Foundations of Public Health Ethics  
Spring 2007

Time: Thursday 2:00-4:45  
Location: 3100 Michael Hooker Building  
Credit hours: 3  
Instructor: James Thomas, MPH, PhD  
Epidemiology  
2104-B McGavran-Greenberg  
Email: jim.thomas@unc.edu  
Tel: 966-7434

Course Overview: The course draws a distinction between public health ethics and medical ethics and it provides tools for ethical decision-making in public health. The course will deal with: human rights, social justice, and racial disparities; both research and practice; both internationally and domestically. It is designed as a required component of the new UNC SPH certificate in public health ethics.

Course Objectives: This course aims to:

1. Articulate the distinctive aspects of public health ethics.
2. Enable students to differentiate between various schools of thought in ethics.
3. Enable students to identify and evaluate ethical questions in public health.

Required Readings: The readings are all available on Blackboard. With the exception of the first session, the materials are to be read in advance of the class because they will serve as the basis of discussion in the class.

Assignments: In addition to assigned readings, students will write three essays, 1-2 pages in length (single-spaced). A final paper will consist of an ethics case study on a topic of the student’s choosing. Two of the essays will help students prepare components of the case study.

Evaluation: The course evaluation components and weights are as follows:

- Contribution to discussions in class (based in part on the readings) 15%
- Essays (15% x 3) 45%
- Case study 40%
Lectures, objectives and readings

1/11  Ethics in a pandemic
• Course overview and introductions
• Student definitions of justice
• Unearthing ethical issues in responses to pandemic influenza

Readings:
• Osterholm MT. Preparing for the next pandemic. Foreign Affairs, July/August, 2005.

1/18  Traditions and values in public health
• Values and beliefs inherent in the public health perspective
• Differentiating PH ethics from medical ethics

Readings:
• Public Health Leadership Society , The Values and Beliefs Underlying a Public Health Perspective (part of the Public Health Code of Ethics).

1/25  Public health and justice
• A survey of prominent schools of thought on justice
• How various types of justice are manifest in public health

Readings:

2/1  Ethical analysis and decision-making
• Identifying an ethical issue
• Public Health Code of Ethics
• Steps for analyzing an ethical problem

Readings
2/8 **Public health law**
- Legal mandates of public health
- The relationship between law and ethics

Readings:

2/15 **Social determinants of health**
- Ecological perspective
- Social epidemiology and its relation to public health ethics

Readings:

2/22 **Power, participation, and disparities**
- The legacy of the Tuskegee syphilis study
- Ethics and equity in health

Readings:

3/1 **Research abuses**
- The legacy of the Tuskegee syphilis study

Readings:

3/8 **Research with human subjects**
- Public health research versus public health practice
- The place of “compliance” in public health ethics

Readings:
- MacQueen, KM and Buehler, J Ethics, Practice and Research in Public Health, AJPH 94(6), 2004
3/15  **Spring Break – No Class**

3/22  **Cross-cultural ethics**
- Non-western concepts of ethics
- Research in the context of global inequity and cultural differences

Readings:

3/29  **Global health ethics**
- Describe global inequalities and some of the causes
- What are the international moral obligations?
- How can they be realized, even in part?

Readings:
- TBN

4/5  **Biodefense**
- Bioterrorism and biodefense
- Conflict, public health and ethics

Readings:
- TBN

4/12  **Environmental health ethics**
- The built environment
- Global warming

Readings:

4/19  **Health policy, allocation and access to services**
- The distribution of resources
- Rural health

Readings:
- Daniels N. Justice, health, and healthcare. MIT Press 2001, 1;2-16.
Professional Ethics

- Virtue ethics
- Moral courage, whistle blowing, and other options in unethical situations
- The ethics of professional competence
- Advocacy

Readings: