

**SPPH 525: Issues and Concepts in Public Health  
Term 1: September – December 2016**

**Time:** Wednesdays 2 – 5 pm

**Location:** SPPH B151

**Instructor:** Monika Naus, MD, MHSc, FRCPC, FACPM ([monika.naus@bccdc.ca](mailto:monika.naus@bccdc.ca)), Associate Professor, School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine, UBC and Medical Director, Immunization Programs and Vaccine Preventable Diseases Service, BC Centre for Disease Control

**Office Location:** Room 1189, 655 West 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, BC Centre for Disease Control; telephone: 604 707 2540. May be at SPPH office by pre-arrangement 1-2 Wednesdays or on some Fridays.

**Teaching Assistant:** Dallas Genereaux [dallas.genereaux@gmail.com](mailto:dallas.genereaux@gmail.com) 2<sup>nd</sup> year MPH student, School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine. We will introduce Dallas at the beginning of the course. She will offer regular office hours and be available by appointment. She will assist in the grading of assignments using the grading scheme.

**Course overview:** SPPH 525 is an introductory, graduate-level course that provides an overview of topics selected from the field of public health and introduces concepts related to the themes within the 4 divisions of the School of Population and Public Health. The course is intended to provide students with an approach to addressing a public health issue in an organized manner that supports decision-makers with the information and analysis required to initiate, discontinue, or modify a public health program.

The 4 divisions are:

- Epidemiology, biostatistics and public health practice
- Health in populations
- Health services and policy
- Occupational and environmental health

Students will be challenged to critically examine current issues in public health based on those under active dialogue by various public health agencies/ governments, in the media, or in the peer reviewed literature. This work will be done through a variety of individual and group based exercises including class discussions and assignments, as well as directed readings in advance of class.

Some of these themes will be addressed in the form of tools or strategies employed by the public health system to investigate health problems, study interventions, and implement programs. As during the term students are also enrolled in SPPH 502 Epidemiological Methods I, the concepts will be used by speakers and in the readings but methods will not be specifically addressed (e.g., surveillance, outbreak investigation) to avoid redundancy.

Guest presenters will be invited to speak on a select number of public health issues sampled from across the themes. Students must recognize that in a course of this length, every topic in public health cannot be addressed in plenary format and the sample topics are necessarily intended to represent a characteristic selection of issues, strategies, and approaches relevant to a variety of public health problems. As you start your career in public health, you will find that new issues arise that present new challenges, and lifelong adult learning and acceptance that 'change is the only constant' will be necessary skills.

**Course objectives:**

- To gain an understanding of the breadth of the field of population and public health with an emphasis on the Canadian context
- To introduce concepts, issues and organizations involved in each of the areas of public health presented
- To gain practice in systematic and critical analysis from the perspective of supporting decision making for several public health issues through a combination of brief and more detailed assignments
- To gain oral presentation skills
- To practice inter/ multidisciplinary dialogue and use the class groups and interaction with guest speakers as an opportunity to critique each other's approaches or proposals with a view to improved understanding and constructive improvement

**Class components:**

**1) Lectures:** instructor and guest lectures with a focus on current public health issues, concepts, programs, strategies and practice to provide context to the Canadian and BC public health system

**2) Class and group work/ discussion:** in addition to discussion as a full class, the class will be divided into groups. Following the first class, each student will post a short description of their background, work experience, and personal objectives for completing the MPH to the class Connect site, and the instructor and TA will divide the class into mixed groups each intended to reflect the diversity of student backgrounds. Each group will work through in-class exercises assignments, and share, including by presentations, results of their findings and deliberations with the class.

**3) Individual homework and assignments:** assessment of student performance will be conducted through several individual short written assignments and one longer assignment.

You are encouraged to attend all sessions as class time will be used for work done in your assigned groups.

**Required readings:**

Required readings will be available on the course Connect web site. These are related to each scheduled class. Students are expected to be familiar with the reading prior to class so that they can participate actively in class discussion and activities.

