

## COURSE REPORT

Course code: INTH 316	Semester:	Department:
Course title: Health systems	Fall 2014	Centre for International Health
Course coordinator: David Lackland Sam and Karen Marie Moland	Approved in:	
Date: 06.10.2014 – 31.10.2014		

### INTRODUCTION

#### Follow-up from previous evaluations:

The course evaluation in 2013 pointed out lack of integration of the various course themes and that the literature should be specified for each day of the course

#### Course description

Number of Credits: 6 ECTS  
Master and PhD

##### Objectives

Sickness and ill-health are a natural part of human life, and poor health has important effects on the individual and the society, as well as ramifications for global economy. Thus national governments and international agencies are all concerned with identifying micro and macro-levels factors that may help understand the health of individuals and of the nation. This course will address four main issues: (i) how health services are prioritized and organized nationally and globally and the policies that govern them (ii) the cost of ill health to the individual and the society (iii) the cultural and socio-political factors that sustain health beliefs and practices and (iv) the socio-psychological dimensions of health and disease prevention and health promotion. While the first two components will be more at the macro-level, the last two will look at the interplay between the micro and macro-levels. Together, these broad areas are aimed at sensitizing students to the health systems thinking as spelt out by WHO in 2007 with the goal of improving the health of all through equity and fairness, and in a financially responsive way.

##### Contents

- i. Health policy, health services and the health workforce

Attention will be directed to three main issues (i) an understanding of health systems as laid out by the WHO including the building blocks (service delivery, health workforce, information, medical products, financing and governance) and the relationship between them (ii) the factors that affect access, coverage and quality of health care, and (iii) the underlying values related to the way services are provided focusing on discrimination, dignity, equity and responsiveness. These issues will be approached and situated in a historical perspective, looking at how global policies have developed over time.

- ii. Economics of health systems

The economics of health systems will look at the economic context of health and health care, the economic determinants of health, financing of health care, paying of health care providers and economic evaluation and priority setting.

- iii. Socio-political dimensions of health

How do individuals and groups of people understand their health and illness and how is access to health care distributed in, and between populations? These questions will be illuminated through a discussion of (i) The cultural context of health and disease; the local knowledge, values and traditions and the steps taken to alleviate ill-health in a pluralistic health care system; (ii) A critical perspective on access and social determinants of health looking at the politics of power, equity and gender.

iv. Health promotion

The attention here will be on health as social and psychological well-being, disease prevention and the promotion of healthy individuals and societies. Individual life styles and health behavior will be illuminated using socio-psychological models for explaining and predicting health behavior.

Learning outcomes

1. To understand and be able to discuss how global health policies have developed and how they affect national health systems; To understand and be able to apply WHO's health systems framework in the analysis of health systems challenges related to coverage, service provision and utilization, human resources and financing.
2. To know how health care spending differs across the world; To be able to explain advantages and disadvantages of different ways of financing health care; To understand basic health economic evaluation, and how to apply such evidence to inform decisions about prioritizing between health interventions.
3. To understand and be able to discuss how the cultural context of health and disease and socio-political factors impact and sustain the health of an individual and a community, and the steps taken to alleviate ill-health.
4. To be able to discuss how human behavior can sustain, prevent and promote positive health.

Teaching methods

The course will stretch over a period of four weeks and will involve formal lectures, interactive group discussions, seminars and data exercises and oral presentations, reading and self-reflection and essay writing. Not all the days will be used for lectures. Self-study will also be included during the period.

Assessment methods: Essay writing (home exams)

Pre-requirements: Minimum a Bachelor or equivalent, according to the requirements for the Master program.

Grading Scale: A-F

STATISTICS:

Number of students:		Number of students completing the course:				
Grade distribution ->:	A: 2	B: 4	C: 5	D: 1	E:	F:
Or ->:	Pass:			Fail:		

SUMMARY OF THE STUDENT EVALUATION (*main points*):

• **Practical implementation**

- The themes taught in the course followed a sequence which was not well received.
- Too much literature on the reading list, but good that the readings were specified for each day

• **Students' evaluations and feedback**

- Health economics excellent both in terms of defining learning outcomes, lectures were relevant and practical exercises very useful and fun to work with

- Medical anthropology should get more time and emphasis
  - The WHO health system framework is overarching and should be better integrated into the various themes
  - Other perspectives on the health system should be even more emphasized
  - Health systems thinking lecture was too complex for the first day and should come later
  - Health promotion was not sufficiently covered and linked to the health systems framework
  - The lectures should be more closely linked to the assigned literature
  - The exam assignment was relevant
- Comments from teachers
- An improvement from the year before, but the challenge of integrating a course which is composed of 4 different themes taught by different disciplines remains to a large extent and needs to be worked on for the coming course. Wednesdays were set aside for self-study and this worked out well.

#### COURSE COORDINATORS EVALUATION:

- Teaching and assessment methods: There was too much lecturing and too little exercises. The exam was a home assignment. The students chose one out of five possible questions to answer in an essay form. The results showed a good comprehension of the course.
- Curriculum: The reading material needs further linking to specific lectures and the scope of obligatory readings should be further reduced.
- Information and documentation: good. Timetable was held, the reading material and the lecture notes were posted on MySpace.
- Grade distribution: even
- Localities/equipment: good
- Field trip (if relevant): not relevant
- Changes done during the course: none

#### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR NEXT EVALUATION PERIOD – IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE:

Some of the lectures should be replaced by exercises in the classroom for the students to work with the particular themes making up the course, and for integrating these themes into a health systems thinking.

The timetable will be organized taking into consideration the students' feedback such as the sequence of lectures.