Controversies in Public Health (EPID 691:001)

Spring Semester 2013

Virginia Commonwealth University
School of Medicine
Department of Epidemiology & Community Health

Syllabus

Date and Time: Mondays (see **course schedule** below for dates) from 3:30 – 6:10 PM
Location: North Hospital 2nd floor Room 065: Infection Prevention Department
Credit: 3 credit hours
Prerequisites: 12 credit hours towards the MPH degree; or third or fourth year medical student; or MD degree; or permission of instructor

Instructor: Gonzalo Bearman, MD, MPH
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Phone: 804-628-0247

Office Hours: Please contact Brie Dubinsky to schedule any meetings with Dr. Bearman

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to current issues and controversies in public health such as HIV transmission risk behavior, poverty, globalization, gun control, healthcare access and obesity. Students will be able to describe these controversies and argue differing perspectives.

COURSE FORMAT

Course sessions will entail a combination of group discussions and student online postings/discussions based on assigned readings. Active student participation in all class presentations and discussions is essential.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: All Blackboard postings are due before noon on the specified date.

January 28th:	Class orientation:	Review of course objectives and expectations
February 1st:	Blackboard posting:	<i>On the Down Low and Private Guns, Public Health</i>
February 4th:	Class discussion:	<i>On the Down Low and Private Guns, Public Health</i>
February 22:	Blackboard posting:	<i>Fast Food Nation and Food Fight</i>
February 25th:	Class discussion:	<i>Fast Food Nation and Food Fight</i>
March 22th:	Blackboard posting:	<i>Pathologies of Power and Overtreated</i>
March 25th:	Class discussion:	<i>Pathologies of Power and Overtreated</i>
April 12th:	Blackboard posting:	<i>Urban Injustice and One World</i>
April 15th:	Class discussion:	<i>Urban Injustice and One World</i>

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able:

- To demonstrate knowledge of selected controversial issues in public health, including globalization, agribusiness, obesity, gun violence, the role of bisexual men in the epidemiology of the HIV epidemic, urban poverty, and the relationship between health, social justice, equity, quality, and access to healthcare.
- To stimulate students to participate in discussion of public health issues that may not be taught in traditional public health courses
- To sharpen the student's ability to think critically and articulate their arguments effectively with peers

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Course requirements:

- Attend orientation
- Read the assigned books and post a 1500-word review of each book to the course web site based on personal and professional experience, and knowledge of epidemiology, public health, and prevention.
- Participate actively in an online forum for peer review, critique, and spirited online discussion
- Participate actively in class discussions

TEXT AND MATERIALS

Reading list:

- *One World: The Ethics of Globalization*; Peter Singer
- *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*; Eric Schlosser
- *Overtreated: Why too much Medicine is Making us Sicker and Poorer*; Shannon Brownlee
- *Food Fight: The Inside Story of the Food Industry, America's Obesity Crisis, and What We Can Do about It*; Kelly Brownell
- *Private Guns, Public Health*; David Hemenway
- *On the Down Low: A Journey into the Lives of "Straight" Men Who Sleep with Men*; J.L. King
- *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*; Paul Farmer
- *Urban Injustice: How Ghettos Happen*; David Hilfiker
- Supplemental Reading Packet- see syllabus below for details

Supplemental Reading Packet *

The supplemental reading material is meant to provide a framework for discussion around controversial issues in Public Health. The class is meant to stimulate discussion on issues relevant in the current era of Public Health. The Supplemental Reading Packet is available at Uptown Color—students should request **packet #1**; the cost of the packet is \$17.00. Packets are printed on a request-only basis, and students should contact Uptown Color to arrange printing and pick-up time.

UPTOWN COLOR (1205 W Main Street Richmond, VA 23220)

phone: (804) 353-2679

Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM.

Topic: **Autonomy vs. Government Intrusion:** * for the first class discussion, and as relevant to the remainder of the class material
Select chapters from: ***For You Own Good*** pgs 1-13, 256-26, ***The Perversion of Autonomy*** pgs-1-25,177-201, 72-88, the article *The Tyranny of Health Promotion* by Marshall Becker, and *Personal Responsibility for Health?* By Meredith Minkler

Topic: **The HIV Epidemic:** *for the class discussion of ***On the Down Low***

Article: *Focusing "Down Low" Bisexual Black Men, HIV Risk and Heterosexual Transmission* by Gregorio Millet et al

Topic: **The Obesity Crisis in the United States:** * for the class discussion of ***Fast Food Nation* and *Food Fight***

Article: *Minisymposium on Obesity: Overview and Some Strategic Considerations* by Shiriki Kumanyika

Topic: **Healthcare Delivery:** for the class discussions of ***Pathologies of Power*, *Overtreated*, *Urban Injustice* and *One World***

Textbook chapter: *A Distinctive System of Health Care Delivery* from ***Delivering Healthcare in America*** by Shi and Singh

STUDENT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

List the assignments/exams that will be used to evaluate student performance in the course and the contribution of each to the final course grade. Provide details on each item as appropriate.

