Public health seeks to understand, and also to protect and improve, health at the level of a community or population. Communities make decisions and allocate resources that, intentionally or not, fundamentally shape human life. For example, great reductions in sickness and early death have come from social interventions with relatively low financial cost, such as physically separating drinking water from sewage, or distributing aspirin, condoms, mosquito nets, vaccines or soap, or sharing new ideas about life’s possibilities. The way a society is organized affects the way that social and scientific knowledge is distributed within it; access to that knowledge shapes health at the individual level. At its heart, the study of public health focuses on questions about relationships between science and society, and between reality and possibility: what effective public health policy is and how we can measure its effectiveness; what the relationship is, and ought to be, between research and policy; how we reconcile important moral and economic claims, or balance other values that compete with maximizing health; what counts as disease, over time and among cultures; how we think about cause and responsibility; what constitutes a healthy environment; how our fundamental beliefs determine our approaches to health decisions; and how such decisions ought to be made.

Requirements
Application to the concentration must be completed in the Spring of sophomore year. Applications are due during pre-registration. Application materials can be obtained on the public health website public-health.williams.edu by early April or by e-mailing the chair of the program. Due to excess demand for the concentration, applicants are not guaranteed admittance to the program. Depending on availability, a few students may be admitted in the Spring of Junior year with a mid-April deadline.

All students wishing to pursue the Area of Concentration should take this course early in their careers, preferably sophomore year. Students may petition the advisory committee to substitute a course taken in a study-abroad program focused on global health, providing that the course is equivalent in scope. However, students who plan to take advantage of this option should have taken at least two other courses from among the electives by the end of their sophomore year, and should recognize that those who lack a foundation in the core issues of the field may find it more challenging to prepare their proposal for admission to the concentration.

Statistics
Statistical analysis is at the heart of the quantitative tools necessary to study the health of populations. One course in statistics from the list below is required of all concentrators.

Elective Courses
Concentrators must take at least three electives, with at least two different prefixes, from the list below. Elective courses are grouped by category, but these clusters are not meant to constrain students to a single “track” within the program. Instead, each student is free to determine, with the guidance of an advisory committee member(s), a set of electives that provides an intellectually coherent exploration of their particular areas of interest within the field of public health. In choosing electives, students should consider the balance of breadth versus depth that will allow them to gain theoretical and methodological sophistication in one or more areas. Students may not substitute an independent study for any of these electives. Winter Study courses may not be counted towards the electives.

Experiential Component
Because many public health challenges cannot be fully appreciated until one has hands-on experience with real communities and actual populations, each concentrator must have at least one relevant field-based educational experience with a research component. This requirement may be met through participation in an approved study abroad program (see below), one of the Winter study courses marked with an asterisk, a WS99 project, or a not-for-credit summer or academic-year internship. In every case, the advisory committee must approve the project in advance. Please note that experiential component should address both the “public” and “health” in public health. Projects that center on clinical or lab or that do not have a meaningful health component will generally not satisfy the PH experiential requirement.

PHLH 402 (S) Senior Seminar in Public Health
The capstone seminar provides concentrators with the opportunity to reflect upon and synthesize their experiential learning in the context of understanding gained from a cohesive set of elective courses, and through the lens of a variety of intellectual and disciplinary frameworks. A second goal is to give concentrators experience working in a multi-disciplinary team to address a real-world, and in many cases very daunting, public health problem. Students will read, discuss, and compose written reflections on primary source empirical papers addressing a range of issues and disciplines in the field of public health. For example, topics may include the social determinants of health, environmental health risks, and access to health care. Students will also be divided into three or four research teams to investigate a contemporary real-life issue in public health by designing a study; collecting and analyzing data; and disseminating findings by written report and formal oral presentation to the public health advisory committee faculty. The capstone course is required of all concentrators, but may be opened to other students with relevant experience at the discretion of the instructor and the advisory committee, if space permits.

