

Fundamental Concepts of Public Health

Establishing a Platform for Integrative Learning
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

August 23 - 26, 2016

COURSE OVERVIEW AND WELCOME

Welcome! The week is intentionally designed to be an experience - one in which you will read, listen, discuss, and reflect - with yourself and with your peers! The purpose of this mini-course is to establish a foundation for your education, experience and engagement in public health. The objectives 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 hope you will leave orientation 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.

FACULTY

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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.

This mini-course will provide a conceptual foundation for critically thinking about public health, positioning health as a fundamental prerequisite for building strong societies, 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.

We are acutely aware that these three sessions will be a relatively 'brief experience' in the context of your time at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Accordingly, we will be deliberative in our effort to distinguish (1) conceptual ways of thinking, global perspectives, and analytic competencies; (2) content knowledge about public health and global issues relevant to public health; (3) skills and competencies for public health research, practice and policy; and (4) enabling 21st century literacies, including digital, visual, graphical, and media. **In this mini-course, we will emphasize fundamental concepts rather than facts and details.** We are not seeking for you to master issue-specific or setting-specific content knowledge; rather, we want to expose you to 'mental constructs' or 'conceptual

maps' that can serve as 'cognitive scaffolding' - helping you to organize information, identify knowledge gaps, facilitate acquisition and retention of new knowledge, and contribute to integrative learning. **We will also provide an opportunity for you to engage in 'self-screening'** for graphical and numerical 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 patterns of health conditions, social determinants, and societal responses across and within countries.

RESOURCES

COURSE WEBSITE

<https://canvas.harvard.edu>

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.

CURATED RESOURCES

We will provide you with a selection of **Curated Resources** - for example, we will provide brief user-friendly navigation summaries to locate data and country examples for small group activities and exercises. You will also have access to educational resources in the **Library and Teaching Coop** curated by the **Harvard Global Health Education and Learning Incubator**. These include global reports, articles, policy briefs, fact sheets, graphics, multimedia, and digital portals to data sources, policy organizations, and news media.

We will make an **E-Book** available to you entitled *An Invitation to Public Health: Clear Thinking for Effective Action*. This was developed by Julio Frenk and Suerie Moon to accompany an introductory course on fundamental concepts in public health for the doctorate of public health program (DrPH) program. While the book was borne out of former 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.

SUMMER PREPARATION

We have decided to not assign prerequisite work during the summer. We recognize that you are all coming from different situations, contexts, and geographical locations - and we want to balance our desire to get you started on your intellectual journey as soon as possible with the reality that you will be better mentally, physically, and spiritually prepared to engage fully if you do not arrive exhausted, pressured, and already feeling behind!

While we will not ask you to do any work prior to arrival, we do require that you attend three large group sessions, complete 2-3 brief assignments that will be posted after each session, and participate in 2-3 self-directed small group activities that we have planned for the week.

Preliminary Schedule Snapshot

Module 1: Aug. 23 CONCEPTUALIZING HEALTH, PUBLIC HEALTH AND GLOBAL HEALTH	Module 2: Aug. 24 UNDERSTANDING & CONTEXTUALIZING PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES	Module 3: Aug. 26 TACKLING AND RESPONDING TO PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES
Pre-Class Refresher Reviews		
	*Refresher Review (optional)	Refresher Review (optional)
Faculty Facilitated Large Group Session		
<p>Soundbites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadening perspectives on health, public health, global health; • Conceptual models, cognitive tools for thinking, guides for action; • Globalization, society, clusters of influential changes & transitions; • Cognitive map of an 'expanded public health knowledge terrain'. 	<p>Soundbites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health conditions: typologies, categories, salient features; • Determinants: type, level, conceptual frameworks; • Inequalities & inequities: concepts & policies; • Demographic, epidemiologic, social drivers of health transition. 	<p>Soundbites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling health challenges from within & outside the health sector • Health systems: conceptual models, objectives, functions; • Programs & interventions - typologies, priorities, pragmatics • Global health governance & international collective action
Small Group Self-Directed Activities		
**Small Group Activity (TBD)* ~45 minutes	Small Group Activity (TBD)* ~45 minutes	Small Group Activity (TBD)* ~45 minutes
Post-Class Exercises		
Assignment (30 minutes) Reflection (15 minutes)	Assignment (30 minutes) Reflection (15 minutes)	Assignment (30 minutes) Reflection (15 minutes)
<p>What are Refresher Reviews? We will post brief self-assessment tools, learning guides, key definitions and metrics, or short video clips that might be helpful to students wishing to review relevant concepts prior to the large group morning sessions. These are not mandatory but are intended to be useful for those learners who benefit from previewing material prior to a large group session. For all students, we hope these resources will ultimately be useful for solidifying key concepts covered in the large group sessions.</p> <p>What should I know about Large-Group Sessions? Please come to class early so we can start exactly on time. We have limited the amount of time you are in class to accommodate a busy orientation schedule and out of respect for many of you who will be moving and getting settled - we therefore want you to engage fully every minute we have allocated! We strongly discourage the use of laptops during sessions, and 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 checks or reflection prompts.</p> <p>What are Small-Group Activities? We are designing 2 -3 opportunities for you to engage with your peers in small groups around a specific 'task' we will charge you with! Details forthcoming.... The 2-3 small group activities, in their entirety, are estimated to require about 2 to 2.5 hours.</p> <p>What are Post-Class Exercises? After class we will post (1) an assignment that will ask you to <i>apply/integrate</i> what we discussed in class to a specific issue or question, and (2) a reflection exercise that will ask you to write (e.g., a paragraph) or graphically conceptualize (e.g., a sketch or diagram) a reaction to a prompt. The post-class exercises are estimated to require approximately 30-45 minutes.</p>		