JRH 5124 Public Health Ethics

Course Syllabus

September 10 – December 3, 2014, 9:30 am – 12:30 pm
Location: Room 705, Health Sciences Building, 155 College Street

Alison Thompson
Course Coordinator
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Pharmacy
University of Toronto
E-mail: a.thompson@utoronto.ca
Telephone: 416-978-8824

Course Objectives

Through the seminar discussions of course readings and case studies and through written and oral presentations, students will develop:
1. Knowledge of major frameworks of ethics and the basic ethical concepts operative in public health ethics;
2. Familiarity with some of the most important ethical issues facing those engaged in public health research (health promotion, disease prevention, and epidemiological and biostatistical research);
3. The ability to identify, articulate, and analyze ethical issues arising from public health, and to formulate critical and well-reasoned ethical arguments;
4. Competence to participate in ethical reflection and decision-making as issues arise in public health research, practice and policy

Pre-requisites

The completion of first year of graduate studies or permission of Course Coordinators is required.

Course Format

The course will be structured around weekly 3-hour seminar sessions. The first half of the session will be devoted to a discussion of the assigned readings and the ethical issues that they raise. The second half of the session will be devoted to discussing and applying those issues to the assigned case for the session.

Three sessions (one mid-term and the last two sessions of the course) have been designated as opportunities for students to present and get feedback on their own individual case-based project.
Course Evaluation

Students will form groups and take turns leading the weekly discussion of the assigned readings. They will produce short "think pieces" (3-5 pages maximum) discussing that week's readings. These short pieces will count for 50% of the final grade.

In addition, students will be required to write a final paper (15-20 pages maximum) in which they will present a public health ethics case (for example, Walkerton water case, Kreever Commission on “tainted blood”, SARS, bathhouse closures, DNA “biobanking”), identify the ethical principles and issues involved and analyze those issues. The final paper will count for 50% of the final grade.

CLASS SCHEDULE

CLASS 1 - September 10

Introduction to Course

Required Background Reading:


Beauchamp, Dan and Steinbock, Bonnie (Eds.) (1999), New Ethics for the Public’s Health, Introduction (pp. 3-23). New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

CLASS 2 - September 17

Overview of Public Health Ethics

Instructor: Alison Thompson

Purpose:
To provide students with an overview of the field of public health and to introduce a proposed framework for public health ethics. To introduce the method of case analysis.

Questions for Consideration:
1. What are the distinguishing features of public health? What is its scope and frame of reference?
2. What might distinguish public health ethics from clinical bioethics? Does it matter? Why or why not?
3. What are some of the ethical issues you might expect to arise with respect to public health? What is it about these issues that make them ethical issues?

Case study - Asylum Seeking

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings** (not included in Reading Package):


**CLASS 3 - September 24**
Ethical Theory and Public Health Ethics: Doing Case Analysis

Instructor: Ross Upshur
Head of Division of Clinical Public Health
Dalla Lana School of Public Health
University of Toronto
E-mail: ross.upshur@utoronto.ca

Purpose:
To introduce central concepts from moral theory and ethics relevant to public health ethics.

Questions for Consideration:
1. How, if at all, is moral theory relevant to public health ethics?
2. What sorts of considerations play a role in justifying moral arguments in public health ethics?
3. Is public health ethics different from medical ethics?

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


Childress, JF; Faden, RR; Gaare, RD; Gostin, LO; Kahn, J; Bonnie, RJ; Kass, NE; Mastroianni, AC; Moreno, JD; Nieburg, P (2002) ‘Public health ethics: mapping the terrain’. The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics: 30(2):170-8.


**CLASS 4 – October 1**

**Individual Rights versus Public Protection: The Eternal Tensions of Public Health Ethics**

**Instructor: Ross Upshur**

**Purpose:**
To explore the tensions between individual rights and collective rights in public health. The specific focus will be on the control of communicable diseases. The seminar will use case studies and interactive consideration to achieve its objectives.