Written Proposal

To be considered for admission to the Area of Concentration in Public Health, students must submit a written statement describing the portfolio of courses, study abroad, and experiential learning component(s) they intend to pursue. In this proposal, candidates for the concentration should describe their intellectual goals, and if relevant, how these relate to their professional goals. A fundamental purpose of the proposal requirement is to encourage the student to consider concretely how s/he will engage with socio-cultural, behavioral, policy, and/or biomedical aspects of population health. To this end, students should address whether a methodological or disciplinary emphasis ties their chosen courses together, and how the intended experiential component will relate to this set of questions. This proposal is due by the end of course registration period in the spring of the sophomore year, and should be prepared in consultation with a member of the advisory committee. Concentrators are required to revisit and update their proposal prior to registration in the spring of the junior year, and to provide documentation of their internship experience both prospectively and retrospectively. Please note electives will not be offered every year. Students should check the course catalog as they considering possible electives.

PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

CHIN 253 / COMP 254 / WGSS 255 SEM "Illness" in Modern and Contemporary Chinese Literature and Culture
  Taught by: Man He
  Catalog details

PHIL 211 TUT Ethics of Public Health
  Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  Catalog details

PHIL 213(F, S) TUT Biomedical Ethics
  Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  Catalog details

PHIL 228 / STS 228 / WGSS 228(F) LEC Feminist Bioethics
  Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  Catalog details

PHIL 337(S) TUT Justice in Health Care
  Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  Catalog details

PSYC 354(F) SEM Health Psychology
  Taught by: Rebecca Crochiere
  Catalog details

STS 311 / AMST 352 / ASIA 352 SEM Global Health in the Transpacific
  Taught by: Shoan Yin Cheung
  Catalog details

PHLH Biomedical Determinants of Health

BIOL 134 / ENVI 134(F) LEC The Tropics: Biology and Social Issues
  Taught by: Joan Edwards
  Catalog details

BIOL 219 TUT Dangerous Exposures: Environment, Immunity, and Infectious Disease
  Taught by: Lois Banta
  Catalog details

BIOL 313(F) LEC Immunology
  Taught by: Damian Turner
  Catalog details

BIOL 315 LEC Microbiology: Diversity, Cellular Physiology, and Interactions
  Taught by: Lois Banta
  Catalog details

BIOL 417(S) SEM Translational Immunology: From Bench to Bedside
  Taught by: Damian Turner
  Catalog details
CHEM 115 / STS 115(F) LEC AIDS: The Disease and Search for a Cure
  Taught by: Amy Gehring

PSYC 313 / NSCI 313(S) SEM Opioids and the Opioid Crisis: The Neuroscience Behind an Epidemic
  Taught by: Shivon Robinson

PSYC 335(F) SEM Early Experience and the Developing Infant
  Taught by: Amy Gehring

PHLH Core Courses

PHLH 201(S) SEM Dimensions of Public Health
  Taught by: Marion Min-Barron

PHLH 402(S) SEM Senior Seminar in Public Health
  Taught by: Kiaran Honderich

PHLH Decision-Making by Institutions + Individuals

ECON 205(F) SEM Public Economics
  Taught by: William Gentry

ECON 230(S) LEC The Economics of Health and Health Care
  Taught by: Shyam Raman

ECON 381 / ECON 571(S) LEC Global Health Policy Challenges
  Taught by: Susan Godlonton

ECON 465 SEM Pollution and Labor Markets
  Taught by: Matthew Gibson

ECON 468 SEM Your Money or Your Life: Health Disparities in the United States
  Taught by: Tara Watson

ECON 504(F) SEM Public Economics in Developing Countries
  Taught by: Jon Bakija

PSCI 209 / WGSS 209 SEM Poverty in America
  Taught by: Cathy Johnson

PSCI 228(S) LEC International Organization
  Taught by: Cheryl Shanks

PSYC 326 SEM Choice and Decision Making
  Taught by: Kris Kirby

PHLH Methods in Public Health

ANTH 371 / STS 370 / WGSS 371(S) SEM Campus and Community Health in Disruptive Times
  Taught by: Kim Gutschow

ECON 523 / ECON 379(S) SEM Program Evaluation for International Development
  Taught by: Susan Godlonton

MATH 412 LEC Mathematical Biology
  Taught by: Julie Blackwood

PSYC 252(F, S) LEC Clinical Psychology
  Taught by: Catherine Stroud, Rebecca Crochiere

PHLH Nutrition, Food Security, and Environmental Health
AFR 211 / AMST 211 / ENVI 211 / SOC 211 LEC Race, Environment, and the Body
  Taught by: TBA
  Catalog details

