

**Public Health and the Liberal Arts
Interdisciplinary Studies 3001**

David Hecht

T/Th 8:30-9:55, Th (6:30-9:30)

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:00-4:00 (and by appointment)

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OVERVIEW

Focuses on the study of health from a wide array of disciplinary perspectives—across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Guest lectures from Bowdoin faculty and visiting scholars form the core of the class; possible topics include epidemiology, medical ethics, environmental health, public policy, disability, nutrition, pharmaceuticals, health inequalities, and mental illness—as well as the history, globalization, and literary representations of health. Student work will center on group & independent research that aims to bring a variety of perspectives to health issues, as well as to provide practice on communicating specific expertise to non-specialist audiences.

READING

The syllabus contains readings for a few of the classes; I will assign additional reading based on consultation with individual guest speakers. I will try to have all readings on Blackboard a week before the class session.

GRADING

Paper: 20%

Blog: 10%

Independent Project 50%

Attendance and Participation: 20%

I will provide more information about each of these as the semester progresses. In brief, however, the *paper* will be a 3-4 page assignment in which each person will relate something from their own academic (or work) experience in public health; these papers will go through a revision process both in and out of class. The *blog* will be a way of keeping a running dialogue going online as well as in class, particularly about the speaker series. The *independent project* will be a final research project in which you are encouraged to do something other than a traditional paper – such as the curriculum project, a short film, or one of the other ideas we discussed over lunch/dinner last semester. The *Attendance and Participation* grade measures active involvement in all aspects of the course, including class discussions. All work must be turned in to pass the class.

In addition, I will ask everyone to complete a short (1-2 page) reflection on the course and the overall public health initiative.

Cell Phones, Laptops, etc.

Please be sure to turn off cell phones during class – no calls, emails, texting, etc. Also, since laptops, iphones, and other electronics can be distracting for discussion, please do not use them during class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Overview of speakers and major course assignments; it is likely to change slightly.
Readings marked with ** can be found on e-reserve/Blackboard.

WEEK 1

January 24: Introduction & course planning
January 26: **Nikolas Rose, "The Politics of Life Itself."

Community Project Proposals due 1/31

WEEK 2

January 31: ** Adele E. Clarke et al., "Technoscientific Transformations of Health, Illness, and U.S. Biomedicine."

February 2: *Guest Lecture: Ann Kibbie* (English)

Short paper drafts due, 2/6

WEEK 3

February 7: *Guest Lecture: Nancy Riley* (Sociology)
February 9: Draft Workshop

Speaker series: Susan Reverby (Wellesley College) – 2/9 at 7:30 pm. Searles 315.
Escaping Melodrama: A Cautionary Tale of the Stories of the Infamous Research Studies in Tuskegee and Guatemala.

Draft comments due, 2/13

WEEK 4

February 14: *Guest Lecture: Hannah Reese* (Psychology)
February 16: No class

Speaker Series: Ellen Baxter (Broadway Housing Communities) – Thurs., 2/16 at 7:30 pm. Searles 315.
Social Justice Advocacy in NYC: Housing, Education, and Art

Revisions due, 2/20

WEEK 5

February 21: Workshop: Meredith McCarroll (Director Writing and Rhetoric)*
February 23: Karen Amstutz (Magellan Health)

Speaker Series: Khiara Bridges (Boston University) – Friday, 2/24 at 3:00 p.m. Searles 315.
The Reproductive Justice Framework

WEEK 6

February 28: No Class
March 2: Presentations

Evening: Presentations

WEEK 7

March 7: *Guest speaker: Mary Lou Zeeman* (Math)
March 9: No Class

Project Proposals due, 3/10

WEEK 8

March 28: *Guest Lecture: Dana Gold* (whistleblower.org)
March 30: No class

Speaker Series: Reproductive Justice Week event – Thurs., 3/31 at 7:30 p.m. Searles 315.
Discussion with Maron Sorenson (Government).

WEEK 9

April 4: *Guest Lecture: Dharni Vasudevan* (Chemistry, Environmental Studies)*
April 6: No Class

Speaker Series: Nicholas King (McGill University) – Thurs., 4/6 at 7:30 p.m. Searles 315.
“Public Health in the ‘Post-Truth’ Era.”

WEEK 10

April 11: *Guest Lecture: Matthew Klingle* (Environmental Studies & History)
April 13: *Guest Lecture: Margaret Boyle* (Romance Languages and Literatures)

Evening: Presentations – possible. (See note at the end.)

WEEK 11

April 18: **Stephen T. Ziliak and Deirdre N. McCloskey, *The Cult of Statistical Significance* (excerpts).
April 20: No Class

Speaker series: **Joseph Valente** (SUNY-Buffalo) – Thurs., 4/20 at 7:30 p.m. Searles 315.
Talk on literature and disability – title TBA

WEEK 12

April 25: *Guest lecturer: Christy Shake* (calvinsstory.com)
April 27: Presentations – possible. (See note at the end.)

WEEK 13

May 2: Presentations – possible. (See note at the end.)

May 4: Presentations – possible. (See note at the end.)

Speaker series: **Johanna Crane** (University of Washington/Bothell) – Thurs., 5/4 at 7:30 p.m. Searles 315.
Risk, Trust, and Control in Global Health Partnerships

WEEK 14

May 9: Conclusion

Final Projects due, 5/18

NOTE: There are four time slots during April and early May listed as “Presentations – possible.” We will not be using all of these time slots, and there will be no class during the unused ones. I’ve reserved them all for the moment, since we have yet to come to a decision as a class on when it makes sense to have them.