



## STS 129: Science and politics in global health

*Summer 2022 Course Syllabus*

**Lectures:** Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - 1:15 p.m.

**Room:** [Roessler Hall 55](#)

**Instructor:** Alejandro Ponce de León, [poncedeleon@ucdavis.edu](mailto:poncedeleon@ucdavis.edu)

**Office hours:** Tuesdays, 2:00–3:00 p.m. (appointments, [here](#))

### Presentation

This course introduces students to key concepts, issues, and contemporary debates around global public health in contemporary social science research. We will focus on how “medical facts” and “global health issues” are produced, reacted, and intervened. Students will learn about the global health movement, the technoscientific production of global diseases and threats, the complexities of global population research, and how experts in this field are bringing together claims to knowledge—and vast amounts of state and non-governmental funding—to reshape the future of humanity.

This is a reading-intensive course. We will engage with a variety of readings and media which will help us think about health and illness beyond their biological dimensions. Students will consider the social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental factors influencing global health and wellness distribution in a profoundly interconnected world through an interdisciplinary framework. Some of the questions this course asks are: How do ideas about global health and well-being circulate across geographies and cultures? Where do they “land,” and with what effects? What are the value systems that underpin paradigms in global health policy? How are facts, evidence, and data about global wellness and sickness produced? How is this all tied to the question of power? And how can social science research respond to it while contributing to a deeper understanding of illness and well-being?

Students are not required to have a background in biomedical sciences to participate in this course. We will read, think, and write across different academic fields to foster reflexive and creative thinking. For example, some topics we will cover include the social production of facts and explanatory models, the political economy of infectious diseases, philanthropic practices and interventions, and the relationship between the global public health moment and the process of colonialism. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze processes of production of truth claims about disease prevention, transmission, and eradication on a global scale.
2. Understand some of the complexities inherent to implementing global public health programs by examining

social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors in the shaping and outcome of these programs.

3. Address current issues, problems, and challenges in global public health through an interdisciplinary perspective.

### Course structure & Assessments

The course consists of a combination of lectures, lab activities, reading reports, in-class discussions, and student-led presentations. We will meet three times a week. Unless stated otherwise, Tuesday sessions will be conducted as lectures and will introduce key concepts and ideas to the course conversation. Wednesday sessions will focus on lab activities and group assignments. Thursday sessions will be organized around in-class discussions and oral presentations. I will post detailed guidelines per assignment on our Canvas website.

As this is a short course, success depends on our collective engagement with the course content. Students should complete and critically reflect on all assigned readings before each session. Expect to spend three to four hours per week preparing your readings, as they are all ‘testable’ material—they may appear in whole or in part in future assignments. I also advise all students to take comprehensive notes of their readings. Readings marked with an **[O]** in the course schedule are optional — except for the students leading the discussion.

Finally, please be aware that we may be discussing topics deemed delicate. At times, the content of the course may surprise or provoke you. You may also be confronted with thoughts or opinions that differ from your values, ideas, or experiences. For this reason, I encourage us to think together about how ideas can move us in different ways. I also invite you to debate politely and intelligently, always trying to assume positive intent in others. This does not mean that we need to agree with one another, but it pushes us to ask questions that help us better understand how our experiences, values, and reasoning shape our thinking.

### Grading criteria

<i>Final essay</i>	<i>24 pts</i>
<i>Lab reports (10 pts. each)</i>	<i>40 pts</i>
<i>Draft version of your essay</i>	<i>16 pts</i>
<i>Student-led discussion</i>	<i>10 pts</i>
<i>Participation &amp; Engagement</i>	<i>10 pts</i>

*For a total of 100 points (100% of your final grade)*

### *Final essay (24pts)*

This course does not have a final exam. Students will write a seven to ten-page final essay based on their research and course concepts. This assignment aims at allowing students to deepen their understanding of the forces shaping ideas and practices in global health by studying a case or problem of their interest. We will be working on this essay throughout the quarter. The lab reports (below) will help students think about their final essay's argument and structure. Students may conduct research in groups but must write their final essays individually, each presenting unique ideas and arguments. I will share further information about this assignment in class on Wednesday, August 3. Detailed instructions will be available online on Wednesday, August 31. This final essay will be worth 24% of the total grade.

### *Lab reports (40pts)*

Students will work on a series of lab reports that expand the research they will be conducting for the final essay. These lab reports will help students identify a topic, structure their research, analyze collected information, and present their research. Students may work in groups for these assignments, but each student should submit an individual lab report. Guidelines will be posted on Canvas. Below you will find a detailed schedule. On Wednesdays, I will review the weekly lab assignments and their requirements and help students think through their research processes. There are four lab reports in total, each worth 10% of your final grade.