ANTH 254 / ENVI 254 / STS 254(S) TUT Food, Forests, & Fungi: Environmental Health in the Anthropocene
  Taught by: Kim Gutschow
  Catalog details

BIOL 220 / ENVI 220(S) LEC Field Botany and Plant Natural History
  Taught by: Joan Edwards
  Catalog details

BIOL 308 LEC Integrative Plant Biology: Fundamentals and New Frontiers
  Taught by: Claire Ting
  Catalog details

ENVI 230 SEM Geographies of Food Justice
  Taught by: April Merleaux
  Catalog details

ENVI 246 / AMST 245 / HIST 265 SEM Race, Power, & Food History
  Taught by: April Merleaux
  Catalog details

GEOS 207 / ENVI 201 LEC The Geoscience of Epidemiology and Public Health
  Taught by: TBA
  Catalog details

PHLH 220 SEM International Nutrition
  Taught by: Marion Min-Barron
  Catalog details

**PHLH Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health**

PHLH 310 SEM Equity in Health
  Taught by: Mats Målqvist
  Catalog details

PSYC 335(F) SEM Early Experience and the Developing Infant
  Taught by: Amie Hane
  Catalog details

PSYC 358 SEM Developmental Psychopathology: Trajectories of Risk and Resilience
  Taught by: Catherine Stroud
  Catalog details

STS 102 / WGSS 103 TUT Breeding Controversy: Technologies and Ideologies of Population Control
  Taught by: Shoan Yin Cheung
  Catalog details

**PHLH Social Determinants of Health**

AFR 211 / AMST 211 / ENVI 211 / SOC 211 LEC Race, Environment, and the Body
  Taught by: TBA
  Catalog details

ECON 380 / ECON 519 LEC Population Economics
  Taught by: Lucie Schmidt
  Catalog details

ECON 468 SEM Your Money or Your Life: Health Disparities in the United States
  Taught by: Tara Watson
  Catalog details

HIST 305 / AFR 304 / GBST 305 SEM A History of Health and Healing in Africa
  Taught by: Benjamin Twagira
  Catalog details

PHLH 310 SEM Equity in Health
  Taught by: Mats Målqvist
  Catalog details

PHLH 351 / AAS 351(F) TUT Racism in Public Health
  Taught by: Marion Min-Barron
  Catalog details

PHLH 384 Comparative History of Science and Medicine in Asian/Pacific America, 1800-Present
  Taught by: TBA
  Catalog details

PSCI 209 / WGSS 209 SEM Poverty in America
  Taught by: Cathy Johnson
  Catalog details
STUDY ABROAD AND INTERNSHIPS

Although not a requirement for the PH concentration, study abroad and/or overseas internships provide a crucial opportunity to engage with global health issues through field-based coursework and independent research projects. The Public Health program in coordination with the Study Abroad Advisor and the Office of Career Counseling will advise students on opportunities in these areas. In particular, students may want to consider one of the several Global Health options offered through SIT. One or more courses completed on an approved study abroad program can be counted toward the three elective courses, with permission of the Chair. You can find general study away guidelines for Public Health at public-health.williams.edu.

PHLH 201 (S) Dimensions of Public Health (DPE)

Public health is concerned with protecting and improving health at the level of a community or population. Although individual behavior is an essential element of public health, collective, rather than individual, outcomes are the focus of public health study. In this course we will survey the field of public health, introducing students to core concepts and methods that highlight the interrelationship of individual choice and social institutions with environmental and biological factors in producing health outcomes at the population level. We will develop these concepts and methods within the context of signal cases and public health crises.

Requirements/Evaluation: two papers on a selected population or country and health issue, peer reviews and active contribution to class discussion

Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 14

Enrollment Preferences: sophomores, potential Public Health concentrators

Expected Class Size: 14

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: No divisional credit (DPE)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course fulfills the DPE requirement because of its central focus on the ways that difference and power shape health outcomes in the U.S. and internationally. It uses an interdisciplinary approach to explore issues including the historical relations between communities of color, healthcare providers, and public health practitioners; contestation over the role of markets and government in public health; and differing explanations for the patterns of race, class, etc., in health outcomes.