**Optional readings:**

These are not required but are 'optional'. All are introductory texts for public health students and will provide you with additional background if you are more comfortable with a textbook to feel that you've covering the ground beyond the selected 'required readings' described above:

- Mary-Jane Schneider. Introduction to Public Health. 4th edition. 2013. Jones and Bartlett Publishers. ISBN 10: 1449697365 or ISBN-13: 9781284089233. Available on amazon.ca. Good introductory text, simple to read, heavily referenced, and oriented to the US system of government and administration.
- Fiona Sim and Martin McKee. Issues in Public Health: Understanding public health. 2011. Open University Press; Second edition. 2011. Available on amazon.ca or elsewhere. The authors draw from UK and international examples and cover a wide array of topics. ISBN 9780335244225
- Franklin White, Lorann Stallones, John M. Last. 2013. Global Public Health: Ecological Foundations. Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780199751907
- Stephen J. Kunitz. 2007. The health of populations: general theories and particular realities. Oxford University Press: New York. ISBN 9780195308075

**Materials for the course and Connect course web site:**

All of the required materials for the course (syllabus, schedule, required readings, and assignments) will be posted on Connect (<http://lthub.ubc.ca/>). Readings and session materials will be organized into folders by the date of the session. Each of these folders will also contain any new assignment information. The course schedule and syllabus which may be updated from time to time will also be posted at this site. An orientation to the Connect course layout will be provided at our first class. Login with your Campus Wide Login ID (CWL) and password. If you find when you log in that you don't have access to the course in your profile under 'Course list', please contact Dallas Genereaux, the TA for this course.

If you lose or forget your ID or password, contact the IT Helpdesk  
<https://it.ubc.ca/got-question-about-it-products-and-support#helpdesk>

For technical difficulties with the Connect site and if you are sure you have logged in properly, check the login page for service notices and bulletins. If you try again and still cannot connect, contact the helpdesk through the methods posted at the page above. When contacting the help desk, please include the type and version of browser you are using (e.g., Explorer 11), your operating system, and a detailed description of the problem you encountered.

I will endeavor to also post slide sets given by presenters, with their permission, on the course Connect site. If not available prior to the session, it will be posted in the folder corresponding to the date of the presentation after the session.

**Assignments and deadlines:**

Ensure that the assignment contains your name and student number at the top right corner of the first page.

All assignments are due on the due date. Assignments submitted later than the due date will be penalized 10% of the possible grade for each day or portion of a day past the due date.

Each written assignment is due to be submitted to the Assessment Dropbox on the Connect course site on time and on the designated due date. If you encounter difficulties logging in at that time and need to submit it by email, please do so to both the instructor and the TA through the Connect site. If you send an email outside of Connect (e.g., from your gmail account) be sure to include '525' in the subject line.

**Plagiarism:** Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism, that plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct, and that such misconduct is subject to penalty. Please review the Academic Integrity and Plagiarism guidelines at UBC

<http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-plagiarism/>

There are a couple of good tutorials on this available online at no cost to you:

SFU: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/tutorials/plagiarism-tutorial>

York University: [http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic\\_integrity/how.html](http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/how.html)

You are encouraged to do these if you have any concerns about your understanding about appropriate use and citation of materials.

**Laptop use during class:** Feel free to use your laptop for activities directly related to the class including note taking or reference to the readings, but please do not use it while the class is in progress for non-class related activities such as email or looking up unrelated web pages.

#### SCHEDULE DATES

Date	Topic	Lecturer / Activity	Assignment following the session
<b>September 7</b>	<b>Course overview:</b> Meet instructor and TA; course orientation and introduction to selected concepts; Connect demonstration	Monika Naus, course instructor	Each student will post a short paragraph outlining their background on Connect to be used for further introduction and assignment into groups. Readings for next week.
<b>September 14 confirmed</b> <b>IMPORTANT CHANGE: ***session will be held from 1-4 pm on this date***</b>	<b>Harm reduction Ideology:</b> When politics ignores evidence	Mark Haden, Adjunct Professor, SPPH; Clinical Supervisor Addiction Services, VCH	Readings for next week. Reflect on the 'new public health' for class discussion next week.

