School of Public Health

PBHL 822
Public Health Ethics
3 credit hours

Instructor: Michael Yudell, Assistant Professor

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Office Hours: By Appointment (or just knock)

Course Time and Place: Wednesdays, 2-5, 11th Floor Conference Room

Pre-requisites: PBHL 801

COURSE DESCRIPTION

It has been a challenge for public health, a field that encompasses so many disparate disciplines and methodologies, to articulate for itself a common mission and definition. In a sense, what makes public health so difficult to define is that ultimately the field itself is an ideal; a noble, multidisciplinary ambition whose goal is to improve the public’s health. Under its umbrella epidemiologists, sociomedical scientists, biostatisticians, environmental health scientists, community and health policy experts, municipal workers, healthcare workers, and ethicists among others work in academia, private enterprise, non-profit, and government to fulfill the field’s shared goals. Public health ethics is playing an increasingly important effort in attempting to provide a unifying ethos for the field. Over the past decade, attention to a public health ethics has attracted greater interest by scholars, and witnessed the first published Code of Ethics in the more than 150-year history of the American Public Health Association. While the new literature of public health ethics is diverse in its approach to the subject, the recent scholarship does share a common goal of distinguishing this nascent field from the longstanding work being done in bioethics. Whether bioethical models will be an archetype for this new field, or whether they are, as some have suggested, “the wrong place to start,” there is still no consensus on what is public health ethics. The emergence of public health ethics has been driven by an equally complex series of events, including newly emerging public health challenges, technological innovations, and an ever-changing social and cultural landscape.

This course will explore the emergence of this field, its philosophical, historical, and political development, its relationship to the field of human rights, and its future. Emphasis will be placed on developing a mastery of the current literature on the subject and on formulating novel approaches in public health ethics. This is a reading and writing intensive course, and students should be prepared to engage in serious dialogue each week in class.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course participants should:

- Have an understanding of the history of the field of public health ethics.
- Be familiar with the philosophical models utilized in public health ethics.
- Be able to distinguish between bioethics and public health ethics.
- Be able to critically appraise the literature in public health ethics.
- Have an understanding of the challenges public health poses to research ethics and IRBs.
- Understand the differences between social justice, communitarian, and human rights approaches in public health ethics.

COURSE CONTENT

This is a reading and writing intensive class that will be conducted as a seminar. Students will be responsible to participate in class discussions each week. Throughout the quarter each student will be responsible to give a short (approx. 5-10 minutes) oral synopsis in class of at least one of that week’s readings.

BOOKS

Norman Daniels, Bruce Kennedy, and Ichiro Kwachi. *Is Inequality Bad For Our Health?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000).


*Additional Course Readings Available on Blackboard*
ASSIGNMENTS

Ethics Case Study
Students will be responsible for developing a short (3-5 pages) ethics case study. The topic must be chosen with instructor’s approval.

Book Review
All students will be responsible for writing a short (2-3 pages) academic book review on a subject related to class reading. You may review one of the assigned books. Please look at academic journals for format and style to follow.

Final Paper (DrPh Students)
DrPh students are required to write a final paper on one issue in contemporary public health practice and explain why and how public health ethics is important to this issue. The paper should be between 15-25 pages. Footnotes and a thorough bibliography are required for all papers. Make sure you cite all sources properly and, please, folks, don’t use websites as sources unless they are documents or used to refer to specific public health programs. And don’t use Wikipedia for anything… ever!!!

Final Exam (MPH Students)
MPH students are required to take a final exam. The exam will be a take home essay exam. Drexel honor code will be strictly enforced for this exam. Questions will be distributed for the exam at the end of class week 9 (May 28th) and will be due on Tuesday June 2 by 5pm. There will be no extensions for this exam as your final grade must be submitted on June 5th for you to graduate on time.

EVALUATION METHODS

Class participation and face-to-face meetings: 20%
Ethics Case Study: 20%
Book Review: 10%
Class presentation: 10%
Final Paper/Exam: 40%
### COURSE SCHEDULE

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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| 1    | What is Public Health? | • Institute of Medicine, *The Future of Public Health* (available online through the Drexel Library website);  
• Yudell, M. “Public Health Ethics: An Update From an Emerging Field,” *Penn Guide to Bioethics* (2009);  
| 2    | Bioethics and Public Health Ethics: Historical Background and Emerging Paradigms | • Jonsen, *The Birth of Bioethics*, preface-122, 325-416;  
• Rothman, *Strangers at the Bedside*. |
• Colgrove, *State of Immunity*, chs.1, 5;  
| 4    | Social Justice, Communitarianism, and Public Health (Book Review Due) | • Madison and Faden, *Social Justice*, pages TBD;  
• Beauchamp, D.E. Public health as social justice. In Beauchamp, D.E. & Steinbock, B (Eds.), *New ethics for the public’s health* (pp.101-109). (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); |
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<th>Human Rights and Public Health Ethics: Competing or Complementary Paradigms</th>
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<td>• Farmer, <em>Pathologies of Power</em>, pages TBD;</td>
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| 6    | Ethics, Epidemiology, and Surveillance | • Readings from Coughlin and Beauchamp, *Ethics and Epidemiology*;  
• Readings from Fairchild, Bayer, and Colgrove, *Searching Eyes*. |
| 7    | Animal Ethics and Public Health (Ethics Case Study Due) | *(All pages below TBD)*  
*Eating Animals*, by Jonathan Safran Foer  
*The Ethics of What We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*, by Peter Singer and Jim Mason  
*Animal Liberation*, by Peter Singer  
*Toxicity Testing in the 21st Century*, The National Research Council  
*Pew Commission Report on Industrial Farm Animal Production*  
| 8    | IRB’s, Research Ethics, & Public Health – Part I Ethical Failures in Public Health | • Jones, *Bad Blood*;  
• Jonsen, pp.125-165;  
• Beauchamp and Childress, “The Meaning and Justification of Informed Consent,” pp. 77-80. (Optional: pp. 69-77, 80-98.); “The Dual Roles of

- Garrard and Dawson, “What is the role of the research ethics committee? Paternalism, inducements and harm in research ethics,” *JME* 31(7): 419-23.
- Cassell and Young, Why we should not seek individual informed consent for Participation in Health Services Research *JME* 2002:28(5): 313-317.

**DREXEL UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

**Disability Policy:** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations and services at Drexel University need to present a current accommodation verification letter (“AVL”) to faculty before
accommodations can be made. AVL’s are issued by the Office of Disability Services (“ODS”). For additional information, contact the ODS at www.drexel.edu/edt/disability, 3201 Arch Street, Ste. 210, Philadelphia, PA 19104, V 215.895.1401, or TTY 215.895.2299.

**Academic Honesty Policy:** Drexel University is committed to a learning environment that embraces academic honesty. In order to protect members of our community from results of dishonest conduct, the University has adopted policies to deal with cases of academic dishonesty. Please read, under, and follow the “Academic Honesty Policy” as written in the Official Student Handbook.