Criteria for Student Evaluation:

- Participation in online discussion
- Participation in class discussions
- Quality of book reviews
- Class attendance

GRADING & DUE DATES

Listed below are the activities, the number of points for each activity, and the date each assignment is due:

Learning Activity	Course Points	Percent of Grade	Due Date
Blackboard Postings	40 Total Points	40 % of final grade	(see below)
<i>On the Down Low and Private Guns, Public Health</i>	10 points		2/1/2013 @ noon
<i>Fast Food Nation and Food Fight</i>	10 points		2/22/2013 @ noon
<i>Pathologies of Power and Overtreated</i>	10 points		3/22/2013 @ noon
<i>Urban Injustice and One World</i>	10 points		4/12/2013 @ noon
Class Discussions	50 Total Points	50 % of final grade	(see below)
<i>Orientation: Review syllabus and class objectives</i>	10 points		1/28/2013
<i>On the Down Low and Private Guns, Public Health</i>	10 points		2/4/2013
<i>Fast Food Nation and Food Fight</i>	10 points		2/25/2013
<i>Pathologies of Power and Overtreated</i>	10 points		3/25/2013
<i>Urban Injustice and One World</i>	10 points		4/15/2013
Class Participation	10 Total Points	10 % of final grade	N/A

GRADING SCALE

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

A (90-100%), B (80-89%), C (70-79%), D (60-69%), F (59% and lower)

BLACKBOARD

All materials from this course will be posted on VCU's Blackboard website:

<http://blackboard.vcu.edu>

All scheduled postings should be made on the Discussion Board (located under the "Discussions" tab). Each assigned posting has its own forum—please make sure to post in the correct area. All assigned postings are due by or before midnight of the specified date.

VCU MPH PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the MPH Program at Virginia Commonwealth University is to promote health and well-being through commitment to public health education, excellence in research, and dedication to community service.

VCU MPH PROGRAM COMPETENCIES

This course covers the following MPH program competencies:

Item	Primary Course Objectives
D. 1.	Identify the main components and issues of the organization, financing and delivery of health services and public health systems in the US.
E. 1.	Identify basic theories, concepts and models from a range of social and behavioral disciplines that are used in public health research and practice.
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. 6.	Describe the role of social and community factors in both the onset and solution of public health problems.
E. 7.	Describe the merits of social and behavioral science interventions and policies.
E.10.	Specify multiple targets and levels of intervention for social and behavioral science programs and/or policies.
K. 1.	Describe how social, behavioral, environmental, and biological factors contribute to specific individual and community health outcomes.
Item	Secondary Course Objectives
G. 2.	Explain how professional ethics and practices relate to equity and accountability in diverse community settings.
G. 6.	Apply the principles of community-based participatory research to improve health in diverse populations.
G. 9.	Cite examples of situations where consideration of culture-specific needs resulted in a more effective modification or adaptation of a health intervention.
J. 2.	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.
J. 3.	Apply evidence-based principles and the scientific knowledge base to critical evaluation and decision-making in public health.
J. 8.	Distinguish between population and individual ethical considerations in relation to the benefits, costs, and burdens of public health programs.
J. 9.	Embrace a definition of public health that captures the unique characteristics of the field (e.g., population-focused, community-oriented, prevention-motivated and rooted in

VCU AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT NOTICE

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires Virginia Commonwealth University to provide a "reasonable accommodation" to any individual who advises us of a physical or mental disability. If you have a physical or mental limitation that requires an accommodation or an academic adjustment, please go to the Americans with Disabilities web site:

<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

VCU HONOR SYSTEM

Virginia Commonwealth University recognizes that honesty, truth, and integrity are values central to its mission as an institution of higher education. The Honor System is built on the idea that a person's honor is his/her most cherished attribute. A foundation of honor is essential to a community devoted to learning. Within this community, respect and harmony must coexist. The Honor System is the policy of VCU that defines the highest standards of conduct in academic affairs.

The Honor System states that faculty members are responsible for:

- Understanding the procedures whereby faculty handles suspected instances of academic dishonesty. Faculty are to report any infraction of the VCU Honor System according to the procedures outlined in our policy.
- Developing an instructional environment that reflects a commitment to maintaining and enforcing academic integrity. Faculty should discuss the VCU Honor System at the onset of each course and mention it in course syllabi.
- Handling every suspected or admitted instance of violation of the provisions of this policy in accordance with procedures set forth in the policy.

The Honor System in its entirety can be reviewed on the Web at:

http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/Honor_system_policy.pdf or it can be found in the VCU Insider.

The Honor System must be upheld and enforced by each member of the Virginia Commonwealth University community. The fundamental attributes of our community are honor and integrity. We are privileged to operate with this Honor System.

VCU GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT CONDUCT

VCU faculty play a critical role in helping to build an environment that is conducive to the academic success of our students. As you know, VCU has policies and procedures designed to create an environment conducive to academic excellence. One of these policies and procedures can be found in a document entitled "Guidelines for Faculty Members Regarding Student Conduct in the Instructional Settings." This document is available on the VCU Web at

<http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/FacultyGuideToStudentConductInInstructionalSettings.pdf> or it can be found in the 2008-09 VCU Insider.

Understanding these guidelines will help you to encourage classroom behavior that does not detract from the quality of each student's educational experience. Please read the document and think about your role in promoting a University culture based on mutual respect and civility.

As a reminder, both faculty and students should turn off cell phones and pagers while in the classroom.

VCU STATEMENT ON SAFETY

What to know and do to be prepared for emergencies at VCU:

- Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (www.vcu.edu/alert/notify). Keep your information up-to-date.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities.
- Know where to go for additional emergency information (www.vcu.edu/alert).
- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

VCU IMPORTANT DATES

Important dates for the Spring 2013 semester include are available at:

http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/ac_fullViewAll.asp?term=Spring+2013