Course Title: Culture and Health

Course Number: 57549-GLPH 0521J-030

Course Location: School of Public Health Piscataway Campus; Live on-line

Course Date & Time: Mondays, 3-5 p.m.

Course Instructor: Louise Weidner (Read), PhD. Assistant Professor, Health Education and Behavioral Sciences and Center for Global Public Health, Rutgers University School of Public Health readbl@sph.ru.edu; 206-963-6386

Office Hours: By appointment.

Required Course Text:

Additional/Supplemental Resources: Additional material will be drawn from texts, websites and supplemental PDFs as described in the course schedule below. Students will also be expected to search the literature and contribute to class resources as part of their assignments.

Course Description:
Medical anthropology identifies the sociocultural roots of public health problems and the manner in which these forces and factors impact public health efforts. The term “sociocultural” will be used inclusively and interchangeably with “culture” and will encompass constructs (beliefs, values, traditions, etc.) systems (politics, economics, education, etc.) and the physical world (biology, environment, etc.). In toto the course touches on the five major public health disciplines and the ten essential public health services, combining diverse and timely cases to convey a need for cultural awareness and competencies in all efforts. Students will practice agility in applying their knowledge to issues in real time.

The course has six units, each approximately 2 weeks in length. The course begins with major global health initiatives and the background and basics of applied sociocultural research and global public health. This will include cultural complexities of WHO flagship initiatives related to sociocultural determinants of health and sustainable development. Subsequent units will include research and data collection; health systems and policies; health promotion and disease prevention; environmental health threats, and; emergency and crisis management. While presented separately in instruction, students should be mindful of the dynamics across these issues in the real
world. Risk perception as both a product and producer of sociocultural factors will be an overarching theme. Cross-cutting issues will also include protracted versus acute or emergent problems, and ethical and practical considerations. Students will examine public health as a sociocultural processes in its own right, and will consider the implications of their own worldview to their engagement in their profession.

**Selected Concentration Competencies Addressed.**
This course addresses all seven competencies identified for the Rutgers University School of Public Health Masters in Public Health, Concentration in Global Public Health, which are to:

1. Evaluate determinants of global public health in a range of context based on the five major public health perspectives: systems and policies, epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental and occupational health, and health education and behavioral science.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the economic, educational, political, sociocultural, environmental, ecological and biological conditions that represent obstacles to attaining global health.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of international regulations, transfer of new pharmaceuticals into health systems and management of global health programs.
4. Analyze root causes of morbidity and mortality in major regions of the world and how they are affected by demographic, socio-cultural, biological, occupational and environmental factors.
5. Apply fundamental principles of global standards for the protection of human subjects in diverse cultural settings.
6. Apply the fundamental principles of global public health perspectives on global public health education, research, and practice.
7. Exhibit skill sets required for global health practice including written and verbal communication skills, capacity for inter-professional teamwork, leadership, social awareness and cultural competency to enhance capacity strengthening and service delivery with compassion and integrity.

**Course Learning Objectives:**
By the end of the course students will be able to:
- Describe five sociocultural determinants of health and provide an example of each.
- Describe five major sustainable development goals and described how sociocultural factors might impact each.
- Describe how risk perception can impact public health research or program initiatives, and cite at least one theory.
- Identify three health metrics and describe how qualitative data could improve data interpretability of each.
- Describe ethical issues and potential unintended consequences of sociocultural research.
- Select a health problem and describe the dynamic across sociocultural constructs, socio-cultural systems and the physical environment.
Describe an example where introduction of a product was impacted by sociocultural constructs and sociocultural systems.

Describe an example where risk perception and emergency preparedness were impacted by both sociocultural constructs and sociocultural systems.

Describe an example where a health education/health promotion initiative was impacted by both sociocultural constructs and sociocultural systems.

Name five WHO health systems indicators and sociocultural factors that impact them.

Describe or discuss potential implications or complications of global health competencies such as “promoting inclusion of representatives of diverse constituencies in partnerships” and using “diplomacy and conflict resolution strategies with partners”.

Describe a major theory for closing gaps between public understanding and public practice where health and/or safety are concerned.

Provide a current example of inter-crises where one or more crisis is manmade.

Describe two socio-cultural traits in disrupted or displaced cultures that present unique challenges to public health efforts.

Describe two factors that can influence health and safety practices at the workplace.

