Decolonizing Public Health
Proposed Syllabus
University of Michigan School of Public Health

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HBHE 699
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“I think the notion of dreaming in a time where we are told that it is foolish, futile or not useful is one of the most revolutionary things we can do. To have our lives determined by our dreams of a free world--instead of reactions to a state-imposed reality--is one of the most powerful tools of decolonization.”
— Harsha Walia, Undoing Border Imperialism

Course Description: This suggested course syllabus is one of four deliverables to the Health Behavior Health Education department inspired by a student organized, student facilitated teach in which took place on March 30th, 2018 at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. It is also inspired by a student-led course at the University of California Berkeley titled Decolonizing Bodies in Public Health.

This syllabus was created to reflect the needs of our student body through data from our comprehensive teach-in evaluation, as well as facilitators’ lesson plans and required readings. We hope to build upon what others have done with U of M context in mind- Some of these readings were written on this very campus. This syllabus is intended to be a dynamic and flexible document that can be adapted to suit the evolving needs of UM SPH. To advance the adaptability of this syllabus, it is equipped with suggested discussion topics, options for further reading, and case studies. Future course facilitators may add or change readings as they see fit.

Our goal is to continue the conversation around decolonizing the field of public health at UM SPH by transforming the curriculum to provide a holistic and foundational understanding of the history of public health that will meet the needs and concerns of students. This suggested syllabus is a first step toward decolonizing our curriculum, which will be a lifelong process.
**Course Format**
This course syllabus is inspired by a similar course at UC-Berkeley, which is facilitated by students. This course could be taught by PhD students, lecturers, or faculty members.
- Once per week, 3 hours, 3 credits
- No more than 30 students to facilitate class discussion

Within each week there are about 4-5 readings but I strongly recommend that the instructor emphasizes one or two readings that they feel are the most applicable.

**Course Materials**

**Textbook** [Required]: Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, second edition, was first published in 2012 by Zed Books Ltd, 7 Cynthia Street, London, N1 9JF, UK and Room 400, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010, USA
ISBN: 978-1848139503

**Recommended Readings and Other Resources**
These are not required for the course but are recommended for future learning:

- Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present, by Harriet A. Washington
- An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

**Other Resources**

- Spiritof1848.org Spirit of 1848 is a network of professionals working within the intersection of public health and social justice.
- https://publichealthawakened.com/ Public Health Awakened is a group of public health professionals organizing for health, equity, and justice.
Grading
Reflections (4 total)  30%
Facilitate a Discussion  30%
Final Project  30%
Participation/Attendance  10%
Total  100%

Assignments
- Reflections: Throughout the semester, you may choose 4 weeks of your choice to reflect on the weekly topic. These are meant for you to analytically reflect on the readings or things discussed in class. How does this weekly topic relate to your own public health research, teaching, practice, or other experiences?
  - Reflections should be submitted about 48 hours before class
  - 3 pages double spaced, size 12 font
- Facilitate a Discussion: Once during the semester, groups of 3-4 will lead a short discussion on a topic of your choice. You can sign up for time slots via Canvas early in the semester, and prepare materials to bring to facilitate discussion (powerpoint, short video clip, poem, passage from an article, etc.)
  - 25-30 minutes
- Final Project (Case Study): Present a case study of your own choosing that relates to decolonizing public health.
  - 15-20 minutes, including summary, solutions/conclusions, discussion questions
    - You will need to set up one meeting with the instructor halfway through the semester to talk through your case study ideas and receive feedback

Course Schedule

Week 1
Introduction to Course: What does Decolonizing Health mean to you?
- Establish ground rules for conversing & set the group dynamic
  - What will we achieve throughout this course?
  - Chapter 1: Imperialism, History, Writing, & Theory
  - Chapter 2: Research through Imperial Eyes
Week 2
Conceptualizing Health Inequities


Toward an Antiracist Public Health


Gender, Sexuality, Colonization.


