NS 4570/Econ 4740:
HEALTH, POVERTY, AND INEQUALITY: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Fall 2018
Tuesday/Thursday 11:40 a.m.–12:55 p.m.

Professor David E. Sahn

Course description:

The course will focus on issues of global health challenges and their relationship to poverty and inequality. We will explore the nature and extent of global inequalities in health, and the possible policy responses to improving health and well-being and reducing observed disparities. We will examine global health inequalities at various levels, including across countries, at the national level, and even within the household. Likewise, the class will examine the implications of the health crisis that afflicts the poorest countries, especially in Africa. The ethics of dealing with problems of global health inequality, as well as some policy options, will also be discussed. The latter issue of how most cost-effectively to address global health problems will be the subject of class projects, as discussed below.

The class will consist of approximately one-third lectures, particularly to present specific concepts and methodological approaches; one-third student-led discussions of topics to be identified; and one-third group presentations of a project in which students examine options for ameliorating a major global health challenge. The class size is being limited with the expectation that students will come to each class having completed all the required assigned readings, including being prepared to lead and/or actively participate in a discussion.

In terms of the discussion sessions, small groups of students will be assigned various leadership roles in the classroom discussion sessions. The students will take the lead in actively debating and discussing different perspectives on the nature of and solutions to global health issues. All students in the class will be required to participate. The selection of students for any given session will be randomized and informed of their roles one week ahead of the discussion. In some cases, the discussion will be set up as a debate between two juxtaposing viewpoints. The students not assigned leadership roles for a given class discussion will still be required to formulate at least one question and one comment (to which the leaders should respond), which must be posted on the class website ahead of the class period for the discussion. These posts will be anonymous to everyone but me. I, along with the students leading the discussion, will selectively choose from the submitted questions/comments to help kick off the discussion session. These questions will be due no later than noon two days prior to the scheduled discussion. For that reason, **students must do the readings before the discussion sessions and must attend these sessions**. Our class discussions are public goods—your preparation and participation benefit your classmates as well as yourself.
As noted above, there will also be a group student project that will involve a presentation and the preparation of a policy paper on how to solve or address a major global health problem, along with a funding proposal. The group report and presentation will involve students working as a team to develop this proposal using a predetermined budget. The group will be asked to prepare something that is in the style of the Copenhagen Consensus (http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com). I will assign students to groups early in the beginning of the semester, based on individual student preferences expressed for particular topics. Every student will not necessarily be assigned to a group reflecting his or her first preference, or even second choice, but I will do my best to take into account individual interests.

During the last half of the semester, each group will present their proposal to the class. This implies that most of the work in preparing these term projects will be done in the first 8 (of the 14) weeks of the semester. This should be advantageous, as I am aware that student work demands really increase in November. The students in the audience will be asked to come to class with questions and critiques at the times that the funding proposals are presented. After each presentation, students in the audience will also be required to post their assessments, comments, and critiques on the class website. These postings again will be anonymous to everyone but me. Based on these assessments, the presenting group will be asked to revise their Challenge paper.

The course final will consist of an approximately 8-page, double-spaced assignment in which you will be asked to allocate the budget among the various activities of the proposal, and justify your choice in terms of considerations, such as the relative importance of the problem being addressed, the costs associated with each activity, and its feasibility of addressing the problem.

**Grade:**

The grade for the class will be composed of the following:

25% — 2 quizzes that will cover material primarily from the lectures: October 4 and December 4

10% — Group-led discussion session and other class participation

5% — Question submissions for discussion sessions

30% — Group Challenge report and presentation (of which 75% of the grade will be based on the scoring of the papers and presentations by the students, and 25% will be based on my scoring)

10% — Comments and critique of Challenge proposals

20% — Final paper
Calendar for Challenge paper submission:

September 10:  1-to-2-page statement (double spaced) on the major themes/interventions to be taken in Challenge paper
October 11:   Detailed annotated outline for your Challenge paper (~ 5 to 8 double-spaced pages)
October 25:  Draft of Challenge paper (~ 20 double-spaced pages, exclusive of tables and figures)
December 7:  Revision of group Challenge paper
December 15:  Final paper

Prerequisites:  Introductory Microeconomics and Introductory Statistics

Meeting Time and Location:  Tuesday–Thursday 11:40 a.m.–12:55 p.m.
MVR Hall G71

Office Hours:  Thursday 2–3:30 p.m. and by appointment
309 Savage Hall
David.Sahn@cornell.edu

Course Website:  http://www.blackboard.cornell.edu

Course Website builder:  Patricia Mason, mailto:pkm6@cornell.edu  All assignments will be submitted on blackboard and submitted via email to Patricia Mason

Class Outline

Definitions: Concept of Well-being—Poverty, Health and Inequality


**Health and Economic Development**


*Recommended reading.*
Health and Economic Inequality


Health Inequality Measurement


Gender Inequality


Global Burden of Disease


Cost Effectiveness and DALYs


Macroeconomics of Health


Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals


Global Food Inequality


Ethics I: Food System


Service Delivery and Program Effectiveness


Foreign Aid and The Role of External Assistance


Fiscal Incidence