**Questions for Consideration:** Please see case study.

**Case Study:** The Case of Drug Resistant TB

**Required Readings:**


Selgelid Michael J. Ethics And Infectious Disease *Bioethics* 2005; 19: 272-289
http://medicine.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371/journal.pmed.0040050

South African MRC Statement on detention of patients with tuberculosis  

WHO Guidance on human rights and involuntary detention for XDR-TB control  
Esp links on Patient charter and good legislative practices

**Recommended Readings:**


**CLASS 5 - October 8**

**Framing Public Health Ethics Issues:**  
The Case of the Walkerton Water Tragedy

**Instructor: Alison Thompson**
**Purpose:**
To introduce the notion of “framing” as central to the critical public health ethics approach to case analysis. In this session, an ‘ecosystem approach’, a ‘human rights’ approach, a ‘political economy approach’ and a “social justice” approach are examined.

**Questions for Consideration:**
1. In what ways does the “framing” of a public health ethics issue shape the case analysis?
2. What, if any, are the normative and political implications of the “framing effect”?
3. What are the strengths and limitations of each approach looked at here?
4. What would an approach where water is deemed a “common good” look like?


**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Reading**


CLASS 6 - October 15

Public Health Research Ethics: The ‘research vs. surveillance’ distinction and implications for ethics review

Instructor: Jim Lavery
Associate Professor
Department of Public Health Sciences
University of Toronto
E-mail: laveryj@smh.ca

Purpose:
To explore the relationship between research and public health surveillance and quality assurance practices, and the implications for appropriate ethical review and oversight for each.

Questions for consideration:
1. Is “intent” an appropriate basis for distinction between research & surveillance activities?
2. Should public health practices, such as surveillance, disease outbreak investigations, and programme evaluation, be subjected to routine ethics review? If so, what is the appropriate authority and what is the appropriate mechanism for the review?
3. Does Taylor & Johnson’s distinction between “population-based research” & “clinical human subjects research” provide an avenue for progress in the research vs. surveillance debate?

Case Study: Investigating Infant Intussusceptions Concerning Rotavirus Vaccine

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:

Coughlin SS. Ethical issues in epidemiologic research and public health practice. Emerging Themes in Epidemiology 2006; 3: 16. (http://www.ete-online.com/content/3/1/16)


CLASS 7 - October 22

Mid-term Discussion of Student Topics

CLASS 8 – Oct 29

Public Health as Social Justice:
The Case of the Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine

Instructor: Alison Thompson

Purpose:
To explore the implications of the notion that public health has at is core the promotion of social justice, and to examine how unjust inequities in health ought to be addressed.

Questions for Consideration:
See case study

Case Study:


Required Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


**CLASS 9 - November 5**

**Public Health Researcher Reflexivity: Power and Oppression in Research**

**Instructor:** Stephanie Nixon

**Purpose:**

TBD

**Questions for consideration:**

**Case Study:**

**Required readings:**
Recommended readings:

CLASS 10 - November 12

Public Health Research Design

Instructor: Jim Lavery

**Purpose:**
To examine ethical issues arising from research designs and strategies employed in public health research

**Questions for Consideration:**
1. What are the key ethical tensions in cluster randomized trials?
2. Does the existing international guidance about standard of care in clinical trials apply to cluster randomized trials?
3. Who is (or should be) authorized to make decisions on behalf of the “cluster”?
4. What obligations to investigators and sponsors owe to intervention and control clusters at the conclusion of the trial?

**Case Study** – Teaching Mothers to provide home treatment of malaria in Tigray, Ethiopia

**Required Readings:**


Recommended Readings: (not included in Reading Package):


Buchanan DR, Miller FG. A public health perspective on research ethics. *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2006; 32: 729-33.


CLASS 11 - November 19

**Global Inequalities in Health**

**Instructor:** Solly Benatar  
Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Cape Town  
Professor, Dalla Lana School of Public Health and Joint Centre for Bioethics, University of Toronto  
E-mail: solly.benatar@utoronto.ca and solomon.benatar@uct.ac.za

**Purpose:**  
To provide an overview of the global burden of diseases and insight into the social, economic and structural forces that promote ever-widening disparities in health.

**Questions for consideration:**  
1. What ideological forces promote and perpetuate widening disparities in health & human rights?  
2. What potential future scenarios do you envision for global health?  
3. What could be done to improve global health?

**Case Study:**  
The Case of Ntombi: as an example of cross cultural considerations in international collaborative research in a world characterized by grotesque disparities
Required Reading:


Additional Resources:


CLASS 12 – November 26  Student presentations
CLASS 13 – December 3  Student presentations
December 15  Final papers due