Week 3
Beauty Standards & Body Positivity


Guiding Question: Explain ways in which we should include body positivity within our curriculum. Why is this important? What are the consequences of not teaching body positivity?
Week 4

- Documentary: “The State of Eugenics” 
  https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5048684/
  - The true story of survival, deception and the battle for justice in North Carolina for thousands who were sterilized against their will between 1933 and 1974.
- Remember Erica Garner by Fighting to Protect Black Women’s Health
- Serena Williams had to save her own life and deal with doctors who didn’t believe her. Robust Health. Retrieved from:

Week 5
Sex Workers’ Health & Policy Perspective

- (From the publication: Selling Sex: Experience, advocacy, and research on Sex Work in Canada): Hunt, Sarah. Chapter 6: Decolonizing Sex Work: Developing an Intersectional Indigenous Approach. Retrieved from
  https://www.ubcpress.ca/asset/9473/1/9780774824484.pdf
Further Readings

Week 6
Disability Justice
  
  *Book Access Available Online from University of Michigan Library*
- Nishida, Akemi: Chapter 10: “Neoliberal Academia and a Critique from Disability Studies.”

Recommended: Two resources listed below from Icarus Project.
- Navigating The Space Between Brilliance And Madness: A Reader & Roadmap Of Bipolar Worlds. (Download Available at link below) [http://nycicarus.org/articles/navigating-brilliance-madness/](http://nycicarus.org/articles/navigating-brilliance-madness/)

Guiding Question: What are some examples of inaccessibility within academic institutions that you have directly witnessed? How can universities further disability justice?

Week 7
Gentrification & Displacement

**The Health Impacts of Gentrification**


**Further Reading (optional)**

● Communities Over Commodities: People-Driven Alternatives to an Unjust Housing System. Report by *Homes For All*. Download available from [https://homesforall.org/reports/communitiesovercommodities/](https://homesforall.org/reports/communitiesovercommodities/) (80-page report, shorter executive summary also available for download)


**Guiding Questions:** What responsibility does U of M have in preserving affordable housing in Ann Arbor and the surrounding areas? What identities do you as a public health professional bring in moving to a new neighborhood? How will you work to advance equity wherever you move to?

**Week 8**

**The Health of Indigenous Peoples & Decolonizing Methodologies**

  ○ Chapter 6: The Indigenous Peoples’ Project: Setting a New Agenda
  ○ Chapter 7: Articulating an Indigenous Research Agenda


Options for further reading:

Week 9
Voluntourism in Research, Global Health

  ○ Chapter 4: Research Adventures on Indigenous Lands

Options for Further Reading:
● Brisbois, Ben, & Plamondon, Katrina. (2018). The possible worlds of global health research: An ethics-focused discourse analysis. Social Science & Medicine, 196, 142-149

Guiding Question: What type of education and/or training is necessary for UM SPH students to work (whether an internship or full time job) in the global south? How does UM create and maintain global health partnerships and collaborations? What could be done differently?

Week 10
Immigration & Health


Week 11
- Chapter 1 of Edward Said’s Orientalism

Arab & Muslim Identities

Data Disaggregation & Health Disparities among Asian Americans

Week 12
Environmental Justice & Human Rights
Week 13

How Institutionalized Racism Affects Research


How Scientific Research Contributes to Institutionalized Racism


Guiding Question: What are some ways in which research institutions can ‘check themselves’ and ensure their research is actually benefiting communities?

Week 14

*Course wrap-up and presentations*

Recommended Readings

Chapter 9: Responding to the Imperatives of an Indigenous Agenda: A Case Study of Maori
Chapter 10: Towards Developing Indigenous Methodologies: Kaupapa Maori Research

Week 15
Course wrap-up and presentations
Recommended Readings
  - Chapter 11: Choosing the Margins: The role of research in Indigenous struggles for social justice
  - Chapter 12: Getting the story right, telling the story well: Indigenous Activism, Indigenous Research

Name and Pronoun Policy
You have the right to be referred to by the name with which you are most comfortable. If the name listed on my roster is not the name you would like to be called, you are welcome to correct me at the time that I call your name, or to e-mail me at any point to inform me of your preferred name and the contexts in which you are comfortable with me using it. I also encourage you to correct me as soon as possible if I am mispronouncing your name.

