

# Fundamental Concepts of Public Health

*Establishing a Platform for Integrative Learning*

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

August 25-28, 2015

## COURSE OVERVIEW AND WELCOME

**Welcome!** Our goal this week is to establish a solid foundation for your education, experience and engagement in public health. The objectives of the four core modules are to acquire a conceptual framework for critically thinking about population health - and to be able to use this framework as a platform from which to understand, contextualize, analyze, and tackle important public health challenges. We have intentionally designed the week to be an experience we share - an experience in which you will read, listen, watch, study, discuss, and debate - with yourself, with your peers, and with your instructors! We hope you will leave this week both informed and inspired: *informed* about contemporary challenges, emerging trends, and unanswered questions; and *inspired* about the possibilities for transformative change, and the fundamental role you can play.

**Important!** Please read through this brief course description to get a sense of the structure and plan for August 25-28<sup>th</sup>. We have included specific recommendations for summer preparation that should be done prior to arrival.

## PRINCIPAL INSTRUCTORS

### **Sue J. Goldie, MD, MPH**

Roger Irving Lee Professor of Public Health  
Department of Health Policy and Management  
Director, Center for Health Decision Science, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health  
Director, Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University

### **Julio Frenk, MD, PhD**

Until August:  
Dean of the Faculty  
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health  
T&G Angelopoulos Professor of Public Health and International Development, Harvard Kennedy School

After August:  
President, University of Miami

## CURRICULUM AND TEACHING SUPPORT

### **TEAM LEADER**

#### **Cherie Ramirez, PhD**

Deputy Director, Global Learning Studio  
Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University  
cherie\_ramirez@harvard.edu

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

There will be 8-10 teaching fellows who will facilitate small-group section activities and discussion.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

**This is a pivotal moment for future leaders and change agents of public health.** Around the world today, the chasm between the health and well-being of disparate populations –between and within borders–has never been greater. Intense changes in demographics, from population growth to rapid urbanization, along with unprecedented shifts in patterns of disease and cross-border risks, are coupled with game-changing advances in knowledge, technology, and innovation. You have chosen to begin your journey at what can only be described as a historical moment for our field - the challenges never more sobering, the stakes never more consequential, and the possibilities never greater. Welcome to the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health!

**This course will provide a conceptual foundation for critically thinking about public health,** positioning health as a fundamental prerequisite for building strong societies, and as a social objective that is relevant to development, security, foreign policy, and human rights. Defined by its' population-level of analysis, and inclusive of the social and biological dimensions of health, we will conceptualize public health as both a multidisciplinary field of inquiry and a space for professional practice. While our discussions will reflect the interconnectedness between health conditions (the “problem”) and societal responses (the “solution”), we will be deliberately attentive to the influential social, economic and political factors (the “context”) that shape the circumstances in which we live. Rejecting the false dichotomy between local and global, we will embrace a global perspective about the contemporary public health landscape as we consider the contours of an expanded knowledge terrain, shaped by profound forces that are transforming our lives, communities and institutions.

**The class will emphasize fundamental concepts rather than acquisition of facts and details.** Our goal is to establish a strong foundation for the next years of learning, one that will serve as a solid intellectual infrastructure, and facilitate the application of broad analytic and critical thinking skills. Throughout the course we will emphasize the distinction between (1) conceptual ways of thinking, critical analytic competencies, and acquisition of global perspectives, (2) content knowledge about specific public health topics and skills related to quantitative and graphical literacy. While the major focus of the course is indeed the former, we have two modest but distinct goals relevant to the latter, and clarify these below.

- First, between class sessions, section activities, preparatory assignments and post-session exercises, you will become acquainted with diverse public health issues across the globe. We are not seeking for you to master issue-specific or setting-specific content knowledge - rather, we want you to be able to draw upon conceptual frameworks to organize information, to assess what you know and do not know, to ask the right questions, and to know how and where to look for answers.
- Second, in several class activities, you will effectively be ‘self-screening’ for numerical and graphical literacy. While the course emphasis is on the acquisition of concepts, it is only possible to master these through application and integration with real-world events and phenomena - therefore, we want you to become comfortable with the ‘language of public health’ as we examine past, present and projected patterns of health conditions, determinants, and responses across and within countries.

## CURRICULUM COMPONENTS

- Summer preparation
- Pre-course assessment
- Pre-session multi-modal assignments
- Large-group facilitated sessions
- Small-group interactive sessions
- Post-session integrative exercises
- Post-course assessment

## COURSE RESOURCES

### COURSE WEBSITE

Once you arrive in Boston, you will be able to check in to the course website daily for announcements, to turn in assignments, and to access course resources.