Describe two core functions of the WHO Emergency Response Framework and explain how socio-cultural factors at the local level can impact these functions.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

This course has 6 units, each approximately two weeks in length. Some adjustment is made around exams and mid-semester recess. *Classroom time will not be spent covering in detail the assigned readings and media. Students are expected to come to class already familiar with the material and ready to engage in discussing, examining, questioning and adding to it.*

A total of 1000 points are available. Content knowledge of major themes will be assessed with two mixed-format exams. Critical thinking and analysis will be assessed with four written assignments and with 2 assignments that are to be both written and presented orally for discussion (10 minutes). Written assignments will be posted in Moodle three days in advance of class and will be part of the class discussion. Satisfactory completion of assignments requires that students meet the objective criteria for content and writing conventions. While attendance is not graded, successful assignments and exams will depend on attendance and interaction.

- **Exams:** 2 @ 200 points/each: 400
- **Written assignments:** 4 @ 75 points/each: 300
- **Written and oral assignments:** 2 @ 150 points/each: 300

Total: 1000 points
Course Schedule:
The description of the six course units below is followed by the articulated weekly schedule.

**WEEKS 1-3  Class Introduction and Unit 1: Culture, Anthropology and Global Public Health**
Following a course overview, Unit 1 will introduce key anthropological theories on how social units form, function and adapt and why cultural factors and forces must be accounted for in public health. The unit covers major entities and initiatives and the historical and practical convergence between anthropology with public health. Unit 1 addresses dynamics between sociocultural constructs (beliefs, values, traditions, etc.), sociocultural systems (politics, economics, education, etc.) and the physical world (biology, environment, etc.). Students will examine WHO Social Determinants of Health and UN/WHO Sustainable Development Goals and will consider their own culture and social groups within the theories, premises and resources presented. The relationship between health and development will be addressed as will cross-cultural and culture-bound aspects of risk perception.

**WEEKS 4-5  Unit 2: Culture and Public Health Research**
Public health requires the ability to accurately characterize a problem and its related complexities. This unit examines the relationship between culture and the effective monitoring, surveillance and diagnosis of health problems. Unit 2 includes the WHO Health Statistics and Information Systems and the influence of culture on how signs, symptoms and impacts of diseases are perceived, explained, defined and reported – including perceptions of etiologies and severity. Students will consider cultural influences on recognized health metrics and the manner in which qualitative data can improve the interpretability of quantitative data. Unit 2 includes challenges in detecting and documenting subtle, hidden or denied social malignancies such as violence and persecution and the influence of culture, including media, on risk perception. Students will consider methods, challenges and ethical issues related to research including ethnographic and other qualitative research, root cause analysis, development of a local theory, etc.

**WEEKS 6-7  Unit 3: Culture, Structures, Systems and Policies**
Unit 3 examines the influence of culture on official and unofficial structures, systems and policies that impact health. This includes issues related to resources distribution, including foods. This unit includes WHO core health systems indicators and WHO Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research. Students will consider the influence of culture on concepts and values related to organization, hierarchy and power, decision-making, accountability, governance, leadership, justice, human rights, equality, etc. Implications of such factors for the introduction of new medical products, devices and services will be considered. Students will examine public health services, systems and policies as sociocultural processes in their own right, will examine the need for cultural competence in such work, and will consider the implications of their own worldview to their engagement in these processes.

**WEEK 8  Spring Break**

**WEEK 9  Mid-Term Exam, March 19. The exam will take place in the classroom 3-5 p.m. There will be no class session.**
**WEEKS 10-11 Unit 4: Culture and Programs for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention**

In Unit 4 students will consider the impacts of culture on health promotion and disease prevention initiatives. This will include development initiatives, including those related to nutrition and food security. This unit will address the complexities of ensuring cultural appropriateness; stakeholder participation; compatibility with larger entities and initiatives at all levels; efficient use of resources, and; plans for sustainability, transfer or phase-out. Students will re-examine major theories of health and culture and apply them to issues at hand. This unit will address the challenges of research and data collection in needs assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation, impact assessment and follow-up. Students will examine the complexities of prioritizing goals, objectives and methods and the importance of ongoing formative assessment and program agility. Students will consider the challenges of reaching individuals whose access to information is limited by language or cultural barriers including women and children in traditional settings, and will consider the confluence of socio-demographics, risk perception and the effectiveness of initiatives.

