

Student Research Seminar: Exploring the impact of politics, organization, and governance on national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Syllabus

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

COURSE INFORMATION

Course Title	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Student Research Seminar: Exploring the impact of politics, organization, and governance on national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.	SPPH 581Y, SPPGA 582?	1.5

PREREQUISITES

This course is open to second-year and beyond students in the Masters and PhD degree programs in SPPH and the Masters program in SPPGA. Prior coursework in policy sciences and public health and infectious disease control would be beneficial

CONTACTS

Course Instructor(s)	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Professor Peter Berman, Director, SPPH, FoM	peter.berman@ubc.ca	SPPH 2206 East Mall, Room 117	By appointment
Professor Milind Kandlikar,	m.kandlikar@ires.ubc.ca	SPPGA, Liu Building 101b	By appointment

COURSE INSTRUCTOR BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Prof. Peter Berman is Professor and Director, School of Population and Public Health. He is a health economist who has worked widely in global health for over four decades. In response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, he initiated work with a multidisciplinary group of colleagues at UBC and internationally on the important question of how institutional, organizational, governance, and political (IOGP) factors shape government and societal responses and their effectiveness.

Prof. Milind Kandlikar is Professor at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs (SPPGA) and Professor and Director of the Institute of Resources, Environment and Sustainability (IRES), University of British Columbia. His work focuses on the intersection of technology innovation, human development and the global environment. His current projects include cross-national comparisons of regulation of agricultural biotechnology; air quality in Indian cities; risks and benefits of nanotechnology; new technologies for sustainable transportation; and development and climate change.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

The seminar will include relevant outside speakers in some sessions to incorporate perspectives from epidemiology, medicine, and national experiences. The following UBC faculty have expressed interest in attending sessions, contributing presentations and discussion, and advising student research groups. From SPPH, this includes Profs. Lovato, Patrick, Smolina. From SPPGA, this includes Profs. Cameron, Tworek, Hoberg, Boyd, Reimer, Tiberghien, Sriram

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course will provide graduate students in public health and public policy an opportunity to develop and apply skills in several key areas of analysis relevant to understanding governmental response to crisis, with a focus on the current pandemic of novel coronavirus disease.

Working individually or in small teams of no more than 3 students on a specific country, course participants will examine: political and institutional conditions; the organization of public health functions within national health systems; the process of decision-making affecting key policy decisions; evidence on the number and types of interventions implemented by government; the rigor of implementation evidence on epidemic progress and health outcomes; and other consequences of the pandemic and response to it.

As a student-oriented course outcome, each country-focussed group will be required to demonstrate their analytical competencies through producing a country case study report (approximately 20 pages with additional tabular and graphical material as needed) as a final deliverable of the course, based on a common template. There may be opportunities for publication of these reports as working papers.

Cross-student/group learning to improve analytical skills and comparative understanding of crisis responses in different settings is another key outcome. This will be achieved through student presentations of their work in progress and sharing of the final reports.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course will organized in seminar style. Each biweekly 2.5 hour session will consist of approximately half devoted to more formal presentations (e.g. 2 presentations of 30 min each plus discussion followed by a break and then one hour Q&A and discussion. Eight sessions are planned for Term 2.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Session content and presentations subject to change. A detailed session by session syllabus will be posted to the course CANVAS website before the term.

One 2.5 hour session each week as below.

1. Week 1

Course introduction – objectives, structure, process, agreement on conduct and responsibilities. Overview of the problem: why are countries experiencing such different outcomes in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic crisis? Lessons from Global Health Security Index. Key elements in a causal analysis framework. The potential role of IOGP factors. Outline of approaches proposal to analyze IOGP factors and other key elements of the pandemic development and response. Presentation by Prof. Berman and Kandlikar

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2. Week 2

Tracking the pandemic in specific jurisdictions – what national data are available on cases and deaths? How are they calculated and collected. What are the strengths and limitations of these data? Interventions – what is being monitored internationally on government response, what is “stringency”? Developing the “timeline” in BC.

- Presentations by Profs. Patrick and Dr. Smolina (to be confirmed)

3. Week 3

Institutional and political factors – key concepts, international comparative indicators. Example of work in Latin America and BC.

- Presentation by Prof. Cameron and post-docs. Discussant, Prof. Tiberghien? (to be confirmed)

4. Week 4

Analyzing the organization of public health functions in national health systems. Key public health functions. Some typologies of the organization of these functions in different countries. Approach to describing organization of public health functions and results in BC.

Week of Feb 15-19 – Mid-term Break

5. Week 5

Governance – key concepts -- approaches to analyzing the process of decision making. Identifying key decision points, exploring process using online data and key information interviews.

6. Week 6

Student presentations of work in progress. 3-4 presentations of 30 min each plus Q&A

7. Week 7

Student presentations of work in progress. 3-4 presentations of 30 min each plus Q&A

Student papers due Friday March 26.

8. Concluding session – review and discussion of what have we learned

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Students will be expected to:

- Attend all online seminar sessions. No more than one prior-excused absences for cause will allowed/given in order to obtain a passing grade in the course.
- Complete all required assigned readings and material reviews (in some cases assignments may include review of a website or online material) prior to the course session for which they are assigned
- Participate actively in class discussions
- Work collaboratively with other students in country case study teams and complete a fair share of the team’s work as recognized by other team members
- Produce individually or in small group a completed country case study report based on a common template by the required submission data

All course sessions will be conducted on line using Zoom.

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LEARNING MATERIALS

Course materials will be available on a course website on Canvas. A detailed session by session syllabus of readings and presenters will be posted on Canvas site by mid-December.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Would propose 30% based on attendance and participation and 70% based on grading of the final paper.

The final paper will be assessed in terms of the following criteria:

- Comprehensiveness of analysis. Has the paper incorporated analysis of at least three of the following four elements: Institutional/political factors; organization of the public health and health system capacities; governance processes around key decisions; linkage of IOGP factors with epidemic progression and outcomes. (40%)
- Creativity in seeking evidence and breadth of information sources (30%)
- Development of insights or recommendations that could improve public health outcomes through strengthening attention to IOGP factors. (30%)

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions.

Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).