Attributes: PHLH Core Courses

Spring 2024

SEM Section: 01  M 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm  Marion Min-Barron
SEM Section: 02  W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm  Marion Min-Barron

PHLH 220 (F) International Nutrition (DPE) (WS)

Global malnutrition continues to represent one of the most challenging issues of international development. Problems of both under- and overnutrition beginning as early as in utero can detrimentally influence the health, development and survival of resource-limited populations. This course introduces students to the most prevalent nutritional issues through a food policy perspective and exposes them to a wide variety of interventions, policies and current debates in the field of international nutrition. In addition to exploring the multi-level programmatic approaches for the prevention and treatment of the related nutritional problems, students will gain exposure and experience in program design and program proposal writing. Readings will involve both real-world programmatic documents/evaluations as well as peer-reviewed journal articles. Examples will be drawn from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Requirements/Evaluation: six 1-page essays, one final term paper (10-15 pages), one oral presentation, and active class participation

Prerequisites: PHLH 201 or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: Public Health concentrators

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: As a writing skills course, students will write six 1-page essays (each with an optional rewrite) which will help build the specific writing skills necessary for the final 10- to 15 page paper. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course exposes the issues of difference, power and inequity by exploring the unequal distribution of resources and power at the global, national and intra-national level within the international nutrition context. We will also critically engage with issues of power, cultural difference and related ethics in the context of international development and nutrition programming.

Attributes: PHLH Nutrition,Food Security+Environmental Health

Not offered current academic year

PHLH 310 (F) Equity in Health

Equity in health has been defined as inequalities in health outcomes based on irrelevant social characteristics. The Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 highlight equity in health as a main focus and key to achieving social sustainability. This course will introduce students to the concept of equity in health, and discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the pathways to unequal health outcomes. The social determinants of health and how they translate to uneven outcomes will be explored and discussed. There will also be a special focus on gender and gender-based violence as a driver of ill health. How to reduce inequity in health will be discussed and debated. Readings will involve some of the classic texts on health equity as well as recent explorations of the area.

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly short reflection papers and one final paper (10-12 pages)
Prerequisites: PHLH 201 Dimensions of Public Health or Permission of Instructor

Enrollment Limit: 16

Enrollment Preferences: Public Health Concentrators

Expected Class Size: 16

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHLH Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health  PHLH Social Determinants of Health

Not offered current academic year

PHLH 351 (F) Racism in Public Health  (DPE)

Cross-listings: PHLH 351 AAS 351

Primary Cross-listing

Across the nation, states, counties and communities have declared racism a public health crisis. This push to identify systemic racism as a high priority in public health action and policy is an important symbolic and political move. It names the faults of histories, systems and institutions but also brings to the spotlight the individual and community responsibility to dismantle racism in the US. In this tutorial, we will examine racism in public health policy, practice and research through an investigation of several mediums of evidence and information, ranging from peer reviewed literature to news editorials, podcasts and documentaries. We will explore specific pathways by which legacies of colonialism and racism function in various public health disciplines such as epidemiology, social & behavioral sciences, health policy and environmental health while also examining the dynamics of power and history in research and community practice. We will take deep dives into issues on how health can be impacted by redlining, racist medical algorithms, racial trauma and stress and police violence, to name a few. Students will also have two opportunities to select their own case studies, as a way for you to research and learn about particular racial health issues that are of personal interest. This course is also about self-reflection and exploration of the ways in which our identities and lived experiences impact our understanding and perspective. We will gain skills in speaking across differences and articulation of how our own perceptions and lived experiences of race and racism impact our study of public health. This tutorial requires an openness to self-reflection and the practice of listening and articulation.

Requirements/Evaluation: bi-weekly tutorial papers, weekly journaling, oral commentaries and tutorial discussion

Prerequisites: PHLH 201 or instructor approval.

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: 1-Public Health concentrators. 2- Asian American Studies concentrators.

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHLH 351(D2) AAS 351(D2)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: In this course students will examine and critically examine the inequities and race based social and health injustices, and the ways racism infiltrates public health action and policy, both historically and currently. They will also refine their self-reflection skills in understanding how their own positions of privilege and power, or lack thereof, inform their understanding of public health.

Attributes: AAS Non-Core Electives  PHLH Social Determinants of Health

Fall 2023

TUT Section: T1  TBA  Marion Min-Baron

PHLH 384 Comparative History of Science and Medicine in Asian/Pacific America, 1800-Present  (DPE)

How have scientific knowledge and medicine been tools of exclusion, violence, and imperial control against Asian Americans, as well as indigenous peoples, Black, Latinx, and white migrants, and their descendants? How have these groups negotiated and resisted encounters with such knowledge from the 19th century to the present? This seminar explores these questions by examining a series of case studies—including American colonial medicine and science in the Philippines and Hawai‘i, Cold War migration of Chinese scientists and South Asian doctors to the U.S., and the politics of HIV/AIDS, psychiatry, and culturally competent care in Black, Asian, and Cuban migrant communities. Together, we will survey the literature in history,
English, Global Health, Sociology, and other fields and consider how the Asian/Pacific American experience in science and medicine has been integral to, as well as informed by, the experiences of other groups in the transpacific world. Students will leave this course with interdisciplinary tools for understanding present-day health inequities in underserved Asian/Pacific American communities and other marginalized groups.

Requirements/Evaluation: Attendance and active participation in discussion, three response papers (3-4 pages), and final research paper (12-15 pages), as well as topic proposal, annotated bibliography, outline, and draft of the final paper

Prerequisites: None

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: Preference to History majors, Asian American Studies concentrators, and Public Health concentrators

Expected Class Size: 20-25

Grading:

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course explores how knowledge about science and medicine has been constituted and remade over time by various groups in the transpacific world to exert power over others on the structural, community and individual levels. We will also consider how individuals who experienced violence and inequities as a result of encounters with such knowledge challenged definitions and practices of science and medicine.

Attributes: AAS Core Electives  HIST Group F Electives - U.S. + Canada  PHLH Social Determinants of Health

Not offered current academic year

PHLH 397  (F)  Independent Study: Public Health

Public Health Independent Study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

PHLH 398  (S)  Independent Study: Public Health

Public Health Independent Study

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

PHLH 402  (S)  Senior Seminar in Public Health

The capstone seminar provides concentrators with the opportunity to reflect upon and synthesize their experiential learning in the context of understanding gained from a cohesive set of elective courses, and through the lens of a variety of intellectual and disciplinary frameworks. A second goal is to give concentrators experience working in a multi-disciplinary team to address a real-world, and in many cases very daunting, public health problem. Students will read, discuss, and compose written reflections on primary source empirical papers addressing a range of issues and disciplines in the field of public health. For example, topics may include the social determinants of health, environmental health risks, and access to health care. Students will also be divided into small research teams to interact with local organizations and investigate a contemporary real-life issue in public health. The capstone course is required of all concentrators, but may be opened to other students with relevant experience at the discretion of the instructor and the advisory committee, if space permits.

Requirements/Evaluation: active seminar participation, written reflections, contribution to the team research project, and a 12- to 15-page final paper

Prerequisites: completion of at least four courses counting towards the PHLH concentration

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: senior Public Health concentrators; students who are not senior Public Health concentrators should contact the instructor

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: No divisional credit
Winter Study

PHLH 13 (W) Concluding your Experiential Component: Public Health Reflections

Because many public health challenges cannot be fully appreciated until one has hands-on experience working on public health issues with populations or communities, each Public Health concentrator must have at least one relevant field-based educational experience. This requirement is known as the Experiential Component (EC). This winter study course will serve as the final step in completing the EC requirement. Through in-person meetings and online discussion, students will be asked to critically reflect on their EC experience, write about their intellectual and emotional journey during their EC and discuss with classmates how this EC experience ties into previous Public Health courses and potential career and graduate educational goals. Students will meet in-person on Tuesday, January 4, 2021: 10-1pm and Tuesday, January 25, 2021: 10-1pm. For the weeks in between these two dates, students will engage in weekly online asynchronous discussions with their classmates.

Requirements/Evaluation: Students will be evaluated on class discussions, reflection papers and a 10-page paper which can be waived.

Prerequisites: PHLH 201 and completion of their Experiential Component internship/work experience.

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: Public Health concentrators who are Seniors will be given preference.

Expected Class Size: 25

Grading: pass/fail only

Not offered current academic year

PHLH 99 (W) Independent Study: Public Health

Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

Class Format: independent study

Grading: pass/fail only

Not offered current academic year