

**Dalla Lana School of Public Health
Planetary/Global Health Ethics
Blended Reading Course: CHL7001H
(Combination of virtual classroom and online discussions) (0.5 FCE)
May/June 2020
(Tuesdays: 9-11 a.m.)**

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Guest Lecturers: Solly Benatar, Ross Upshur, Blake Poland, Stephanie Nixon, Alison Thompson

Course Overview

The state of population (public) health in many countries and indeed the state of health at a global level are of major current concern. Despite advances in medicine and medical care and massive growth of the global economy, health in the world is characterized by widening disparities within and between countries; lack of access to even basic health care for billions of people; the emergence of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, HIV and many other new infectious diseases such as COVID19; rising costs of commercialized health care; changing health demographics with ageing populations and massive increases in the incidence of obesity and diabetes and other non-communicable diseases. Climate change and environmental degradation related to human activity are exacerbating these adverse health trends. The causes of these health crises are multifactorial and complex and overlapping. The ideology lying behind the deliberately structured neoliberal global political economy is one central factor. Introspection and examination of our values and ways of life are required if we wish to understand what has led to these crises and their implications for health and medical research in the remainder of the 21st century. It is in this context, within which new waves of conflict over security and resources, food and water security issues, human deprivation and displacement of people will arguably be exacerbated, and epidemics of infectious diseases will continue to emerge, that questions arise about what *global/planetary health ethics* implies, whether this is needed as a distinct paradigm from the dominant inter-personal bioethics and public health ethics of today and how such a discourse and agenda could be pursued.

Questions that will be addressed include:

- What is the substance and scope of planetary and global health?
- How can we explain widening health disparities in the light of scientific, technological/medical advances and continued economic growth?
- What lies at the heart of disparities in health locally and globally?
- How do wealthy people and wealthy countries exacerbate poor health?
- What is the difference between inequalities and inequities in health?
- Should domestic or international inequalities/inequities concern us most?
- What does global health ethics imply?
- Is it a distinct paradigm from bioethics or public health ethics?
- Is there a need for global health ethics? For whom and for what purpose?
- What are the differences between the neo-liberal and the Human Rights/Social Justice approaches to global health?
- What does the state of world health tell us about us, and what we value?

This course will confront these questions from empirical and normative perspectives. Through attention to key concepts and critical issues in the evolving field of global/planetary health ethics it will also explore the centrality of values to a sustained and effective confrontation of global health inequalities. These sessions will propose an ethics discourse sensitive to inequalities in the determinants of health within and across national borders and also to the societal power structures that lie behind and aggravate these disparities. The course will aim to cultivate 'a global/planetary state of mind' and an ethical framework that expands the bounds of rights, responsibilities, duties and citizenship across different cultures and contexts in a profoundly interdependent & threatened world.

Course goals:

- To explore dimensions of local/ global social/societal forces shaping population health and health inequity
- To introduce the field of Global Health Ethics
- To analyze ethical challenges raised by a range of global/planetary health dilemmas
- To begin to cultivate a global/planetary state of mind

Educational Objectives:

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the substance and scope of 'global/planetary health' as distinct from international health
- Discuss the dimensions of forces shaping global/planetary health
- Identify the field of global/planetary health ethics
- Interrogate the normative dimensions of global/planetary health ethics
- Analyze ethical challenges raised by many critical global health issues

Students will also have deeper insights the following questions:

- Who is responsible for global/planetary health?
- How could this responsibility be justified?
- How are the state of global/planetary health and challenges to improving this linked to the global political economy and to the concepts of human rights and social justice?
- What should/could be done to alter the balance of forces affecting GH?
- Do we have the intellectual and material resources to reverse current trends and make significant progress towards improved health for all?
- What is the likelihood that we will use this potential?
- Could we conceptualize health as a form of the 'global commons'?
- How could we begin to change the paradigm within which we live and act?