<p><b>September 21</b></p>	<p><b>Introduction to Public Health:</b> History and organization of public health</p> <p><b>Public health legislation and current public health priorities in BC</b></p>	<p>Monika Naus, course instructor</p> <p>Bonnie Henry, Deputy Provincial Health Officer, Ministry of Health</p>	<p>Assignment into groups. Readings for next week.</p>
<p><b>September 28</b></p>	<p><b>The organization of public health in Canada and the primary-public health interface</b></p>	<p>Arlene King, Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health, and former Chief Medical Officer of Health, Ontario</p> <p>In class group discussions related to health issues addressed by Health Officers Council April 2016: what makes these ‘public health’, which skills/ strategies come into play, what are the interfaces to primary care/ health care system/ non health agencies?</p>	<p>Readings for next week.</p>
<p><b>October 5</b></p>	<p><b>Primary prevention:</b> The example of immunization, and introduction to a framework for decision-making</p>	<p>Monika Naus</p> <p>Group discussion on ‘frameworks’ or other approaches to analysis of an issue to facilitate decision-making.</p>	<p>Readings and online conference session viewing for next week.</p>
<p><b>October 12</b></p>	<p><b>Communicable disease prevention and control:</b> Measles elimination and outbreak control</p>	<p>Monika Naus Marcus Lem, former Medical Health Officer, Fraser Health</p>	<p>Readings for next week.</p>

		In class group case study – mandatory vaccination	
<b>October 19</b>	<b>Topic to be finalized: public health policy at the municipal / provincial level</b>	Penny Ballem, former Deputy Minister of Health BC and former City Manager, Vancouver  In class discussion: economic analysis and its contribution to decision making	Readings for next week.
<b>October 26</b>	<b>Maternal and child health: Improving outcomes for high risk children</b>	Donna Jepsen, Nurse Family Partnership, Ministry of Health  In class discussion: models of behaviour change	Readings for next week.
<b>November 2</b>	<b>Environmental Health:</b> Public health approaches and responses to environmental issues  <b>Emergency response to Ebola</b>	Sarah Henderson Epidemiologist, Environmental Health, BCCDC  Eleni Galanis, Physician Epidemiologist, BCCDC	Readings for next week.
<b>November 9</b>	<b>Mental health:</b> the public health approach  Introduction to public health ethics and brainstorming topics for case studies/troubling ethical issues for in-class discussion with David Unger.	Naomi Dove Assistant Professor, SPPH  Monika Naus	Readings for next week.

<b>November 16</b>	<b>Chronic Disease Secondary Prevention:</b> Preventing cancer through organized screening programs	Andy Coldman Formerly with BCCA Population Oncology and Surveillance  Group presentations	Readings for next week.
<b>November 23</b>	<b>Ethics in public health:</b> An approach and case studies	David Unger Ethicist and family medicine physician, Providence Health Care  Group presentations	Readings for next week.
<b>November 30</b> <b>Last day of instruction</b>	<b>Chronic disease prevention: The example of tobacco control</b>	Meena Dawar Medical Health Officer, VCH  Group presentations	Readings for next week.

## GRADING

Grading will be in accordance with UBC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies policies available at: <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/grading-practices>

A minimum passing grade for graduate students is 60%. For doctoral students, requirements are more stringent.

## STUDENT EVALUATION

- 1) **Participation – 5%.** This will be derived from observation of student participation during case studies and other class discussions.
- 2) **Op-ed – 10%**
- 3) **Reflective writing (3 topics related to class content) – 15% (5% each)**
- 4) **Individual public health program ‘for decision’ paper proposal – 5%**
- 5) **Commentary related to sessions (5) – 5%**
- 6) **Group based assignments and presentations – 20%**
- 7) **Final individual public health program ‘for decision’ paper – 40%**

All written submissions to be single spaced, with 1 inch margins, using 12-point font, with numbered pages, and with the student’s name and student number in the top right corner of page 1. Marking rubrics (schemes) for items 2,3, 6 and 7 above will be available.