**WEEKS 12-13 Unit 5: Culture and Hazards Natural, Built and Social Environments.**

Unit 5 exposes students to the breadth of issues addressed in the WHO Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health program strategies. This unit examines the influences of culture on defining, explaining, tolerating and controlling environmental hazards and risks. Students will consider hazards in natural and built physical environments as well as hazards produced in the social environment, including violence, poverty and food insecurity. Students and will consider the impacts of culture on risk perception and adaptation/mal-adaptation and will do so for both acute and protracted hazards. Students will examine environmental, occupational and social regulation as cultural processes in their own right and will consider the role of competing/conflicting interests. Students will consider models and theories for improving the perception and management of risk and will consider the impact of interacting hazards.

**WEEKS 14-15 Unit 6: Culture and Emergency and Crisis Management**

Against the backdrop of Unit 5, this unit will cover emergency and crisis management. Students will become familiar with the WHO Emergency Response Framework, the cultural forces that drive policies and the cultural forces that impact policy implementation by governing bodies and individuals. Students will examine theories and models for closing the gaps between risk perception and preparedness when resources are not a barrier. Students will consider how culture can contribute to emergencies/crises, such as techno-environmental disasters, and how emergencies and crises can in turn impact culture in short- and long-terms. This unit addresses the complexities of culture and interacting crises, multi-crisis and sequential crisis conditions. The geopolitics of emergency and crisis management will be addressed, including the control of diseases subsequent to a disaster. Students will consider the cultural aspects of emergency/crisis management among displaced populations/disrupted cultures.
Learning Management System: Moodle will be used extensively throughout the semester for course syllabus, assignments, announcements, communication and/or other course-related activities. It is the student’s responsibility to familiarize themselves with Moodle and check it regularly. If you have difficulties accessing Moodle, please inform the instructor and Moodle Support (moodlehelp@ca.rutgers.edu). Moodle is accessible at moodle.rutgers.edu.

School of Public Health Honor Code: The School of Public Health Honor Code is found in the student bulletin (sph.rutgers.edu/academics/catalog/index.html). Each student bears a fundamental responsibility for maintaining academic integrity and intellectual honesty in his or her graduate work. For example, all students are expected to observe the generally accepted principles of scholarly work, to submit their own rather than another’s work, to refrain from falsifying data, and to refrain from receiving and/or giving aid on examinations or other assigned work requiring independent effort. In submitting written material, the writer takes full responsibility for the work as a whole and implies that, except as properly noted by use of quotation marks, footnotes, etc., both the ideas and the works used are his or her own. In addition to maintaining personal academic integrity, each student is expected to contribute to the academic integrity of the school community by not facilitating inappropriate use of her/his own work by others and by reporting acts of academic dishonesty by others to an appropriate school authority. It should be clearly understood that plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can lead to sanctions up to and including separation from the Rutgers School of Public Health.

Students with Disabilities: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student must Apply for Services by first completing a Registration Form with the Rutgers Office of Disability Services (ODS) at ods.rutgers.edu. The student will also be required to participate in an ODS intake interview and provide documentation. If reasonable accommodations are granted, ODS will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations which should be shared with your instructors as early in your courses as possible.

Graduate Student Computer Policy: Students are required to possess a personal laptop, no older than approximately two years, that must meet minimum requirements which may be found online at: sph.rutgers.edu/student_life/computer_requirements.html

Policy Concerning Use of Recording Devices and Other Electronic Communications Systems: When personally owned communication/recording devices are used by students to record lectures and/or classroom lessons, such use must be authorized by the faculty member or instructor who must give either oral or written permission prior to the start of the semester and identify restrictions, if any, on the use of mobile communications or recording devices.

Withdrawal/Refund Schedule: Students who stop attending their course(s) without processing an Add/Drop Course form will receive a failing grade. Furthermore, students dropping to zero credits for the semester are considered withdrawn and must submit a completed Leave of Absence form from the School of Public Health’s Office of Student Affairs. The School of Public Health refunds tuition only. Administrative and technology fees are non-refundable. You may find the Withdrawal/Refund Schedule on the School of Public Health website at: sph.rutgers.edu/academics/registration/school_calendars.html
**INTRODUCTION: WEEK OF JANUARY 22**

- **By Jan. 22,** log in to Moodle to view course website and syllabus.
- **Jan. 22,** attend first class session:
  - introductions and background of class members;
  - overview of course instructional model and expectations;
  - the historical and practical convergence of anthropology and global public health;
  - introduction to Unit 1;
  - description of Assignment #1, **due in Moodle Friday, Feb. 2** (see full description in Moodle).
- **By Jan. 28,** complete these assigned readings/media due for Unit 1 class discussion Jan. 29:

