

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES**

**Policy Approaches to Public Health**

**PUBH 205.10, CRN 56885 (3 Credits)  
Time: 6:10 PM – 9:00 PM, Thursdays  
Location: ROSS HALL, Room 117**

***Spring 2006***

**Facilitators:**

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**Course Description:**

This three-credit course exploring the multi-disciplinary and team-based approach to public health is a core requirement for MPH and MS students. Learners will use a variety of problem identification, problem analysis, and problem solving strategies from all disciplines of public health in coming to understand current local, national, and international public health issues. Learners will also assess the impact of other factors (e.g., social, legal, economic, and political) on contemporary public health issues drawing on the perspectives and skills of epidemiology, environmental and occupational health, global health, health services management, exercise science, nutrition, health communications, health policy, and prevention and community health. The course allows students to apply a range of principles to specific case studies and intervention examples of local, state, national, and global public

health importance. In this introductory course, the emphasis is on learning how to best describe and assess a public health problem and the policy and program options for addressing the problem at the local, state, national and international levels.

The course uses several didactic approaches, including readings, case study analysis and discussion, lectures, team and group work, and problem based learning exercises.

### **Course Competencies:**

The core competencies gained in PUBH 205 include:

- (1) Understanding the multi-disciplinary nature of contemporary public health issues and the role the profession plays in addressing these issues.
- (2) Understanding the social, legal, economic, and political context of contemporary public health problems.
- (3) Identifying and assessing specific public health problems and the policy and programmatic options to address these problems at the local, state, national, and international levels.
- (4) The ability to recognize dynamic interactions among human and social systems and how they affect the relationships among individuals, groups, organizations and communities.
- (5) Establishing basic teamwork skills within the context of adult learning.
- (6) Building effective oral and written communication skills for communicating with lay and public health audiences.

### **Levels of organization in the course:**

**Class:** The broadest level of organization, the *class* refers to the time and place when we all gather once a week in Ross 117 @ 6:10 PM (all facilitators, guests, and all learners). *Class* work will focus on broad discussion of the content and skill requirements embedded in issues confronting the profession of public health. In the *class* setting, we will also address administrative issues relating to the course requirements and expectations.

**Group:** This slice of our organization is the large break-out session consisting of as many as three teams in each group (see next) occurring when the *class* concludes. In the first 30-45 minutes of each *group* meeting, the facilitator leads a discussion based on the study questions included at the end of each case. Learners should prepare in advance for this *group* discussion. The *group* is the forum for clarification and explanation about the skills-building resources.

**Team:** For the presentations, each group is divided into as many as three *teams*. Effort is made to balance experience, background and interest in the make up of the *team*. The *team* is the setting where domains of analytic assessment, policy development, program planning, communication, cultural competency, management, basic sciences of public health and systems thinking are explored and applied in a truly multidisciplinary and multicultural fashion. Your *group* facilitator is responsible for assigning grades for your team presentations.

**Individual:** You are the most important level of contribution in any organization where the goal is learning. Your preparedness to engage in discussion in all settings in the course is wholly dependent on your commitment to meeting the requirements for reading and taking advantage of skill development.

The facilitators and learners share responsibility for the presentation and discussion of ideas. Facilitators have primary responsibility for the structure and delivery of course content in the *class* and *group* settings. Learners have primary responsibility for learning in all settings.

Learners are expected to have completed all readings and requirements to be prepared to participate in each *class*, *group* and *team* meeting.

**Class Prerequisites:   None**

**Code of Academic Integrity:** Students are required to read and abide by the GW Code of Academic Integrity found at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

**Readings:**

All required readings and case materials are provided electronically through Blackboard. Each week a specific set of readings is posted on Blackboard under "Required Readings" (Class Session 1, Class Session 2, etc.).

We assume each learner will follow public health issues in the popular press (e.g., Washington Post, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, International Herald Tribune or press of the nation of interest and focus for the learner). Learners are expected to track key issues discussed in class. One way to easily accomplish this expectation is to subscribe to the free Kaiser Family Foundation's Daily Health Policy Report: [www.kaisernetwork.org](http://www.kaisernetwork.org).

