PHSC 170  Health Care and Public Health in El Salvador

Course description
This course will focus on health care and public health in El Salvador. The course will examine key health indicators and patterns seen in El Salvador, and their connections with behavioral, economic, social, environmental, and political factors. Public health interventions and policies that may improve community health will be explored, as will the role of community organizing and empowerment for achieving positive health outcomes and social justice. Cultural competence and humility will be developed as students undertake an intensive clinical practicum that integrates academic study with direct immersion with people living and working in poor communities.

Academic Course Objectives
1.1. Identify key data sources and health indicators that can be used for understanding population health in a low-income country such as El Salvador.
1.2. Recognize and analyze complex social and environmental determinants of health, and how they contribute to individual health outcomes, and health disparities at the population level.
1.3. Analyze the effectiveness of medical and public health intervention strategies on health outcomes in impacted or at-risk populations in El Salvador.
1.4. Understand basic principles associated with improving population health through community organizing and empowerment.
1.5. Apply concepts learned in class by working with an underserved, at-risk population in a Salvadoran community health clinic.

Experiential Learning for Social Justice Course Objectives
2.1. Recognize the benefits of life-long responsible citizenship and civic engagement in personal and professional activities. (Civic Life)
2.2. Interact appropriately, sensitively, and self-critically with people in the communities in which they work and appreciate the formal and informal knowledge, wisdom, and skills that individuals in these communities possess. (Perspective)
2.3. Recognize, analyze, and understand the social reality and injustices in contemporary society, including recognizing the relative privilege or marginalization of their own and other groups. (Social Justice)
2.4. Make vocational choices in light of both their greatest gifts and the world’s greatest needs. (Civic Engagement)

Readings
The following books will be used extensively:
- Additional readings, such as the specific journal articles listed in the schedule, will be provided as PDF’s or printed copies

Disability Accommodation Policy
To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must be registered with Disabilities Resources, located in Benson, room 216. If you would like to register with Disabilities Resources, please visit their office in Benson 216 or call at 408-554-4109. You will need to register and provide professional documentation of a disability prior to receiving academic accommodations. Please make sure to do this in advance of arriving in El Salvador for the summer program, to allow time for such accommodations to be arranged.
Overview of course schedule

- PHSC 170 will meet in the classroom two afternoons per week, for two hours each meeting. Classroom lectures and discussions will be led by Dr. Annel.
- In addition, students will participate in a 1 hour weekly reflection session with Kevin and Trena Yonkers-Talz, which will focus on digesting and discussing the Salvadoran reality that they are experiencing through their praxis sites.
- There will also be a 1.5 hour seminar session once per week with guest speakers who will discuss case studies, projects, and their specific work in medicine or public health in El Salvador.
- Finally, all students will also participate in two extended field trips to explore health-related projects in villages and rural areas outside of San Salvador. A detailed schedule of all events will be provided at the start of the summer session.

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics for classroom sessions</th>
<th>Readings/assignments</th>
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| Week 1 | Epidemiological profile of El Salvador – major health issues, population structure, sociocultural-economic-environmental factors  
Introductions to praxis experience and sites  
Medical interviews and culturally appropriate questions and topics for practica. | Farmer Chapter 1: Introduction: A Biosoical Approach to Global Health  

Wednesday evening reflection with Kevin and Trena: Readings from Palmer TBA

Friday Seminar Speaker: Rick Jones (Regional Director, Catholic Relief Services)

Weekend field trip: Visit to Santa Marta (Morizon province) guided by Geoff Gusoff of Doctors for Global Health. DGH support several community-based health-related projects in and around Santa Marta, a remote community near the Honduran border that was severely impacted by the Salvadoran civil war.

| Week 2 | The Salvadoran health system  
Poverty, health, and human rights - the Salvadoran context | Farmer, Chapter 4: Health for All? Competing Theories and Geopolitics  
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<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Women and children’s health issues in El Salvador</th>
<th>Violence as a public health issue in El Salvador</th>
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<td>Wednesday evening reflection with Kevin and Trena:</td>
<td>Readings from Palmer TBA; Farmer, Chapter 9: Values and Global Health</td>
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<td>Friday seminar:</td>
<td>Guest speaker from UN Development Program</td>
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<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Non-communicable diseases – diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer</th>
<th>Environmental health issues</th>
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Praxis experience
Each student will participate in an intensive practicum at a community health clinic, where they will spend at least 5 hours per day, Mon-Fri. Examples of placements are described below. The praxis experience allows for direct observation of health issues prevalent in El Salvador, and will provide abundant opportunities for students to interact with Salvadoran health care and public health professionals as they go about their jobs, as well as patients and community members. Transportation to and from praxis site will be provided, and students will be extensively briefed on safety issues. Every student will have an assigned mentor at the praxis site. Discussion and reflection on the praxis experience will be integrated into the PHSC 170 course and the overall summer program at all levels.

Example 1. Fundacion de Desarrollo Social
Fundacion de Desarrollo Social is a local NGO located within walking distance of the Casa. The foundation has a variety of different health care projects, including a medical clinic, pharmacy, and dentist office. At Fundacion de Desarrollo, patients have access to primary care, as well as specialists in areas such as physical therapy, gynecology and gastrology. Patients receive valuable and necessary care at an affordable price. About 350 people visit and attend the clinic every day. Twelve doctors attend the patients as well as a staff who works in the laboratory. The clinic staff also conducts medical brigades on a weekly basis. In addition, social workers travel to rural areas to provide outreach programs to moms, children, and youth.