  - Hahn and Inhorn, pages 1-16 (up to “Anthropological Methods in Public Health”).
  - Hoffman and Oliver-Smith, pages 3-22.
  - Singer and Erickson, pages 1-34.
  - Doda, pages 38-58; 100-107; 165-183.
  - Explore WHO Social Determinants of Health main page (first link) then download and read *Health in the Post-2015 Agenda: A Need for a Social Determinants of Health Approach* (second link):
    - o [http://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/)
    - o [http://www.who.int/social_determinants/advocacy/UN_Platform_FINAL.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/advocacy/UN_Platform_FINAL.pdf?ua=1)
  - Take a look at the same issue for the US: [https://www.healthypeople.gov/sites/default/files/SocietalDeterminantsHealth.pdf](https://www.healthypeople.gov/sites/default/files/SocietalDeterminantsHealth.pdf)
**UNIT 1: Key Concepts, Entities and Initiatives in Medical Anthropology and Global Health**

### Week of Jan. 29: Unit 1-Week 1

- **Jan. 29 class session:** discussion of key themes and concepts from readings/media listed above.
- **By Friday, Feb. 2,** post to Moodle Assignment #1.
- **By Feb. 4,** complete these assigned readings/media due for Unit 1 class discussion Feb. 5:

### Week of Feb. 5: Unit 1-Week 2

- **Feb. 5 class session:**
  - discussion of key themes and concepts from readings/media listed above;
  - student discussions/presentations of Assignment #1;
  - introduction to Unit 2
  - description of Assignment #2, due to Moodle Friday, Feb. 16 (see full description in Moodle).
- **By Feb. 11,** complete these assigned readings/media due for Unit 2, Week 1, class discussion Feb. 12:
  - *WHO Core Health Indicators* (2015)
    [http://www.who.int/healthinfo/indicators/2015/100CoreHealthIndicators_2015_infographic.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/indicators/2015/100CoreHealthIndicators_2015_infographic.pdf?ua=1)
  - Doda, pages 59-79.
  - Hahn and Inhorn, pages 16-31
  - Hahn and Inhorn, Chapters 1, 4 & 6
# UNIT 2: Culture and Public Health Research

## Week of Feb. 12: Unit 2-Week 1

- **Feb. 12 class session:** discussion of key themes and concepts from readings/media listed above;
- **By Feb. 16,** post to Moodle Assignment #2.
- **By Feb. 18,** complete these assigned readings/media due for Unit 2, Week 2 class discussion Feb. 19:

  - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41563170_Influenza_Anthropology_and_Global_Uncertainties](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41563170_Influenza_Anthropology_and_Global_Uncertainties)
- *Draft Outcome Document of the United Nations Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (2015)* Pages 14-28 (Read up to “Means of Implementation.”)
- Main pages of WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO) and Health Data Collaborative.

## Week of Feb. 19: Unit 2-Week 2

- **Feb. 19 class session:**
  - discussion of key themes and concepts from readings/media due this day (listed above);
  - student discussions/presentations of Assignment #2;
  - description of Assignment #3, due to Moodle Friday, Mar. 2 (see full description in Moodle);
  - introduction to Unit 3.
- **By Feb. 25,** complete these assigned readings/media due for Unit 3, Week 1 class discussion Feb. 26:

- Hahn and Inhorn, Chapters 8, 17, 18 and 19.
- See UN Document on Sustainable Development Goals, Goal #3 (page 16).
- Use this link for WHO handbook *Monitoring the Building Blocks of Health Systems.* Read the Introduction and learn the six key areas.
**UNIT 3: Culture, Structures, Systems and Policies**

**Week of Feb. 26: Unit 3-Week 1**

- **Feb. 26 class session:** discussion of key themes and concepts from readings/media listed above.
- **By Mar. 2,** post to Moodle Assignment #3.
- **By Mar. 4,** complete these assigned readings/media due for Unit 3, Week 2 class discussion Mar.5.

  - Hahn and Inhorn, Chapters 23&24.

**Week of Mar. 5: Unit 3-Week 2**

- **Mar. 5 class session:**
  - discussion of key themes and concepts from readings/media listed above;
  - student discussions/presentations of Assignment #3
  - preparation for mid-term on Mar. 19;
  - description of Assignment #4, due to Moodle Friday, March 30 (full description available in Moodle);
  - introduction to Unit 4.
- **Mar. 5-25:** complete these assigned readings/media due for class discussion Mar. 26:

**WEEK OF MARCH 12 – SPRING BREAK - NO CLASS**

**WEEK OF MARCH 19 – MID-TERM FOR UNITS 1-3. IN THE CLASSROOM, 3-5 p.m.**