

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
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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.
- Bayer R. Ethics and infectious disease control: STDs, HIV, TB. In: Jennings B, Kahn J, Mastroianni A, Parker LS (Eds). *Ethics and Public Health: Model Curriculum*. Association of Schools of Public Health. 2003.

1/18 Traditions and values in public health

- Values and beliefs inherent in the public health perspective
- Differentiating PH ethics from medical ethics

Readings:

- Gostin LO. Tradition, Profession, and Values in Public Health. In: Jennings B, Kahn J, Mastroianni A, Parker LS (Eds). *Ethics and Public Health: Model Curriculum*. Association of Schools of Public Health. 2003.
- Kass NE. An Ethics Framework for Public Health. *Am J Public Health* 2001;91:1776-82.
- 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:

- Lebacqz K. *Six Theories of Justice*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986. Chapter 1, The Utilitarian Challenge: John Stuart Mill. Pages 15-32.
- Lebacqz K. *Six Theories of Justice*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986. Chapter 4, A Catholic Response: The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, pages 66-82.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Online at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>.
- Beauchamp, DE. Public Health as Social Justice In: Beauchamp DE, Steinbock B. *New Ethics for the Public's Health*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

2/1 Ethical analysis and decision-making

- Identifying an ethical issue
- Public Health Code of Ethics
- Steps for analyzing an ethical problem

Readings

- Thomas JC, Sage M, Dillenberg J, Guillory VJ. A code of ethics for public health. *Am J Public Health* 2002; 92:1057-9.
- Thomas JC, Zuiker E, Millikan R, Rockhill B. Genomics and public health ethics. *Am J Public Health* 2005 (in press).
- Roberts MJ, Reich MR. Ethical analysis in public health. *Lancet* 2002;359:1055-9.

- Public Health Leadership Society , The Public Health Code of Ethics

2/8 **Public health law**

- Legal mandates of public health
- The relationship between law and ethics

Readings:

- Gostin, L. Public Health Law: Power, Duty, Restraint. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2001; Chapter 1, A theory and definition of public health law, pages 3-24.

2/15 **Social determinants of health**

- Ecological perspective
- Social epidemiology and its relation to public health ethics

Readings:

- Ruger JP Ethics of the social determinants of health. Lancet 2004;364:1092-7.

2/22 **Power, participation, and disparities**

- The legacy of the Tuskegee syphilis study
- Ethics and equity in health

Readings:

- King ML. Letter from Birmingham Jail. Online at <http://www.nobelprizes.com/nobel/peace/MLK-jail.html>.
- Cooke B, Kothari U. The case for participation as tyranny. In: Cooke B, Kothari U (Eds). Participation: The New Tyranny? New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001, pages 1-15.
- Powers M, Faden R. Racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare: An ethical analysis of when and how they matter. In: Smedley BD, Stith AY, Nelson AR, editors. Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2002.

3/1 **Research abuses**

- The legacy of the Tuskegee syphilis study

Readings:

- Parker LA, Alvarez HK. The Legacy of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. In: Jennings B, Kahn J, Mastroianni A, Parker LS (Eds). Ethics and Public Health: Model Curriculum. Association of Schools of Public Health. 2003.
- CDC web description of the Tuskegee study. Online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/od/tuskegee/time.htm>.

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
- Thomas JC. Research ethics in public health. In: Jennings B, Kahn J, Mastroianni A, Parker LS (Eds). Ethics and Public Health: Model Curriculum. Association of Schools of Public Health. 2003.

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:

- Marshall PA. Public health research and practice in international settings: Special ethical concerns. In: Jennings B, Kahn J, Mastroianni A, Parker LS (Eds). *Ethics and Public Health: Model Curriculum*. Association of Schools of Public Health. 2003.
- MacQueen KM. Ethical challenges in international HIV prevention research. *Accountability in Research* 2004;11:49-61.

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:

- McMichael T. Global environmental change: overstepping limits. In: McMichael T. *Human Frontiers, Environments and Disease: Past Patterns, Uncertain Futures*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001, (pages 283-317).
- Shrader-Frechette, K. Ethical issues in environmental and occupational health. In: Jennings B, Kahn J, Mastroianni A, Parker LS (Eds). *Ethics and Public Health: Model Curriculum*. Association of Schools of Public Health. 2003.

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.
- Garland M, Stull J. Public health and health system reform: Access, priority setting, and allocation of resources. In: Jennings B, Kahn J, Mastroianni A, Parker LS (Eds). *Ethics and Public Health: Model Curriculum*. Association of Schools of Public Health. 2003.

4/26 **Professional Ethics**

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

Readings:

- Weed DL, Mink PJ. Roles and responsibilities of epidemiologists. *Ann Epidemiol* 2002;12:67-72