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

**PHIL 211 TUT Ethics of Public Health**
- Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  [Catalog details]

**PHIL 212 / STS 212 / WGSS 212(F) LEC Ethics and Reproductive Technologies**
- Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  [Catalog details]

**PHIL 213(S) TUT Biomedical Ethics**
- Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  [Catalog details]

**PHIL 228 / STS 228 / WGSS 228 LEC Feminist Bioethics**
- Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  [Catalog details]

**PHIL 274(F) TUT Messing with People: The Ethics of Human Experimentation**
- Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  [Catalog details]

**PHIL 337 TUT Justice in Health Care**
- Taught by: Julie Pedroni
  [Catalog details]

**PSYC 354 SEM Health Psychology**
- Taught by: Rebecca Crochiere
  [Catalog details]

**WGSS 332 / AMST 369(S) SEM Gender, Sexuality & Disability**
- Taught by: Abram Lewis
  [Catalog details]

**PHILH Biomedical Determinants of Health**

**BIOL 313 LEC Immunology**
- Taught by: Damian Turner
  [Catalog details]

**BIOL 315(S) LEC Microbiology: Diversity, Cellular Physiology, and Interactions**
- Taught by: Lois Banta
  [Catalog details]

**BIOL 417 SEM Translational Immunology: From Bench to Bedside**
- Taught by: Damian Turner
  [Catalog details]

**CHEM 115 LEC AIDS: The Disease and Search for a Cure**
- Taught by: Amy Gehring
  [Catalog details]

**ENVI 134 / CAOS 134 The Tropics: Biology and Social Issues**
Taught by: Joan Edwards
Catalog details
PSYC 313 / NSCI 313 (F) SEM Opioids and the Opioid Crisis: The Neuroscience Behind an Epidemic

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

Taught by: Amie Hane
Catalog details

PHLH Core Courses

PHLH 201 (S) SEM Dimensions of Public Health
    Taught by: Marion Min-Barron
    Catalog details
PHLH 402 (S) SEM Senior Seminar in Public Health
    Taught by: Kiaran Honderich
    Catalog details

PHLH Decision-Making by Institutions + Individuals

ECON 205 SEM Public Economics
    Taught by: William Gentry
    Catalog details
ECON 230 (S) LEC The Economics of Health and Health Care
    Taught by: Shyam Raman
    Catalog details
ECON 381 / ECON 571 (S) LEC Global Health Policy Challenges
    Taught by: Susan Godlonton
    Catalog details
ECON 465 SEM Pollution and Labor Markets
    Taught by: Matthew Gibson
    Catalog details
PSCI 209 / WGSS 209 SEM Poverty in America
    Taught by: Cathy Johnson
    Catalog details
PSCI 228 LEC International Organization
    Taught by: Cheryl Shanks
    Catalog details

PHLH Methods in Public Health

ANTH 371 / STS 370 / WGSS 371 SEM Campus and Community Health in Disruptive Times
    Taught by: Kim Gutschow
    Catalog details
ECON 523 / ECON 379 (S) SEM Program Evaluation for International Development
    Taught by: Pamela Jakiela
    Catalog details
PSYC 252 (F, S) LEC Clinical Psychology
    Taught by: Jennifer McQuaid, Marlene Sandstrom
    Catalog details

PHLH Nutrition, Food Security, and Environmental Health

AFR 255 / SOC 255 / ENVI 256 / AMST 257 (F) LEC Race, Environment, and the Body
    Taught by: Christopher Ndubuizu
    Catalog details
ANTH 254 / ENVI 254 / STS 254 TUT Food, Forests, & Fungi: Environmental Health in the Anthropocene
    Taught by: Kim Gutschow
    Catalog details
BIOL 133 (F) LEC Biology of Exercise and Nutrition
    Taught by: Steven Swoap
    Catalog details
BIOL 220 / ENVI 220 (S) LEC Field Botany and Plant Natural History
    Taught by: Joan Edwards
    Catalog details
BIOL 308 (F) LEC Integrative Plant Biology: Fundamentals and New Frontiers
Taught by: Claire Ting
Catalog details
GEOS 207 / ENVI 201 LEC The Geoscience of Epidemiology and Public Health

Taught by: TBA
Catalog details
PHLH 220 (F) SEM International Nutrition

Taught by: Marion Min-Barron
Catalog details

PHLH Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health
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

PHLH Social Determinants of Health

AFR 255 / SOC 255 / ENVI 256 / AMST 257 (F) LEC Race, Environment, and the Body

Taught by: Christopher Ndubuizu
Catalog details
CHIN 421 / GBST 386 / ASIA 421 (F) SEM Chinese Societies through the lens of COVID-19

Taught by: Xiaoming Hou
Catalog details
HIST 384 / AMST 383 / AAS 384 (F) SEM Comparative History of Science and Medicine in Asian/Pacific America, 1800-Present