### 1. Participation

Purpose: To encourage discussion and critical commentary on information presented and

dialogue on public health issues. Students are expected to attend all classes and to come to class prepared. Readings are to be completed before class and students should be ready to participate actively in class and group discussion and activities, to critically consider materials presented in class and from readings, and to offer content to the class and group discussions based on these, as well as other experiences (including from other classes/ learning). Participation will be assessed over the balance of the course.

## **2. Op-ed**

Purpose: To practice clearly stating an opinion to a lay readership from the perspective of a public health professional, and justifying it using available data and information in a concise fashion and related to a current public health issue with which the student has familiarity. This is a warm-up activity for the writing that will continue to occur throughout the course.

## **3. Reflective writing**

Purpose: To reflect on reading materials, session presentations and discussion and build on prior knowledge and experience to develop an approach to analysis of public health issues, that incorporates a variety of considerations. Over the period of the course you can choose three of the topics/ sessions on which to write a reflection (one per month). This is an opportunity to integrate and express your own ideas about the readings and content including concepts raised in the sessions, and how these relate to what you are learning in other classes, how these may contrast to materials or approaches covered in earlier sessions as well as external sources including your own (new) field of study. It is designed to help you develop your analytical writing skills including explaining the reasons for your thoughts and ideas. You can choose to submit these on any of the classes (readings/ presentation/ discussion) during EACH of the three months of the course (September, October, November) with due dates on the last day of the month for each of the three (but you may submit earlier in the month). Length should be between 500 and 1000 words.

## **4+7. Public health program ‘for decision’ discussion paper/ proposal (individual)**

Purpose: To lay out a specific public health issue in a systematic fashion and present a proposal with an accompanying analysis for a decision-maker. A specific format for this will be provided when this task is further outlined in class. A 1-page proposal will be submitted by mid-October, which states the topic/ issue selected, explains why it is of interest for this assignment, and includes a few key references. The paper is due Friday December 2<sup>nd</sup>. It should incorporate the terminology, concepts (e.g., burden of illness, causation, effective interventions), components of analysis required to support decision making, and strategies (e.g., in recommendations for an approach) of public health. This paper should be no longer than 10 pages, not counting any required appendices/ figures/ charts/ references, which should be located at the end of the paper. Further details for both of these along with a template and the marking rubric will be outlined in class and available on the course Connect site.

It will include the following sections and approach:

- a) **Identify the issue:** In a summary paragraph. Typically, this will be in the form of ‘whether’ a specific action should be taken along the lines of initiating a program/

intervention, or modifying or discontinuing an existing program/ intervention. What decision is being sought?

- b) **Background and Analysis:** what has led to the current state of needing to consider this issue? What is known about the causes of this problem and potential solutions? Analyze the components required to make a fully informed decision about this issue: causes, burden of illness, effective interventions, health economic considerations associated with interventions, implementation issues (e.g., resources, legislation, information systems, communication)
- c) **Options considered:** and their pros/ cons
- d) **Recommendation:** Recommend preferred strategy and reason why
- e) **References, and any required tables or figures**

#### 5. **Commentary related to sessions**

Purpose: To reflect on which public health concepts, approaches, tools and strategies were highlighted in this session, how well illustrated these were in the readings or presentation, what outstanding questions you have on this topic, and what else you would like to learn about this area. The instructor will post a place for this commentary at the end of every Wednesday, for student submissions by the end of the following Tuesday. In the course of the term, respond to five (5) of these, for 1% of your total mark each. Review of student commentaries will also be used to assist in steering further in class discussion and future course development.

#### 6. **Group based assignments and presentations**

Purpose: To examine and analyze a topic of public health importance, condense and present this information in a 20-minute presentation (delivery shared among all members of the group), and lead a short class question period related to your selected issue.

Dates of presentations will be during regularly scheduled classes at the end of the term. Format to be similar to the discussion paper/ proposal outline above, but this work is intended to show collaborative effort and contributions from each member of the group. Potential topics should be chosen from current public health issues (e.g., identified from the news/recent publications) and reflect a specific (e.g., BC) jurisdictional context.