Human Rights, Social Medicine, and the Physician

Syllabus: Spring 2007 Medicine Elective MEDI 645
Emory University School of Medicine

“Medicine is inherently a social science, and politics is medicine in the most profound sense.”
Rudolf Virchow, prominent 19th c. pathologist

Die Medicinische Reform, 1848

This course will explore central issues and key questions in the historical practice of social medicine, as well as the emerging field of human rights and health. How do social forces become embodied as pathologies? What are pressing ethical considerations in the practice of contemporary medicine? How do political, economic, and historic trends influence the distribution of disease among different populations? How will new trends in the organization of health care affect the most vulnerable members of society? We will also explore the intersection between health and human rights, and the central tenets of this emerging field of praxis. What is the connection between the practice of medicine and the promotion of human rights? Are they complimentary, or are they mutually exclusive?

Improved hygiene, better housing, high-tech diagnostic methods, and new drugs and vaccines have enabled industrialized countries to drastically reduce the prevalence of killer infections, including tuberculosis, polio, and smallpox. Today, however, infectious diseases remain a leading cause of death in the world, and the incidences of many of these infections are once again on the rise. Drug-resistance among common infections is becoming an increasing cause of concern. The optimism of a quarter century ago has been tempered by a more humble and cautious view that is just beginning to recognize close linkages between disease burdens, violations of social and economic rights, and the forces of globalization in our rapidly changing world. This interdisciplinary course uncovers these linkages by integrating local, national and international perspectives to explore the interaction of social forces, human rights, and health.

This course will be taught by a team of physicians and epidemiologists engaged in the practice of health & human rights and social medicine in United States, with extensive experience of social and economic effects on health in developing countries.

Course Faculty:
Timothy H. Holtz, MD, MPH, FACP (Course Director)
Emory Univ School of Medicine, Rollins SPH, CDC

Invited lecturers:
Jason Prystowsky, MD  Emergency Medicine Attending/PhD candidate
Suzanne Merlis  Independent Clinical Psychologist
Dabney Evans, MPH, CHES  Instructor, Rollins School of Public Health
Camara Jones, MD, MPH, PhD  Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Henry Kahn, MD  Professor Emeritus of Family-Preventive Medicine, Emory
Carlos del Rio, MD  Chief of Medicine, Grady Hospital
Aun Lor, MPH  Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Basia Tomczyk, RN, PhD  Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Course organization and requirements:
The course will meet on Monday afternoons from 4:30-6:50 pm in WHSCAB 118D. There is a computer and LCD projector in the room. There will be no class on January 15th, January 29th, and March 5th. Each class period will consist of 1.5 hours of lecture and one hour of discussion. Students are expected to prepare for each class by reading all required materials. In addition, students are encouraged to read optional materials if time allows. Films relevant to each week’s topic can be borrowed from the course director as needed. We would like to schedule one “movie night” to screen and discuss a film with a social medicine message.

Educational Objectives:
At the end of this course, students will:
1. Have an understanding of the historical roots of social medicine, and how it is practiced today.
2. Be able to articulate the links between human rights and health, and be able to articulate the synergistic relationship between addressing human rights and achieving the highest attainable standard of health.
3. Be able to analyze the social and economic forces that shape infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, and be able to think critically about how to address these diseases in resource poor settings.
4. Begin developing skills about how to recognize, diagnose, and evaluate survivors of torture and trauma in the clinical setting.
5. Be able to think critically about structural factors that prohibit achieving the highest attainable standard of health for the majority of the world’s people.

Evaluation in the course are based upon three criteria:
1. Engaged class participation.
3. Attendance through the semester.

Each student will prepare a short paper (7-8 pages) on a topic of relevance to the course’s central themes. The final paper should include a critical review of the relevant literature, integrating resources and data from the social and biological sciences to:
1. Describe a human rights problem relevant to physicians
2. Present an analysis of the problem
3. Formulate a plan of action how to address this human rights issue as a physician or group of health care professionals

The paper can be part of a more extensive research program, and may be directed toward ongoing or future research projects of relevance. Students are encouraged to meet individually with course faculty to discuss paper topics. The paper could be combined with the skill building exercise if an appropriate topic is chosen.

The skill building exercise and presentation will be something planned and carried out by individual students or a group of students. One example could be a lobbying trip to a state legislator, which would include doing background research on a topic such as the medically uninsured in Georgia and determining the impact of legislation that is being proposed to ameliorate it. Another exercise could include doing an asylum interview, exam, and writing an affidavit under the supervision of an attending physician, or interviewing medical staff to determine their views on race and health.
Course readings:

Required books, available in paperback:

Mann J, Gruskin S, Grodin M, and G Annas, eds.

Amnesty International

Farmer, Paul

Recommended reading:

Fadiman, Anne

Gruskin S, Grodin M, Annas G, Marks S, eds.

Hilfiker, David
1990  *Not All of Us Are Saints: A Doctor's Journey With the Poor.* New York.

