

Environmental and Health Issues in the Community

MPLC 6539

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Objectives

This course is designed to teach the fundamentals of epidemiology and environmentally induced illness in the community. We will study a range of contemporary environmental health issues, including asthma, lead poisoning, Gulf War Syndrome, smoking, bioterrorism, Legionnaire's disease, violence, Love Canal and cancer.

From an epidemiological perspective, we will explore the social, political and economic factors of environmental illness, emphasizing such concepts and skills as population analysis, community diagnosis, causation and transmission of disease, and risk assessment. These standard epidemiological concepts are more contested and less precise when applied to the suspected and sometimes known environmental sources of illness.

Often, medical interventions in the community to combat or prevent environmental health issues occur only after the affected group and its advocates take political actions. Students will learn new skills and gain the knowledge needed to make them better practitioners and advocates of an environmental health care policy that acknowledges the importance of this issue in the emerging global economy.

Reading

Required- Illness and the Environment: A Reader in Contested Medicine, edited by Steve Kroll-Smith, Phil Brown, and Valerie J. Gunter, New York University Press, 2000.

Required- Introduction to Public Health, Mary-Jane Schneider, Aspen Publishers, 2000.

Recommended- Environmental Health, Dade W. Moeller, Harvard University Press, 1997.

In addition, relevant articles from environmental health literature will be listed under each class heading. Please read the articles prior to class. Some readings may be changed, announced and distributed in class.

Grading

- 1) Midterm (Approximately 30% of grade)- Each student must select a chapter from Illness and the Environment (Toxins in the Workplace, chapters 9-12; Toxins in the Community, chapters 13-16; Citizen Responses to Contested Medicine, chapters 20-22; Setting the Environmental Health Agenda, chapters 23-24), submit a brief (approximately 5 pages) report on the chapter topic and lead a class discussion (1/2 hour) on the material that is the basis of the report. A 1 or 2 page handout should accompany each discussion.

- 2) Final (Approximately 50% of grade)- Each student must submit a 1 page final paper proposal before session 4 that includes at least three of the references that will be used in the paper. Your final paper must be approved before you write it. Each paper must contain an introduction, review of the literature, methods, results, and conclusion section. Final PowerPoint presentations will take place during the last classes, May 12 and May 19, 2003. Time for each presentation will be approximately half an hour and should be accompanied with a handout for the class.
- 3) Class participation (Approximately 20% of grade)- Students are expected to complete the chapter readings before each class and submit brief answers to chapter questions, when assigned. Active participation in classroom discussion is expected.
- 4) Incomplete applications must be presented in writing and approved by the faculty member. These will only be granted in the event of an extraordinary circumstance beyond the control of the student. Further, New School University policies require a work schedule and final deadline for completion of the final requirements to be signed and submitted at the time the incomplete application is submitted.

Syllabus

Session 1: January 27, 2003

Topic: Environmental health, public health, disease and social conflict (introduction, overview, and course requirements).

Reading: Smith, Brown, & Gunter, Chapter 1; Schneider, Chapters 1-3

Session 2: February 3, 2003

Topic: Analytic Methods of health measurement.

Reading: Smith, Brown, & Gunter, Chapters 2-4. Schneider, Chapter 4 - 8

Session 3: February 10, 2003

Topic: Biomedical basis of health.

Reading: Schneider, Chapter 9-12, Moeller, Chapters 1-5

****Session 4: February 24, 2003***

Topic: Environmental Issues in Public Health

Reading: Schneider, Chapters 15-16, 19-20

Session 5: March 3, 2003

(Optional session for those who have an approved final proposal before 3/3)

Final Paper Proposal Due

Discussion of Final Paper

****Session 6: March 10, 2003 (Extended Session)**

Topic: Toxins in the Workplace or Community

Midterm Presentations: Smith, Brown & Gaunter, Chapters 9-16

****Session 7: March 17, 2003 (Extended Session)**

Topic: Citizen Responses, Setting the Agenda

Midterm Presentations: Smith, Brown, & Gunter, Chapters 20-24

Session 8: April 7, 2003

Topic: Environmental Issues in Public Health

Reading: Schneider, Chapter 21-24

Session 9: April 14, 2003

Topic: Bioterrorism, Anthrax, Smallpox

Reading: Smith, Brown, & Gunter, Chapter 23

Session 10: April 21, 2003

Topic: "Contested Diseases"

Reading: Smith, Brown & Gunter, Chapters 17-19

Session 11: April 28, 2003

Topic: The Future Environmental Health Agenda

Reading: Smith, Brown & Gunter, Chapters 22-25; Schneider Chapter 29

***Session 12: May 5, 2003**

(Optional Session for those who have turned in final paper before 5/5)

Final Paper Preparation

Final Paper Due

****Session 13: May 12, 2003 (Extended Session)**

Final Paper Presentations

****Session 14: May 19, 2003 (Extended Session)**

Final Paper Presentations

*** Paper Due**

**** Extended Session in order to facilitate presentation**