### MULTI-MODAL RESOURCES

#### E-BOOK

We have made an **E-Book** available to you for the summer entitled *An Invitation to Public Health: Clear Thinking for Effective Action*. This was developed by Julio Frenk, with Suerie Moon and Josh Salomon, to accompany a month-long introductory course on fundamental concepts in public health for the doctorate of public health program (DrPH) program at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The book is comprised of 12 chapters that include embedded videos of the lectures given to the inaugural DrPH class. While the book was borne out of Dean Frenk's decades of experience in building institutions for public health research and education, it also reflects the evolution in his own thinking shaped by lessons of the past, complexities of the present, and a keen understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

You can access the **E-Book** here: <http://hsph.me/e-book>

#### CURATED RESOURCES

We will provide you with a selection of **Curated Resources** - carefully chosen websites, public health reports, peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, and fact sheets intended to accommodate a diverse student body with a wide range of backgrounds, existing competencies, and interests. These resources are intended to facilitate engagement in self-directed learning - both during and after the course! Occasionally, you will draw on these resources to explore an issue in small-group sections, and to practice 'scanning material' for main points in post-class integrative exercises and assignments.

#### COURSE COMPANION

We will provide you with an electronic **Course Companion** that will be sent to you at the end of July and will provide informal guidance for how to approach the optional reading in both the E-Book and Curated Resources. The Course Companion will be electronically updated in August so that when you arrive in Boston, you will have access to specific instructions on how to prepare for each session.

#### GLOBAL REPORTS

We will provide you with access to educational resources in the **Library and Teaching Coop** curated by the **Harvard Global Health Education and Learning Incubator**. For example, for useful global reports such as the sample provided below, we will provide brief user-friendly navigation summaries to locate data and country examples. During the course, you will become familiar with how to access these resources for a wide range of public health issues.

- World Health Statistics 2015. WHO 2015. [Report media](#). [Link to PDF](#).
- World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, Behavior. World Bank 2015. [Report media](#). [Link to PDF](#).
- World Development Indicators 2015. World Bank 2015. [Report media](#). [Link to PDF](#).
- Human Development Report 2014: Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience. United Nations Development Programme 2014. [Report media](#). [Link to PDF](#).
- State of the World's Children 2015: Reimagine the future. UNICEF 2014. [Report media](#). [Link to PDF](#).
- The Millennium Development Goals Report 2014. UN 2014. [Report media](#). [Link to PDF](#).
- Population Reference Bureau, World Population Data Sheet 2014. [Link to PDF](#).
- Global Burden of Disease Study 2010 & 2013. Lancet. 2012, 2014. [Link](#).

## GUIDANCE FOR SUMMER PREPARATION

### What should you do this summer?

We would advise that you watch the videos included in the E-Book over the summer. We are not asking that you ‘study’ the videos as if you were in a formal class. What we are recommending is that you watch these videos in a relaxed way to become familiar with the concepts and issues, much like you would ‘watch a documentary on television’ or ‘read the newspaper’ - i.e., you are interested in the main stories, but you do not deliberately ‘study’ or try to ‘master’ the content.

Why are we recommending this approach?

- First, this course has been designed to take place in a condensed week over four days, and the learning objectives have been tailored to be appropriate and feasible for that time period. The E-Book was intended for a month-long credit-bearing course and covers too much material for our specific goals during the orientation week in August.
- Second, the E-Book was not designed to be a comprehensive resource for alternative conceptual frameworks, synthesis of evidence on all topics, or to provide case examples from multiple countries. That being said, we want to expose you to a variety of frameworks and examples, because it will be through ‘comparing and contrasting’ that you will most effectively learn. We did not feel it was feasible to assign the entire E-Book and supplementary resources to be completed prior to your arrival.
- Third, we have thought carefully about the balance of work expected over the summer. It is critical to the core goals of the class that you come with an open mind, enthusiasm for broad thinking, and fresh energy to engage fully. Our compromise, after consideration of several different options and intensities for summer preparation, was to ask you to watch the videos which can be viewed in a casual paced manner over a considerable number of weeks.

Please note that we are not advising that you do not read the E-Book if you are interested and motivated! We think that you will benefit from scanning and perusing the material and encourage you to do so! To assist you in this regard, we will be sending you the **Course Companion** in mid-late July, and this will provide some guidance about the most useful sections to read, as well as a few carefully curated supplemental resources that might be helpful.

## OTHER INFORMATION

### PARTICIPATION

To foster an environment of engagement and reflection we strongly discourage the use of laptops during sessions. Cell phones are absolutely prohibited. We are informed in this regard by our experience, feedback from students, and educational research suggesting that you will be likelier to record more meaningful notes (including illustrations, which we will encourage!) that will enhance your conceptual understanding of material if you write rather than type your notes. Please note that your participation may at times require that you have paper and a writing utensil ready so that you can turn in answers to in-class knowledge check quizzes or reflection prompts. We expect that all students will come to class on time and prepared with this in mind.

### QUESTIONS

Once you are in Boston, if you have questions or concerns regarding the course, please direct them to the head teaching fellow who will triage inquiries and either address them directly or refer them to the appropriate person (e.g., principal instructors or teaching team leader) to get you the information you need.