Role of Casa Student: Students experience a small private clinic, and spend time in the clinic, pharmacy and laboratory, as well as accompanying the staff on community visits and outreach. Students will also help teach English to a small group of doctors, nurses and clinic staff.

Example 2. La Chacra
La Chacra is a very poor, urban community located just 5 minutes from the center of San Salvador. The parish, Maria Madre de los Pobres, is extremely active in offering services to the community. The parish is run by a group of very committed and active lay people who serve on the parish council. 53 people are employed through the parish and offer a variety of services including a medical clinic, laboratory, pharmacy, and eye clinic. The clinic was originally founded by Doctors Without Borders in 1987 and is now run completely by the parish.

Role of Casa student: Students will rotate between observing regular check-ups and consultations, the laboratory clinic, and the dental clinic. Students will also visit patients in their homes with a doctor or health promoter.

Assessment - The course grade will be determined through several assignments:

1. Weekly journal entries (10% of final grade)
Each week, students will reflect on their experiences at the praxis sites and integrate information discussed in class. Journal entries are less structured than the writing assignments (detailed below), but will be essential for processing thoughts, emotions, and reactions to your experiences at the praxis sites; increasing awareness of self in relation to others different social contexts in El Salvador; and preparing for in-class discussion and the writing assignments. Optional guiding questions will be provided weekly to facilitate written reflection in journals, but the format will be relatively open-ended.

2. **Writing assignment #1 – Praxis host organization description** (10% of final grade)
The praxis component in this course gives you the opportunity to work directly with a local community health organization that serves a disadvantaged or underserved population in the San Salvador area. Community health organizations are important for responding effectively to health-related issues by protecting and promoting the health of a community and its members.

Describe various characteristics of your praxis site, including information on its size (number of staff and clients), location, history, mission/objectives, services provided, organizational structure, staff, funding sources, and partnerships. Explain how practices and aspects of the organization encourage cultural competence and humility. Discuss effective strategies to interact with community members that you learned during orientation, in classes (e.g. Spanish language course taken concurrently), and from staff members, and examples of how you have put these strategies into action.

Responses should be approximately 3-4 pages long, typed, and double-spaced.

3. **Writing assignment #2 – Praxis site community description** (10% of final grade)
Understanding the unique characteristics of a community is essential for addressing health issues and informing appropriate and culturally-sensitive health promotion efforts. Describe key characteristics of your praxis site community, with particular attention to the following areas:

- Sociodemographic characteristics
  - Health needs and disease risk/prevalence (if known)
  - Barriers or limitations to receiving health care or practicing healthy behaviors
- Common practices (e.g., language, activities, behaviors, traditions)
- Culture (e.g., social norms, practices, beliefs, values, religion)
- Influence (e.g., how members organize, influence, and communicate with each other)
- Strengths, assets, and social capital of the community

Discuss how risk for certain diseases is disproportionately represented in your praxis community in comparison to other less marginalized communities. What are some upstream social determinants and underlying "fundamental causes" (Phelan, et al. 2010) driving these health inequalities? How does this compare to your experience growing up and as a student at Santa Clara University?

Responses should be approximately 5-6 pages long, typed, and double-spaced.

4. **Writing assignment #3 – Community-based learning final paper** (30% of final grade)
The final paper will consist of three portions, outlined in detail below. Responses should be no more than 10 pages long, typed, and double-spaced.
Discuss how your perspective on your praxis site community evolved and how you connected with community members (including staff members) over the course of the quarter.

How did your perspective on your community change or develop over time? How were you able to communicate, interact, and connect with members during your praxis experience? What approaches did you find most effective for engaging with community members in culturally appropriate and sensitive manner? What insight, knowledge, wisdom, and/or skills did you gain from interacting with community and staff members?

Reflect on how your experience helped identify any personal strengths and interests that can be used to inform future life choices.

What did you learn about your personal strengths, weaknesses, skills, interests, and/or talents with regards to public and community health? How would you use this information to make future educational and/or vocational choices?

Design a health intervention/program for your praxis site community.

The intervention can expand upon pre-existing activities you have observed or be based on a new idea/approach. Justify why you think the intervention would be important and beneficial for the community and briefly describe how the intervention would be implemented. In designing the intervention, take into account unique assets and strengths of your praxis site community; implement practices that ensure cultural competence and humility; and integrate community building approaches to facilitate sustainability of the intervention.

5. Writing assignment #4 - Opinion editorial (10% of final grade)

In line with the phrase, "Think globally, act locally", the perspectives and insight gained from your experiences in El Salvador can be applied to public health issues in the U.S. and local communities. Choose one specific public health issue or policy in the U.S. (e.g., community health promoters; a community maternal child health program; involving male partners in reproductive health dialogue; health insurance coverage, etc.) and use your experiences in El Salvador to write an opinion editorial on that topic. Your topic can address a larger national public health issue or can focus on a local marginalized or underserved community. Your opinion editorial should clearly state your stance on a specific public health issue; have a compelling introduction; have a thesis statement; include supporting evidence and examples (e.g., data, expert testimony, personal experience); make specific recommendations; and be no more than 800 words.

6. Engaged Participation (30% of final grade)

The remainder of the course grade will be based on an evaluation by the instructors of the student’s engagement and meaningful participation in all aspects of the course, which will be based in part on consultation with mentor(s) at the praxis site.

Academic Integrity Policy

Santa Clara University is committed to academic excellence and integrity. Students are expected to do their own work, and to cite any sources they use. A student who is guilty of a dishonest act in an examination, paper, or other work required for this course, or who assists others in such an act, may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a grade of “F” for the course. In addition, a student found guilty of a dishonest act may be subject to sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the University, as a result of the student judicial process as described in the Student Handbook.