### *A draft version of your essay (16pts)*

Students will present a draft version two weeks before submitting their final essay, which will include the introduction, conceptual scaffold, tentative structure, and a summary of the main arguments. In this report, students will also respond to a set of questions that will help them establish the relationship between their research and the course themes and topics. The goal of this assignment is for students to receive detailed feedback from the instructor on their essays. Further instructions will be posted on Canvas on Wednesday, August 17. This research report will be worth 16% of the total grade.

### *Student-led discussion (10pts)*

Throughout the course, each student will present the main ideas of a set of readings to the class and lead a group discussion around them. On Tuesday, August 2, I will circulate a list in which every student will select a day for their presentation. There will be more than one presenter per session. Students presenting on a given day will collectively write a short handout summarizing the key points, arguments, and concepts presented in the readings, concluding with at least five discussion questions to pose to the class. The summary and questions will be shared on Canvas with other students and the professor the night before our meeting. Discussion leaders will

conduct the session in any manner they choose, but their facilitation should encourage thoughtful discussion about the assigned readings. Readings marked with an [O] in the course schedule must be covered in the presentation and included in the handout. This assignment will be worth 10% of the total grade.

### *Participation & engagement (10pts)*

All students are expected to participate actively and contribute to class discussions. There are many ways of participating. Some of them include: discussing readings, making pertinent comments or questions, contextualizing course content within the broader themes of the course, proposing different interpretations of the materials we are studying, making eye contact, actively listening, and nodding. I am flexible on what counts as participation, so feel free to contact me so we can clarify expectations. On average, plan to participate once or twice per session. I will not be taking attendance, but please try to be punctual as a gesture of courtesy. If you miss a session, you will not receive points for participation & engagement unless you present proper documentation. If you are not feeling well or have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, please stay home, notify me at your earliest convenience, report your symptoms by completing the UC Davis Daily Symptom Survey, and get tested —this all counts as proper documentation. Participation and engagement will be worth 10% of the total grade.

### **Late assignments**

Each assignment should be submitted before its stated deadline. Please reach out to me via Canvas if there are pressing reasons why you need to turn in an assignment late. Extensions will occasionally be granted. Otherwise, late assignments will receive a 10% point deduction immediately. After this, an additional 10% will be deducted for each additional day you are late. No assignment will be accepted more than one week (7 days) after the stated deadline (including weekend days). If you miss a session, you will not receive points for participation & engagement unless you present proper documentation.

### **Course material**

In this course, we will read a selection of articles and book chapters. All the readings are available on Canvas, under the folder named “readings,” and organized per week. You are expected to do the assigned readings before our course meetings. Below, you will find a detailed schedule. If you have any problem accessing the material, please let me know as soon as possible.

Keep in mind that there is **no textbook assigned for this course**. There are, however, two suggested textbooks that are available to you at no cost via the UC Davis library:

1. Biehl, João, and Adriana Petryna, eds. *When people come first: critical studies in global health*. Princeton University Press, 2013.
2. Farmer, Paul, Jim Yong Kim, Arthur Kleinman, and Matthew Basílico, eds. *Reimagining global health: an introduction*. University of California Press, 2013.

### **Communication policy**

We will communicate via Canvas. Please visit the course site every week. If you have any questions, please send me a message and I will respond to you as soon as possible. However, allow me two business days to respond.

### **Accommodations**

Let me know via Canvas if you need any accommodations based on a documented disability. I rely on the Student Disability Center to make accommodations, so please contact them as well. For more information, visit the SDC website: <https://sdc.ucdavis.edu/>

### **Plagiarism and academic integrity**

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's work (in any media) as one's own. It can occur intentionally or unintentionally. Examples of plagiarism include the lack of appropriate citations when quoting someone's work, paraphrased text that lacks a correct reference to the original source, and work copied from a peer. See this link for more information: [sdc.ucdavis.edu/process.html](http://sdc.ucdavis.edu/process.html). I will report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs in accordance with the Code of Academic Conduct: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/cac.pdf>. Your responsibility is to know and comply with all other University of California policies and procedures regarding academic integrity.

### **GE Requirements**

This course meets the SS breadth and World Cultures and Writing Experience literacy requirements. Our course addresses the World Cultures literacy requirement by studying how medical experts around the World translate local and subjective experiences and redefine them as global diseases. We do so by critically engaging with scholarship and methodologies in the contemporary social sciences (SS requirement). You will reflect on these matters through writing exercises (WEL requirement). The purpose of these writing exercises is to strengthen practical writing skills, so please expect to write reports and essays every week.