If you have questions before you get to Boston, please contact us at [studentaffairs@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:studentaffairs@hsph.harvard.edu).

Module 1: Tuesday, Aug. 25 CONCEPTUALIZING PUBLIC HEALTH AND GLOBAL HEALTH	Module 2: Wednesday, Aug. 26 UNDERSTANDING & CONTEXTUALIZING PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES	Module 3: Thursday, Aug. 27 TACKLING AND RESPONDING TO PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES	Module 4: Friday, Aug. 28 INTEGRATING CONCEPTS THROUGH ANALYSIS OF POLICY & PRACTICE
<b>Pre-Class Preparation Assignment</b>			
Refresher Reading (optional) Bare Basics Check (written) Pre-Class Prep Activity (multi-modal)	Refresher Reading (optional) Bare Basics Check (written) Pre-Class Prep Activity (multi-modal)	Refresher Reading (optional) Bare Basics Check (written) Pre-Class Prep Activity (multi-modal)	Refresher Reading (optional) Bare Basics Check (written) Pre-Class Prep Activity (multi-modal)
<b>Instructor-Led Large Group [Section 1: 9-10:15am] [Section 2: 10:30-11:45am]</b>			
<b>Introduction, Synthesis, Roadmap</b> <b>Soundbites:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Broadening perspectives on health, public health, global health;</li> <li>Concepts, models, frameworks - tools for thinking, guides for action;</li> <li>Globalization, society, clusters of influential changes &amp; transitions;</li> <li>Cognitive map of an 'expanded public health knowledge terrain'.</li> </ul> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Photo Reaction &amp; Reflection</li> <li>Map Game &amp; Activity</li> <li>Group Drawing Activity</li> </ul> <b>Dialogue and Debate:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JF &amp; SG dialogue, then open group</li> </ul> <b>Facilitated Wrap-Up</b>	<b>Introduction, Synthesis, Roadmap</b> <b>Soundbites:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health conditions: typologies, categories, salient features;</li> <li>Determinants: type, level, conceptual frameworks;</li> <li>Inequalities &amp; inequities: concepts &amp; policies;</li> <li>Demographic, epidemiologic, social drivers of health transition.</li> </ul> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Event Reaction/Reflection</li> <li>Country Contextualization Exercise</li> <li>Activity Exercise 3</li> </ul> <b>Dialogue and Debate:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JF &amp; SG dialogue, then open group</li> </ul> <b>Facilitated Wrap-Up</b>	<b>Introduction, Synthesis, Roadmap</b> <b>Soundbites:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tackling health challenges from within &amp; outside the health sector</li> <li>Health systems: conceptual models, objectives, functions;</li> <li>Programs &amp; interventions - typologies, priorities, pragmatics</li> <li>Global health governance &amp; international collective action</li> </ul> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Event Reaction/Reflection</li> <li>Policy Debate Exercise, Part 1</li> <li>Peer-Feedback</li> </ul> <b>Dialogue and Debate:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JF &amp; SG dialogue, then open group</li> </ul> <b>Facilitated Wrap-Up</b>	<b>Introduction, Synthesis, Roadmap</b> <b>Soundbites:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrating concepts through analysis of Mexico's Health Reform;</li> <li>Extending concepts through country comparison;</li> <li>Translating knowledge to policy &amp; action;</li> <li>Contextualizing evidence through analysis of policy and action.</li> </ul> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Event Reaction/Reflection</li> <li>Policy Debate Exercise, Part 2</li> <li>Open Space Dialogue</li> </ul> <b>Dialogue and Debate:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JF &amp; SG dialogue, then open group</li> </ul> <b>Facilitated Wrap-Up</b>
<b>Facilitator-Led Small Group [Section 1: 10:30-11:30am] [Section 2: 12:00-1:00pm]</b>			
<b>Introduction &amp; Section Orientation</b> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How do you know what you know &amp; do not? (metrics &amp; measures)</li> <li>Front page news &amp; radio broadcast (using conceptual models to 'think on your feet', team-building)</li> <li>Role-play teaching (graphical literacy, communication skills)</li> </ul>	<b>Introduction &amp; Section Orientation</b> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum development and companion exercises in progress</li> </ul>	<b>Introduction &amp; Section Orientation</b> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum development and companion exercises in progress</li> </ul>	<b>Introduction &amp; Section Orientation</b> <b>Activities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Curriculum development and companion exercises in progress</li> </ul>
<b>Post-Class Applied and/or Integrative Exercise</b>			
<b>Students:</b> Post-Class Exercise <b>Teaching Fellow:</b> Reflection Portfolio	<b>Students:</b> Post-Class Exercise <b>Teaching Fellow:</b> Reflection Portfolio	<b>Students:</b> Post-Class Exercise <b>Teaching Fellow:</b> Reflection Portfolio	<b>Students:</b> Assessment & Evaluation <b>Teaching Fellow:</b> Reflection Portfolio