

**MCHC Seminar 4**  
**Friday 11am – 1:45pm**  
**Professor Naomi Braine**  
**Spring 2014**

**Office Hours and Contact Information**

Office: James Hall 3103                      Office Hours: Tues 3:30-5pm, Fri 2:30-4pm  
Tel: 718-951-5000 x1775                      Email: [nbraine@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:nbraine@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

**Required Books** *Available at Shakespeare and Company*

The Ghost Map by Steven Johnson  
The Body Economic by David Stuckler and Sanjay Basu  
Additional readings distributed electronically

**Course Overview**

The goal of this seminar is to develop an understanding of the relationship between the social, economic, and political systems and population-level patterns of health and illness. As Americans, most of us have been taught that health is an attribute of the individual: our genetics, our personal histories, and, of course, our personal choices in regard to eating, exercise, and adherence to medical advice. Yet patterns of disease, the concern of public health, have a striking connection to societal dynamics of social inequality and marginalization. This seminar will place social inequality and social policy at the center of our inquiry as a starting point from which to understand health as a societal phenomenon. Since both disease and marginalization have important spatial elements, we will spend time looking at maps of NYC to help us study the connections between health, policy, and the social environment.

We will begin with the historical roots of epidemiology and public health during a cholera epidemic in London in the 1850s, and the larger history of structural approaches to public health. We will then consider policing, incarceration, housing and community stability as key elements shaping the social environment and health in urban communities, and key issues for NYC in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Finally, we will examine how the economic downturn that began in 2008 has affected health and longevity, drawing the connections between macro economic policies and population health. Throughout the semester, we will take field trips to sites in NYC that can lead us to a deeper understanding of the issues involved. For the final project, students will work together in small groups to study how social policies shape a health issue of their choice. This project will combine group work for the Seminar 4 conference presentation and individual final papers.

This is a seminar, so student engagement and participation are critical to the development of the course over the semester. Students have multiple avenues for engagement and for

shaping the directions we take within the larger framework:

1. Students are expected to attend and actively participate during class sessions
2. Students will post 1 question and 1 comment about the readings each week on the bulletin board for that week. The comment and the question can be related or separate, and can be a response to another student. Threads are encouraged. All comments and questions must be posted by 10am on Fridays, and students are encouraged to use the bulletin board as a way to communicate between weekly class meetings
3. Students will work in pairs to facilitate discussion of the readings on weeks where there is no field trip or guest speaker, with each student responsible for facilitation one week out of the semester.

### **Learning Goals**

In this course, students will learn:

1. To identify basic ways that social policy can shape public health
2. Core skills needed to analyze the relationship between the prevalence of a particular disease and characteristics of the social environment, including the identification of relevant policy domains.
3. To work with virtual maps as a tool for social analysis
4. To write brief critical essays that construct an analytical argument

### **Assignments and Grading:**

Attendance and participation	20%
Post questions/comments weekly	15%
Facilitate class discussion	5%
3 short essays, 3-5 pages each	35% (10%, 12%, 13%)
Final paper 7-10 pages	25%

Graded and ungraded assignments: weekly questions/comments, class facilitation and attendance are credit/no credit. The short essays and final paper are graded. Credit for ungraded assignments will raise your grade at a % level through a B+, BUT ungraded work WILL NOT raise a student's grade into the A-level.

Late Work- Late work will not be accepted unless there are very special circumstances such as, illness/injury, death in the family, etc. If such an emergency occurs, please contact me as soon as possible.

A Note on Plagiarism- I am a teacher, not a police officer. However, in fairness to the vast majority of students who work hard and struggle with the material, those rare students who cheat will receive an F for the course. If I have any reason to suspect plagiarism, then I will check the material in question and if I find copied material then I will file a report with the Committee on Academic Integrity. Students are responsible for knowing and following the College's policy on Academic Integrity. (<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/serindex.htm>)

## **Spring 2014 Schedule [student facilitators for each week]**

- 1/31 Intro to course
- 2/7 Social environment and the emergence of disease  
Reading: chapters 1-4 of Ghost Map
- 2/14 Space, social inequality, and health  
Reading: chaps 5-8 of Ghost Map
- 2/21 Structural approaches to public health:  
Reading: Sommer and Parker, chapters 2 & 3 (electronic)
- 2/28 Podwalk and Speaker: contemporary urban water issues  
Class starts 12:30  
**1<sup>st</sup> essay due**
- 3/7 Field trip: Drug policy and health  
Reading: New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander, Intro and chapt 1 (electronic)
- 3/14 Mass Incarceration, Policing and Urban Communities **[Jairam, Morris]**  
Reading: New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander, chaps 2 & 3 (electronic)
- 3/21 Communities, roots and displacement **[Muin, Joy]**  
Reading: Rootshock by Mindy Fullilove, chaps 3-6 (electronic)  
**Optional field trip (8a.m.)**: attend a broadcast of Democracy Now, meet with staff
- 3/28 Community structure, displacement, and HIV **[Cameron, Pricila]**  
Reading: Wallace "Synergism of Plagues" (electronic)
- 4/4 Field Trip: Queens museum  
Review maps of poverty and HIV  
**2<sup>nd</sup> essay due**
- 4/11 Economic crisis and health **[Josh, Saul]**  
Reading: Body Economic, Part I
- 4/18 Spring Break
- 4/25 Fiscal crisis and austerity **[Rachel, Renee]**  
Reading: Body Economic, Part II
- 5/3 Austerity and health **[Annalisa, Emily]**  
Reading: Body Economic, Part III
- 5/9 The future of NYC

Reading: Structural Approaches chapt 18  
**3<sup>rd</sup> essay due**

5/10-11: Seminar 4 Conference

5/16 Last day/field trip