Additionally, you can sign up for Google news alerts for each case's topic. <http://news.google.com>.

You are strongly encouraged take full advantage of relevant classes offered by Himmelfarb Library to improve data collection and presentation skills (e.g., classes on using Medline and using the internet for health information resources) and the University Writing Center <http://www.gwu.edu/~gwriter/>

**Using Case Studies:**

In addition to the required readings, we use case studies to illustrate theories and skills in the practice of public health and the considerations of each discipline in decision-making. We will examine cases through a mixture of didactic approaches (e.g., lectures by faculty or guest speakers) and group learning by learners focused on specific projects supported with faculty facilitation. Learners will examine a particular aspect of the case – determining what additional information they must gather to best analyze the issue at hand, to synthesize the information, and to report findings and recommendations back to the group and/or full class. This analytic process emphasizes the ability to understand multiple perspectives: those taken by different stakeholders (parties of interest) associated with the case, and those taken from the various disciplines associated with public health.

Three cases provide the framework for the course during the semester. Each addresses a different aspect of public health and serves to illustrate both the challenges faced by decision-makers and the need to apply specific analytic skills *and* skills associated with each of the disciplines of public health.

Our intention is to have learners do 85% of the talking and faculty acting as facilitators steering the conversation by making occasional observations and asking questions. Additionally, we hope you draw

on your diverse backgrounds, functions, countries, and experiences to enrich the classroom experience for all. The exchange of ideas among the learners — reflection and analysis of real problems – and not a lecture or textbook – will provide the lessons.

### **Evaluation:**

Grading for this course is not competitive. Your grade depends on the quality of your work individually and as a member of your team. Although points are not awarded for class attendance, the success of courses with adult learners is dependent on the active participation of the entire class. Taking an active part in class translates to your future in active roles as leaders and managers in the public health system, where considered thought is essential to the design, development and delivery of high-quality services to the public, and to your effective functioning as a member of a team, a manager and/or a leader in such a system. Expectations for your participation are:

- Read, assimilate, discuss and critique all materials assigned for class
- Read at least one newspaper each day
- Participate reliably in class, group and team activities
- Uphold the expectations of your team by completing team responsibilities and assignments on time
- Be creative, active, analytical and thoughtful in raising issues for discussion
- Have fun

### **Assignments:**

**(1) Two Analysis Papers (30 points total):** For the first two major case studies (pandemic flu preparedness & gun violence) the learner will submit papers (five pages maximum, double-spaced, 12 point font) addressing an aspect of the case (as described below) from the perspective of several of the core disciplines of public health, including: epidemiology, environmental and occupational health, global health, health services management, exercise science, nutrition, health communication, health policy and prevention and community health. Learners will write and submit analysis papers individually.

Learners must conduct “outside research” for the papers and provide adequate references (i.e., the paper should not be written solely from the cases themselves). Papers must conform to the footnote style of Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers*. Style guides are available in the bookstore, the library, and on Blackboard.

Each analysis paper is due the class session following the team oral presentations (to provide for insights gained from the presentations in your group). You may submit the analysis papers in hard-copy or electronically. Each analysis paper is worth 15 points for a total of 30 points (30% of your final grade).

#### **Analysis Paper 1 (15 points, pandemic avian flu preparedness)**

From the perspective of three (3) public health disciplines of your choosing, describe/define the core problem(s) of pandemic avian flu preparedness. Include some discussion of the challenges that each discipline faces.

**Due: March 2, 2006 (Class session 7)**

**Analysis Paper 2 (15 points, gun violence)**

From the perspective of three (3) public health disciplines **not** used in Analysis Paper 1, discuss how the science of gun violence has informed – or not informed – decision makers.

**Due: April 6, 2006 (Class session 11)**

**(2) Synthesis Paper (30 points, Childhood Obesity/Nutrition):** For the final case study of the semester (childhood obesity/nutrition), you are to consider the context of childhood obesity, its underlying causes, the groups and/or entities that care about the issue, and why they care about the topic. This assignment is worth 30 points (30% of your final grade)

**Specifically:**

In order to evaluate the context mentioned above, please select ONE of the following contexts to serve as the basis of the Synthesis Paper: social, legal, economic, OR political. Once you have chosen the context, please draft a **10-page maximum** (double-spaced, 12 point font) paper that first describes this context. Once the context is set, identify two (2) distinct stakeholders with an interest in childhood obesity interventions and specify why each stakeholder cares about the issue. Then make recommendations regarding how the concerns of these two groups could be addressed to advance the agenda of public health.

