Sociology of HIV/AIDS: Global and U.S. Experiences of Epidemic
SC077: Spring 2010

Tuesdays/Thursdays 9:00-10:20
Lyons 207

Instructor: Shelley White
Office: McGuinn 410D
Email: mlwhite@bc.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 10:30-12:00 And by appointment

Course Description

This course explores the social dimensions of global and U.S. experiences of HIV/AIDS. We examine the social forces that impact and determine the course and experience of the epidemic as we also explore the impact that the epidemic has had on communities and cultures worldwide. The course surveys 1) the history and epidemiology of the epidemic; 2) the social construction of the disease; 3) the impact upon and response from particularly affected communities and social groups; 4) social issues in testing, treatment and prevention; and 5) the politics of governmental, non-governmental and grassroots responses to the disease.

As a core course, the class will include the following:

Perennial Questions: The HIV/AIDS epidemic teaches us a great deal about society and about ourselves as global citizens. Through our readings, research, class discussions, and personal reflections, we will be challenged to consider the following questions: How do we understand HIV, disease, and related social phenomenon within the broad social system of structural determinants (i.e. social, political, economic, and environmental)? How is HIV/AIDS socially constructed in society and what role have governments, health organizations, educational systems, religious institutions, health activists, citizens and others played in shaping and challenging these understandings of disease? What obligations do societies and individuals have to respond to HIV/AIDS and other epidemic diseases? How do we understand the concepts of innocence, morality, blame, stigma and bystanding in the context of global disease? Finally, what are the possibilities for change, and how might governments, non-governmental institutions, communities, and individuals shape effective responses to HIV/AIDS?

Historical Perspective: In order to create deep understandings of the contemporary picture of HIV/AIDS, we must employ a lens that is, in the words of Paul Farmer, “historically deep and geographically broad.” We begin our course by exploring an in-depth history of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the U.S. and globally. We consider how early responses and key decisions by those in power shaped the future course of HIV/AIDS. We also consider the rich history of social movements which have challenged and shaped not only HIV/AIDS, but deeply entrenched cultural understandings of difference and disease.

Cultural Diversity: Culture has a tremendous influence on disease transmission, prevention approaches, understandings of health and illness, and personal and political responses to disease. HIV/AIDS, as an infectious disease long associated with taboo topics of sexuality and drug use, has been deeply stigmatized and surrounded by cultural myths and misperceptions. In this course, we attempt to disentangle these, and to understand the various ways in which culture shapes and is shaped by the
HIV/AIDS epidemic. We also, contrary to the early, oft-repeated mantra that “AIDS does not discriminate,” aim to understand HIV/AIDS as a disease of inequality. We explore how existing class, gender, sexuality, race and other inequalities have shaped diverse experiences of HIV/AIDS around the world, and how HIV/AIDS has disproportionately affected those already disadvantaged in our domestic and global social systems.

Personal Philosophy: This course continually grapples with the question of how a largely preventable disease has evolved to be one of the most catastrophic epidemics of our times. In 1998, shortly before his death, Jonathan Mann challenged us, stating: "Our opportunity is historic. For when the history of AIDS and the global response is written, our most precious contribution may well be that at a time of plague we did not flee, we did not hide, we did not separate ourselves." Many have called for global action on AIDS, and at many historical moments, global and U.S. efforts have fallen short. In exploring this complex history and the contemporary global epidemic, students will be asked to consider their own personal and moral commitments, their understandings of human rights obligations, and their values around concepts of global citizenship. Through our readings, research, class discussions, and written assignments, students are also encouraged to develop their own skills of critical analysis, in questioning existing understandings of epidemic and response, and imagining new approaches to change.

Methodology: Through our readings and research, this course exposes us to various methodological approaches employed in sociology, public health, economics, and political science. These include both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including epidemiological studies, ethnographic and interview-based research, case studies, household survey research, cross-cultural and comparative analyses, policy analyses and others. We will examine the ways in which various theoretical approaches shape the perspectives of our authors, and will consider the limits of academic knowledge production.

Writing component: Students will be encouraged to develop their writing and critical analysis skills through two written paper assignments. The first will allow students to research HIV/AIDS in a particular country, and to analyze the factors that have shaped local experiences of epidemic and response. In the second paper, students will explore a topic of interest related to the social, political, and/or economic aspects of HIV/AIDS. Students will also produce occasional short, written homework assignments and personal written reflections that engage the reading materials and course content.

Required Texts


Course Requirements and Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1: Country Study</td>
<td>Due February 25th</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam (In-Class)</td>
<td>On March 30th</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2: Issue Analysis</td>
<td>Due May 4th</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (Take-Home)</td>
<td>Due by May 11th at 12:30 PM</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Homework Assignments &amp; Quizzes</td>
<td>Assigned Periodically</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Course Preparation*</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note that there is one required evening session for the course, on March 17th from 7:30-9:30. Attendance for this session will be counted as double.

Policy on Papers and Exams

Papers are due on the date indicated above, at the start of the class session. Extensions are granted only on rare occasions, and with proper documentation (i.e. medical note, Dean’s note). For late papers, one full grade is deducted for each week the paper is late (i.e. for the first week late, the maximum grade is B+). If a paper is due Tuesday, it is considered one week later if it is not collected during the class session, whether it is passed in on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday or any day until the following Tuesday.

