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>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1: Country Study</td>
<td>Due February 24th</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 2: Issue Analysis</td>
<td>Due April 14th</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam (Take Home)</td>
<td>Due May 5th</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Homework Assignments &amp; Quizzes</td>
<td>Assigned Periodically</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Course Preparation*</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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*Please note that there is one required evening session for the course, on March 23rd from 7:00-9:00 PM. 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 late 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.

*I encourage you to print double-sided if possible to save paper.

Academic Integrity

Students should be familiar with, and carefully follow, the Boston College Policy on Academic Integrity, found at: [http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity](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 as well as any 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/ods/disabilityservices.html](http://www.bc.edu/offices/ods/disabilityservices.html). The Connors Family Learning Center is also available for tutoring and academic support: [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html](http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html)

Technology

Use of laptop computers and cell phones during class is not permitted, except with prior permission. Please see me if you require the use of a laptop for note taking. Students are expected to check their BC email account regularly for class announcements and assignments.

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

WEEK 1: January 18 and 20
Introduction and Course Overview
Overview of HIV/AIDS Epidemic; Basics of HIV Transmission

Readings: 71 pgs
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 1 & 2 (67 pgs)

Optional Readings:
- Irwin, et al – Myth 1: AIDS and Africa (18 pgs)

WEEK 2: January 25 and 27
A History of the Epidemic: Creating a Timeline

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

WEEK 3: February 1 and 3
Understanding Stigma
AIDS in Africa

Readings: 113 pgs
- Kalipeni, et al – Chapter 23 (5 pgs)
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapter 5 (32 pgs)
- Lewis – Chapters 1 & 2 (36 pgs; 34 pgs)

Optional Readings:
- Lewis – Chapter 3 (38 pgs)

Part II: Social Causation and Social Construction

WEEK 4: February 8 and 10
Understanding Impact/ Measuring an Epidemic
Social Causation of Disease

Readings: 96 pgs
- Irwin, et al – Myth 2: Dangerous Behavior (22 pgs)

• Ecological Model of Health [Hand-Out] (2 pgs)

• Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 3 & 6 (30 pgs; 28 pgs)

**WEEK 5: February 15 and 17**

*Identity and Inequality: Race, Class and Gender*

*Social Constructions of Disease*

Readings: 119 pgs

- Kalipeni, et al – Intro & Chapters 1, 3, & 6 (11 pgs; 14 pgs; 9 pgs; 15 pgs)
- Lewis – Chapter 4 (36 pgs)

Optional Readings:

- Kalipeni, et al – Chapters 8, 9, 12, 14 (12 pgs; 10 pgs; 8 pgs; 13 pgs)

**WEEK 6: February 22 and 24**

*Identity and Inequality: Sexuality and Drug Use*

*Social Constructions of Disease*

Readings: 68 pgs

- Kalipeni, et al – Chapters 10, 11 & 20 (10 pgs; 12 pgs; 12 pgs)

Optional Readings:


Due February 24: Paper 1 – Country Study

Part III: Human Rights, Development and Economy

WEEK 7: March 1 and 3
Households, Families and Children

Readings: 86 pgs
• Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 7 & 8 (13 pgs; 28 pgs)
• Kalipeni, et al – Chapters 19 (20 pgs)

Optional Readings:
• Kalipeni, et al – Chapter 22 (11 pgs)

SPRING BREAK: March 7 – 11

WEEK 8: March 15 and 17
HIV/AIDS and Human Rights

Readings: 77 pgs
• Kalipeni, et al – Chapter 18 (11 pgs)

Additional Reading TBA

**WEEK 9: March 22 and 24**

*Labor and the Economics of HIV*

*HIV/AIDS and Development*

***March 23rd: Required Evening Session: 7:00-9:00 PM***

Readings: 116 pgs

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

**Part IV: Politics of Response**

**WEEK 10: March 29 and 31**

*Governance and Policy*

Readings: 107 pgs

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

**WEEK 11: April 5 and 7**

*Treatment, Medication Access, and Global Trade*

Readings: 96 pgs

- Irwin, et al – Myth 5: Obstacles to AIDS Treatment; Myth 6: Vaccines & Myth 7: Profits vs. Health (14 pgs; 8 pgs; 20 pgs)


**WEEK 12: April 12 and 14**

*Sex Education and Behavior Change*

Readings: 93 pgs


Optional Readings:

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

**Due April 14: Paper 2 – Issue Analysis**

**WEEK 13: April 19 (No Class April 21)**

*Global Commitment*

Readings: 46 pgs

Part V: Social Movements and Social Change

WEEK 14: April 26 and 28

Global Activism and Health

Readings: 80 pgs

- Irwin, et al – Myth 10: Nothing We Can Do (18 pgs)
- Stockdill, B.C. “AIDS, Multiple Inequalities, and Activism”. Pp. 1-24 in Activism against AIDS: At the Intersections of Sexuality, Race, Gender, and Class. [E-Reserve] (23 pgs)

WEEK 15: May 3 and 5

A Way Forward

Readings: 77 pgs

- Irwin, et al – Myth 8: Limited Resources & Myth 9: Nothing to Gain (17 pgs; 12 pgs)
- Barnett/Whiteside – Chapters 13 & 14 (32 pgs; 16 pgs)

Due May 5: Final Take-Home Exam

Useful Websites

- Kaiser Family Foundation
  http://www.kff.org
  http://www.kaisernetwork.org
- UNAIDS
  www.unaids.org
- The Body
  www.thebody.com
- Avert
  http://www.avert.org/
- The Global Fund
  http://www.theglobalfund.org/
- AIDS Education Global Information System (AEGiS)
  http://www.aegis.com/
- World Health Organization
  http://www.who.int/en/
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  www.cdc.gov
- HIV InSite
  http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu/
- Health Resources and Services Administration: HIV/AIDS Bureau
  http://hab.hrsa.gov/aboutus.htm