**Due: May 11, 2006**

**(3) 3 Oral Team Presentations (30 points total):** Each of the three (3) case studies addressed this semester ends with oral team presentations to your groups. In our first class session, you will be divided into groups. After the second class meeting you will be assigned to teams within your groups. You will remain a member of this team for the entire semester. For each of the three case studies, your team will represent a local, state, or national/global level of analysis (teams switch levels with each case so all learners represent all 3 levels by semester's end).

Teams are assigned a specific real-life intervention (both policy and programmatic) and must present an evaluation of that intervention. Throughout each case, your team will research the intervention and develop – as a team – a professional oral/visual presentation focused on the strengths and weaknesses of the intervention. You will have 15 minutes for the team presentation.

Each week, teams will be given time (following group sessions) to meet, discuss and plan for team research and presentations. You are invited to present the information in whatever form/medium/style you and your team deems the most effective. Each team presentation is worth 10 points for a total of 30 points (30% of your grade). Everyone on the team receives the same presentation grade.

**Due: Oral Presentation 1 (pandemic flu preparedness) February 23, 2006.**

**Oral Presentation 2 (gun violence) March 30, 2006.**

**Oral Presentation 3 (childhood obesity/nutrition) April 27, 2006.**

**(4) Peer Evaluation of Team Participation (10 points):** In addition to the points for the oral presentations by the teams, you will be asked at the end of the semester to assign a point value to your own participation as well as that of the other members of your team. Because the points for the oral presentations are rendered on a "team basis", this is your chance to let the faculty know if a specific member did an outstanding job or did not pull his/her weight. The Peer Evaluation Form is posted on Blackboard.

**GRADING SCALE**

<b>Points Earned</b>	<b>Grade</b>
95-100	A
90-94	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
69 and below	F

### **SCHEDULE FOR COURSE**

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>TEAM ASSIGNMENT</b>	<b>PRODUCTS DUE</b>
<b>Class 1 1/19/06</b>	Introductions; Syllabus; Sample Case	Get to know each other	
<b>Class 2 1/26/06</b>	Skills focus & course design; Discipline fundamentals	Begin presentation process by developing criterion for evaluation of program/ intervention	Learning style inventory results e-mail to Reum
<b>Class 3 2/02/06</b>	FLU	A) Local B) State/ Region C) National/International	
<b>Class 4 2/09/06</b>	FLU	A) Local B) State/Region C) National/International	
<b>Class 5 2/16/06</b>	FLU	A) Local B) State/Region C) National/International	
<b>Class 6 2/23/06</b>	FLU PRESENTATIONS TO GROUPS/Guest Speaker		
<b>Class 7 3/02/06</b>	GUN VIOLENCE	A) National/International B) Local C) State/Region	Analysis Paper 1
<b>Class 8 3/09/06</b>	GUN VIOLENCE	A) National/International B) Local C) State/Region	
<b>Class 9 3/23/06</b>	GUN VIOLENCE	A) National/International B) Local C) State/Region	
<b>Class 10 3/30/06</b>	GUN VIOLENCE PRESENTATIONS TO GROUPS/Guest Speaker		
<b>Class 11 4/06/06</b>	CHILDHOOD OBESITY/NUTRITION	A) State/Region B) National/International C) Local	Analysis Paper 2
<b>Class 12 4/13/06</b>	CHILDHOOD OBESITY/NUTRITION	A) State/Region B) National/International C) Local	
<b>Class 13 4/20/06</b>	CHILDHOOD OBESITY/NUTRITION	A) State/Region B) National/International C) Local	
<b>Class 14 4/27/06</b>	CHILDHOOD OBESITY/NUTRITION PRESENTATIONS TO GROUPS/Class Wrap-up		
<b>SYNTHESIS PAPER DUE BY 5 PM, MAY 11, 2006</b>			