Please print out your papers, review them for quality, and hand them in during class. Papers will be accepted by email only in unusual circumstances, and with prior permission. The Final Take Home Exam should be printed and passed in to my mailbox in McGuinn 410 any time prior to May 11th at 12:30 PM. If you plan to leave campus prior to May 11th, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have passed in a paper copy of your exam prior to your departure. Exams will be collected promptly at 12:30 on May 11th and late exams will not be accepted.

Please ensure that your travel plans for the Easter Break allow you to take the Mid-Term Exam in class on March 30th. Make-up exams are scheduled only in extenuating circumstances.

Academic Integrity

Students should be familiar with the Boston College Policy on Academic Integrity, found at: http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity. When writing papers, be sure to cite any material that is not your own (or material you have previously written), whether direct quotes or concepts and ideas.

Academic Support

Students requiring accommodations for success in this course should see me, and should contact the Office of Disability Services: http://www.bc.edu/offices/odsd/disabilityservices.html. The Connors Family Learning Center is also available for tutoring and academic support: http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html

Readings and Class Schedule

Readings are assigned on a weekly basis. Please come to class each week, on Tuesday, having read the material for the week. Our tentative course schedule is provided below, though this schedule may change as we move through our semester.
Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments

**Part I: History and Overview of Epidemic**

**September 19 and 21**
*Introduction and Course Overview*
*Overview of HIV/AIDS Epidemic; Basics of HIV Transmission*

Readings:
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 1 & 2 (67 pgs)

**September 26 and 28**
*A History of the Epidemic: Creating a Timeline*

Readings:
- Ryan White – Entire Text, through Afterword (287 pgs)

**February 2 and 4**
*Understanding Stigma*
*AIDS in Africa*

Readings:
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapter 5 (32 pgs)
- Irwin, et al – Myth One: AIDS and Africa (18 pgs)
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapter 23 (5 pgs)
- Lewis – Chapters 1 & 2 (36 pgs; 34 pgs)

**Part II: Social Causation and Social Construction**

**February 9 and 11**
*Understanding Impact/ Measuring an Epidemic*
*Social Causation of Disease*

Readings:
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 3 & 6 (30 pgs; 28 pgs)
- Kalipeni, et al – Intro & Chapter 3 (11 pgs; 9 pgs)
- Lewis – Chapter 3 (38 pgs)
- Ecological Model of Health [Hand-Out] (2 pgs)
February 16 and 18
Identity and Inequality: Race, Class and Gender
Social Constructions of Disease

Readings:
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapters 1, 6, & 8 (14 pgs; 15 pgs; 12 pgs)
- Lewis – Chapter 4 (36 pgs)

February 23 and 25
Identity and Inequality: Sexuality and Drug Use
Social Constructions of Disease

Readings:
- Irwin, et al – Myth Two: Dangerous Behavior (22 pgs)
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapters 9, 11, & 20 (11 pgs; 12 pgs; 12 pgs)

Due February 25: Paper 1 – Country Study
March 2 and 4: NO CLASS/SPRING BREAK

Part III: Human Rights, Development and Economy

March 9 and 11
HIV/AIDS and Human Rights

Readings:
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapter 18 (11 pgs)

March 16 and 18
Households, Families and Children

Readings:
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 7 & 8 (13 pgs; 28 pgs)
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapters 14, 19, & 22 (13 pgs; 20 pgs; 11 pgs)

***March 17th: Required Evening Session: 7:30-9:30***

March 23 and 25
Labor and the Economics of HIV
HIV/AIDS and Development

Readings:
- Barnett/Whiteside: Chapters 9, 10 & 11 (24 pgs; 28 pgs; 25 pgs)
- Irwin, et al – Myth Three: Corruption (18 pgs)
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapters 15 & 21 (11 pgs, 13 pgs)

**March 30: In-Class Mid-Term Exam**

**April 1: NO CLASS/EASTER BREAK**

**Part IV: Politics of Response**

**April 6 and 8**

*Approaches to Prevention and Care*

Readings:
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 12 (26 pgs)
- Lewis – Chapter 5 (46 pgs)

**April 13 and 15**

*Prevention and Behavior Change*

Readings:
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapter 13 (16 pgs)

April 20 and 22
Treatment and Medication Access

Readings:
• Irwin, et al – Myth Six: Vaccines & Myth Seven: Profits vs. Health (18 pgs)
Part V: Social Movements and Social Change

April 27 and 29

Social Movements and Social Change

Readings:
- Irwin, et al – Myth Ten: Nothing We Can Do (18 pgs)
- Stockdill, B.C. AIDS, Multiple Inequalities, and Activism. In Activism against AIDS: At the Intersections of Sexuality, Race, Gender, and Class. pp. 1-24. [E-Reserve] (23 pgs)

May 4 and 6

Global Commitment

Readings:
- Barnett and Whiteside – Chapters 13 & 14 (33 pgs; 17 pgs)
- Irwin, et al – Myth Eight: Limited Resources & Myth Nine: Nothing to Gain (18 pgs; 16 pgs)

Due May 4: Paper 2 – Issue Analysis

Due on or before May 11 at 12:30 PM: Final Take-Home Exam

Useful Websites

Kaiser Family Foundation
http://www.kff.org
http://www.kaisernetwork.org

The Body
www.thebody.com

UNAIDS
www.unaids.org

AIDS Education Global Information System (AEGiS)
http://www.aegis.com/

The Global Fund
http://www.theglobalfund.org/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

World Health Organization
http://www.who.int/en/

Health Resources and Services Administration:
HIV/AIDS Bureau
http://hab.hrsa.gov/aboutus.htm

HIV InSite
http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/