Many women and men prefer to be referred to with the pronouns “she/her/hers” and “he/him/his,” respectively. Some women and men—and some individuals who are transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, genderqueer, or other gender identities besides “woman” or “man”—have other pronouns, including “they/them/theirs,” “ze/zir/zirs,” or “ze/hir/hirs.” In order to create a safe, respectful classroom environment, it is crucial that we are referring to people using the pronouns with which they are most comfortable. I encourage you to list your pronouns on your name tent, although you are not required to do so. If you have any concerns about the pronouns I am using for you or that your peers are using for you, please e-mail me or visit me during office hours so we can find a comfortable solution.

Student Mental Health and Well-Being
This course will address systemic violence & discussions on difficult topics. If you are unable to attend class because the coursework for that day may be upsetting to you, please let the facilitators know and take care of yourself. Preserving mental health of students is crucial, and we encourage you to take advantage of the resources available to you on campus and to let us know if we can support you in any way.
The University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and https://caps.umich.edu during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus.

**Accommodations**

Although the University of Michigan, as an institution, does not observe religious holidays, it has long been the University's policy that every reasonable effort should be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities.

It is the obligation of students to provide faculty with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which they will be absent. Such notice must be given by the drop/add deadline of the given term. Students who provide such notice and who are absent on days of examinations or class assignments due to religious observance shall be offered an opportunity to make up the work, without penalty, unless it can be demonstrated that a make-up opportunity would interfere unrealistically with the delivery of the course. Should disagreement arise over any aspect of this policy, the parties involved should contact the department chair, the dean of the school, or the student ombudsperson. Final appeals will be resolved by the provost.

Students who need accommodations can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) and myself to determine appropriate accommodations. Please notify me as soon as possible if you will need accommodations or if there are any circumstances that might affect your attendance and/or performance in this course (e.g., religious observances, participation in athletics, health concerns, family obligations). I will keep this information private and confidential.

Services for Students with Disabilities: G664 Haven Hall 763-3000
http://ssd.umich.edu/

**Gender Inclusive Restrooms**

The closest gender inclusive restroom to our classroom can be located on this map:
http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu/article/gender-inclusive-restroom-map
University of Michigan Sexual Misconduct Policy
According to the University of Michigan’s policy, sexual misconduct “encompasses a range of behaviors that can create a hostile educational environment, including sexual assault and sexual harassment.”
The policy can be read in full at:
http://studentsexualmisconductpolicy.umich.edu/content/university-michigan-policy-sexual-misconduct

The following resources are strictly confidential, which means that (except in rare circumstances) nothing you say will be shared without your explicit permission: Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC), Office of the Ombuds, and Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS).
Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center: 998-9368
http://www.umich.edu/~sapac/
If you wish to make a report of sexual misconduct, please see the resources and procedures listed on Office for Institutional Equity website:
http://hr.umich.edu/oie/studentsmp.html

University Resources
Sweetland Writing Center: (734) 764-0429 http://www.lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/
Information and Technology Services: (734) 764-4357 http://www.itcs.umich.edu/
The Office of Student Conflict Resolution: (734) 936-6308 http://www.oscr.umich.edu/
Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs: (734) 763-9044 https://mesa.umich.edu/
Spectrum Center (LGBTQ*+): (734) 763-4186 http://spectrumcenter.umich.edu/
Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center: (734)998-9368
http://www.umich.edu/~sapac/
Counseling and Psychological Services: 764-8312 http://www.umich.edu/~caps/
There are many other resources not mentioned here. For more information, please visit:
https://studentlife.umich.edu/article/areas-student-life

Academic Integrity
Cheating, plagiarism, and all other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Plagiarism is representing someone else’s ideas, words, statements or other works as one’s own without proper acknowledgment or citation. Examples of plagiarism are:
Copying word for word or lifting phrases or a special term from a source or reference without proper attribution. Paraphrasing using another person’s written words or ideas, albeit in one’s own words, as if they were one’s own thought.

Text above adapted from:
http://www.lsa.umich.edu/saa/international/handbook/conduct.html

For more information see the English Department’s description of plagiarism at:
http://www.lsa.umich.edu/english/undergraduate/plag.htm

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