Kidder, Tracy

Kozol, Jonathan

Reading packet:

A CD-ROM reference of readings has been prepared and will be provided to students who are registered in the course. Required and recommended books can be found at local area bookstores or web-based bookstores. If you have questions regarding the course or readings, please contact the course director.
Course Schedule and Readings:

I. Historical Underpinnings of Social Medicine
Holtz

January 8

Readings:


Optional readings provided on CD:


Film:

II. The Global Practice of Torture and the Role of the Physician

Prystowsky, Merlis

January 22

Readings:


Please also try to read some of these articles on torture and the role of medical professionals, both pre- and post-Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal and abuses uncovered at Guantánamo:

- New Yorker stories by Seymour Hersh (3 total) which broke the story about abuses in Abu Ghraib, plus commentary by David Remnick (New Yorker) and Susan Sontag (NYT Magazine)
- Powerpoint slides of abuse in Abu Ghraib downloaded from Washington Post

Optional readings about torture provided on CD:


Asylum and care of survivors:

- Eisenman D, Keller A, Kim G. Survivors of torture in a general medical setting: how often have patients been tortured, and how often is it missed? *West J Med* 2000;172:301-304.

Trauma and mental health:


Involvement of physicians:


Film:
- *Judgement at Nuremberg*, with Max Schell, 1961
- *Moolaadé*, Directed by Ousmane Sembene, 2004
III. Health and Human Rights: the New Social Medicine?

Readings:

- Other readings provided on CD:
  - Writing group. Call to action on the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. *JAMA* 1998;280:462-464.

Film:

IV. Confronting Institutionalized Racism: Race and Disparities in Health in the US

Jones
February 12

Readings:


Optional readings provided on CD:


Film:

- *King Leopold's Ghost*, 2006
- *Amazing Grace*, 2007
V. The Right to Health: Experiences with Local Advocacy for Universal Health Care Insurance

Kahn

February 19

Readings:

Optional readings provided on CD:

Comparative health system readings provided on CD:

Film:
- Damaged Care, Directed by Harry Winer, with Laura Dern, Adam Arkin, and Diane Ladd, 2002.
VI. Plagues of Poverty: The Re-emergence of Infectious Disease in the Modern Era

Holtz

February 26

Readings:


Optional TB readings provided on CD:


Other readings provided on CD:

- MSF website: [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)
- MSF Access to Essential Medicines campaign: [www.accessmed-msf.org/index.htm](http://www.accessmed-msf.org/index.htm)

Film:

- *Your Money or Your Life*, Film by Médecins Sans Frontières, 2002.
VII. HIV: Equity and Human Rights in Resource Poor Settings

del Rio          March 12

Readings:


Optional readings from Partners in Health:

- Behforouz HL, Farmer PE, Mukherjee JS. From directly observed therapy to accompagnateurs: enhancing AIDS treatment outcomes in Haiti and in Boston. *CID* 2004;38:S429-S436.
- Mukherjee JS. The International AIDS Conferences from Vancouver to Bangkok: How far have we come in eight years? *Pan Am J Public Health* 2004;16:75-77.

Optional readings provided on CD:

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Film:
- *3 Needles*, 2006
VIII. Militarism, War, and Health

Readings:


Optional readings on war provided on CD:


Embargoes:

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**Landmines:**

**Nuclear war:**

**Arms trade:**

**Post-conflict setting:**


Waldman RJ. Public health in times of war and famine: What can be done? What should be done? *JAMA* 2001;286:588-590.

**Film:**

- *Long Night’s Journey into Day*, Directed by Deborah Hoffman and Frances Reid, with supporting South African cast, 2000
IX. Sickness and Wealth: The Political Economy of Global Human Rights Abuses
Holtz March 26

Readings:

Optional readings provided on CD:

Film:
- Darwin’s Nightmare
- Black Gold, 2006
- Bamako, 2006
X. Physicians, Refugee Health, and Humanitarian Assistance
Tomczyk  April 2
Readings:


Other readings provided on CD:


Health of humanitarian aid workers:


Film:

XI. Social Responsibility of Health Professionals

Holtz

Readings:

- Sidel VW. The social responsibilities of health professionals: lessons from their role in Nazi Germany. *JAMA* 1996;276(20):1679-1681.
- Sidel VW. Asklepios and Zeus. *Harvard Medical School Alumni Bulletin* 1982;Fall:30-32.

Optional readings provided on CD:


Peace and health:


Film:

- *Carandiru*, Directed by Hector Babenco, 2004

XII. Presentations by students – 1

April 16

Students from the class will present the results of their research projects.
Important topics we didn’t have time for

### Addressing Social Suffering in the Individual and Community

**TBD**

**Readings:**

### Women’s health and human rights

**TBD**

**Readings:**

Optional readings provided on CD:

**Film:**

### Bioterrorism and the Reconfiguration of the US Health Care System

**TBD**

**Unknown**

#### Readings:


Social Medicine in Latin America
TBD

Readings:


The Role of Social Epidemiology
To be determined

Readings:

Poole C, Rothman KJ. Our conscientious objection to the epidemiology wars. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 1998;52:613-614.


**Inequities, Globalization, and Macroeconomics**

**To be determined**

**Unknown**

Readings:

- Feacham RGA. Globalisation is good for your health, mostly. *BMJ* 2001;323:504-506.
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