Taught by: Hongdeng Gao
Catalog details
PHLH 270 SEM Healthcare Workers

Taught by: Kiaran Honderich
Catalog details
PHLH 351 / AAS 351 (F) TUT Racism in Public Health

Taught by: Marion Min-Barron
Catalog details
PSCI 209 / WGSS 209 SEM Poverty in America

Taught by: Cathy Johnson
Catalog details
PSYC 356 (F) SEM Asylum: Understanding the Psychological Effects of Persecution, Trauma, and the Migration Experience

Taught by: Jennifer McQuaid
Catalog details
REL 269 / ANTH 269 / ASIA 269 / STS 269 TUT Mindfulness Examined: Meditation, Emotion, and Affective Neuroscience

Taught by: Kim Gutschow
Catalog details

PHLH Statistics Courses
PSYC 201 (F, S) LEC Experimentation and Statistics

Taught by: Kenneth Savitsky, Kris Kirby, Rebecca Crochiere, Amie Hane
Catalog details
STAT 101 (F, S) LEC Elementary Statistics and Data Analysis

Taught by: Mihai Stoiciu, Anna Plantinga
Catalog details
STAT 161 (F, S) LEC Introductory Statistics for Social Science

Taught by: Duncan Clark
Catalog details
STAT 201 (F, S) LEC Statistics and Data Analysis

Taught by: Elizabeth Upton
Catalog details
STAT 202 (F, S) LEC Introduction to Statistical Modeling

Taught by: Anna Neufeld, Xizhen Cai
Catalog details
STAT 335 (S) LEC Introduction to Biostatistics and Epidemiology

Taught by: Anna Plantinga
Catalog details
STAT 372 LEC Longitudinal Data Analysis
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: a sequence of three assignments (a report, an infographic and a presentation) that focuses on a particular public health problem, peer reviews and active contribution to class discussion

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: sophomores, potential Public Health concentrators

Expected Class Size: 19

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 2025

SEM Section: 01  W 1:10 pm - 3:50 pm  Marion Min-Barron

SEM Section: 02  W 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm  Marion Min-Barron

PHLH 220 (F)  International Nutrition  (DPE)

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 and multi-disciplinary programmatic approaches for the prevention and treatment of the related nutritional problems, students will gain exposure and experience in program design and 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: five 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: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Public Health concentrators

Expected Class Size: 19

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

Distributions: (D2) (DPE)

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

Fall 2024

SEM Section: 01 M 7:00 pm - 9:40 pm Marion Min-Barron

PHLH 270 (S) Healthcare Workers (DPE)

Health care is the largest industry in the US, employing more than one of every 10 private-sector workers. Jobs in the industry, ranging from subcontracted hospital cleaners to university-affiliated specialist surgeons, reflect and reproduce the kind of inequality we see elsewhere in the economy. We will start with an historical perspective, using sources like Patricia D'Antonio's American Nursing: a History of Knowledge, Authority, and the Meaning of Work, Gretchen Long's Doctoring Freedom: The Politics of African American Medical Care in Slavery and Emancipation, and The Next Shift by Gabriel Winant, to understand the development of the modern health care industry in the US, its relationship to the process of deindustrialization in cities like Pittsburgh, PA and the shifting racial and gendered character of the paid labor force. From that framing we will investigate the present. What are working conditions like in each sector, what kind of organizing is there, and how do workers interact across sectors? We will spend some time on Marxist feminist theories of care work and how they relate to this industry. Students will be invited to think about themselves as possible future health care workers, and how they might want to interact with the history of the industry, and the low paid, racialized, gendered sector of care workers that health care depends upon. We will have several guest speakers with expertise on the local health care economy, and spend some time learning about comparative experiences in other countries, including colonial experiences with nursing.

Requirements/Evaluation: Assignments will include a short paper and a longer research project. Participation in discussion will form part of the grade.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: public health concentrators

Expected Class Size: 20

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

Distributions: No divisional credit (DPE)

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: The class asks students to reflect critically on power differences within the health care industry and their shifting relation to race, class, gender and colonial history.

Attributes: PHLH Social Determinants of Health

Not offered current academic year

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

Cross-listings: 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:

AAS 351(D2) PHLH 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 2024

TUT Section: T1 TBA Marion Min-Barron

PHLH 397 (F) Independent Study: Public Health

Public Health Independent Study

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

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2024

IND Section: 01 TBA Susan Godlonton

PHLH 398 (S) Independent Study: Public Health

Public Health Independent Study

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

Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2025

IND Section: 01 TBA Susan Godlonton

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
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

**Attributes:** EXPE Experiential Education Courses  PHLH Core Courses

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**Spring 2025**

SEM Section: 01  TR 9:55 am - 11:10 am  Kiaran Honderich

SEM Section: 02  TR 11:20 am - 12:35 pm  Kiaran Honderich

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**Winter Study**  

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