## Course Schedule

### **Tuesday, August 2: Introduction to the course.**

> Hanna, Bridget, and Arthur Kleinman. “Unpacking Global Health.” In Farmer, Paul, Jim Yong Kim, Arthur Kleinman, and Matthew Basilio, eds. *Reimagining global health: an introduction*. University of California Press, 2013: 15-32.

[List for Student-led discussions will be circulated]

[Lab 1 posted]

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### **Wednesday, August 3: Identify topics of interest.**

[Lab 1, due 5:00 p.m.]

[Lab 2 posted]

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### **Thursday, August 4: Seeing the “global.”**

> Law, John. “And if the global were small and noncoherent? Method, complexity, and the baroque.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22, no. 1 (2004): 13-26.

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### **Tuesday, August 9: From International to world health.**

> Birn, Anne-Emanuelle. “The stages of international (global) health: histories of success or successes of history?” *Global Public Health* 4, no. 1 (2009): 50-68.

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### **Wednesday, August 10: Actors, places, and temporalities.**

[Lab 2, due 5:00 p.m.]

[Lab 3 posted]

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### **Thursday, August 11: Eradication and development.**

> Stepan, Nancy Leys. *Eradication: ridding the World of diseases forever?*. Reaktion Books, 2013. Introduction and Ch. 1.

[O] Packard, Randall M. *A history of global health: interventions into the lives of other peoples*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016. Ch. 7 & 8.

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### **Tuesday, August 16: The politics of implementation.**

> Greenough, Paul. “Intimidation, coercion, and resistance in the final stages of the South Asian smallpox eradication campaign, 1973–1975.” *Social science & medicine* 41, no. 5 (1995): 633-645.

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### **Wednesday, August 17: Identify social dimensions.**

[Lab 3, due 5:00 p.m.]

[Guidelines for the Research report posted]

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**Thursday, August 18: Social medicine and Primary health care.**

> Cueto, Marcos, and Steven Palmer. 2014. "Primary Health Care, Neoliberal Response, and Global Health in Latin America." In *Medicine and Public Health in Latin America: A History*, 204–58. New Approaches to the Americas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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**Tuesday, August 23: Civil and philanthropic initiatives.**

>Redfield, Peter. *Life in crisis: The ethical journey of doctors without borders*. University of California Press, 2013. Ch. 2.

>Youde, Jeremy. "The Rockefeller and Gates Foundations in global health governance." *Global Society* 27, no. 2 (2013): 139-158.

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**Wednesday, August 24: Building an argument.**

[Research report due 5:00 p.m.]

[Lab 4 posted]

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**Thursday, August 25: Biosecurity and emergent diseases.**

>King, Nicholas B. "Security, disease, commerce: ideologies of postcolonial global health." *Social studies of science* 32, no. 5-6 (2002): 763-789.

>Wald, Priscilla. *Contagious: Cultures, carriers, and the outbreak narrative*. Duke University Press, 2008. Introduction

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**Tuesday, August 30: Neoliberalism & global health.**

>Adams, Vincanne. "Evidence-Based Global Public Health: Subjects, Profits, Erasures." In Biehl, João, and Adriana Petryna, eds. *When people come first: critical studies in global health*. Princeton University Press, 2013: 54 - 90.

[O] Clarke, Adele E., Janet K. Shim, Laura Mamo, Jennifer Ruth Fosket, and Jennifer R. Fishman. "Biomedicalization: Technoscientific transformations of health, illness, and US biomedicine." *American sociological review* (2003): 161-194.

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**Wednesday, August 31: Developing main points.**

[Lab 4, due 5:00 p.m.]

[Guidelines for the final essay posted]

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**Thursday, September 1: Metrics & accounting.**

>Adams, Vincanne [ed.]. *Metrics: what counts in global health*. Duke University Press, 2016. Chap 1.

[O] Richardson, Eugene. *Epidemic Illusions: On the Coloniality of Global Public Health*. MIT Press. 2020. Ch. 6.

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**Tuesday, September 6: A mor-than-human world.**

>Fearnley, Lyle. *Virulent Zones: Animal Disease and Global Health at China's Pandemic Epicenter*. Duke University Press. 2020. Introduction and Ch. 1.

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**Wednesday, September 7: Facing planetary change.**

>Watts, Nick, et al. "Health and climate change: policy responses to protect public health." *The lancet* 386.10006 (2015): 1861-1914.

[O] Hayes, Katie, G. Blashki, J. Wiseman, S. Burke, and L. Reifels. "Climate change and mental health: Risks, impacts and priority actions." *International journal of mental health systems* 12, no. 1 (2018): 1-12.

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**Thursday, September 8: Course conclusion.**

[Final essay, due 5:00 p.m.]