**Human Rights, Social Medicine, and the Physician**  
Syllabus: Spring 2004 Elective  
Emory University School of Medicine

“Medicine is inherently a social science, and politics is medicine in the most profound sense.”  
Rudolf Virchow, prominent 19th c. pathologist

*Report on the Silesian Typhus Epidemic*

This course will explore central issues and key questions in the historical practice of social medicine, as well as the emerging field of human rights and health. How do social forces become embodied as pathologies? What are pressing ethical considerations in the practice of contemporary medicine? How do political, economic, and historic trends influence the distribution of disease among different populations? How will new trends in the organization of health care affect the most vulnerable members of society? We will also explore the intersection between health and human rights, and the central tenets of this emerging field of praxis. What is the connection between the practice of medicine and the promotion of human rights? Are they complimentary, or are they mutually exclusive?

Improved hygiene, better housing, high-tech diagnostic methods, and new drugs and vaccines have enabled industrialized countries to drastically reduce the prevalence of killer infections, including tuberculosis, polio, and smallpox. Today, however, infectious diseases remain a leading cause of death in the world, and the incidences of many of these infections are once again on the rise. Drug-resistance among common infections is becoming an increasing cause of concern. The optimism of a quarter century ago has been tempered by a more humble and cautious view that is just beginning to recognize close linkages between disease burdens, violations of social and economic rights, and the forces of globalization in our rapidly changing world. This interdisciplinary course uncovers these linkages by integrating local, national and international perspectives to explore the interaction of social forces, human rights, and health.

This course will be taught by a team of physicians and epidemiologists engaged in the practice of health & human rights and social medicine in United States, with extensive experience of social and economic effects on health in developing countries.

**Course Faculty:**
- Timothy H. Holtz, MD, MPH (Course Director)  
- Alyssa Finlay, MD 

**Invited lecturers:**
- Carlos Del Rio, MD  
- Dabney Evans, MPH, CHES  
- Camara Jones, MD, MPH, PhD  
- Henry Kahn, MD  
- Brandon Kohrt  
- Aun Lor, MPH  
- Els Mathieu, MD  
- Sharmila Shetty, MD  

**Instructors:**
- Rollins, DGH, CDC  
- CDC  
- Chief of Medicine, Grady Hospital  
- Instructor, Rollins School of Public Health  
- Research Director on Social Determinants of Health, CDC  
- Professor Emeritus of Family-Preventive Medicine, Emory  
- MS2 Emory School of Medicine  
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
- CDC; Board of Directors, MSF  
- CDC; Former MSF volunteer
Course organization and requirements:

The course will meet on Monday afternoon from 4:30-6:50 pm in WHSCAB 104C. Each class period will consist of approximately one hour of lecture and one hour of discussion. Students are expected to prepare for each class by reading all assigned materials. In addition, students are encouraged to read optional materials if time allows. Films relevant to each week’s topic can be borrowed from the course director as needed.

Educational Objectives:
At the end of this course, students will:

1. Have an understanding of the historical roots of social medicine, and how it is practiced today.
2. Be able to articulate the links between human rights and health, and be able to articulate the synergistic relationship between addressing human rights and achieving the highest attainable standard of health.
3. Be able to analyze the social and economic forces that shape infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, and be able to think critically about how to address these diseases in resource poor settings.
4. Begin developing skills about how to recognize, diagnose, and evaluate survivors of torture and trauma in the clinical setting.
5. Be able to think critically about structural factors that prohibit achieving the highest attainable standard of health for the majority of the world’s people.

Evaluation in the course are based upon three criteria:

1. Engaged class participation.
3. Attendance through the semester.

Each student will prepare a short paper (10 pages) on a topic of relevance to the course’s central themes. The final paper should include a critical review of the relevant literature, integrating resources and data from the social and biological sciences to:

1. Describe a human rights problem relevant to physicians
2. Present an analysis of the problem
3. Formulate a plan of action how to address this human rights issue as a physician or group of health care professionals

The paper can be part of a more extensive research program, and may be directed toward ongoing or future research projects of relevance. Students are encouraged to meet individually with course faculty to discuss paper topics. The paper could be combined with the skill building exercise if an appropriate topic is chosen.

The skill building exercise and presentation will be something planned and carried out by groups of 2-3 students. One example could be a lobbying trip to a state legislator, which would include doing background research on a topic such as the medically uninsured in Georgia and determining the impact of legislation that is being proposed to ameliorate it. Another exercise could include doing an asylum interview, exam, and writing an affidavit under the supervision of an attending physician, or interviewing medical staff to determine their views on race and health.
Course readings:

Required books, available in paperback:

Mann J, Gruskin S, Grodin M, and G Annas, eds.
Amnesty International
Farmer, Paul

Recommended non-fiction reading:

Fadiman, Anne
Hilfiker, David
1990 Not All of Us Are Saints: A Doctor's Journey With the Poor. New York.
Kidder, Tracy
Kozol, Jonathan

Reading packet:

A CD-ROM reference of readings has been prepared will be provided to students who are registered in the course. Required books will be available at the Emory University Bookstore. Recommended books can be found at local area bookstores. If you have questions regarding the course or readings, please contact the course director.
Course Schedule and Readings:

I. Class introduction
Holtz, Finlay  
January 5

II. Historical Underpinnings of Social Medicine
Holtz, Finlay  
January 12

Readings:


Optional readings provided on CD:


Film:
Enemy of the People, Directed by George Schaefer, with Steve MacQueen and Charles Durning, 1978.
Damaged Care, Directed by Harry Winer, with Laura Dern, Adam Arkin, and Diane Ladd, 2002.

III. Health and Human Rights: the New Social Medicine? January 26

Readings:

Other readings provided on CD:
Hunt P. The right to health: from the margins to the mainstream. Lancet 2002;360:1878.

Film:
- Silkwood, Directed by Mike Nichols, with Meryl Streep, Kurt Russell, and Cher, 1983.

### IV. The Right to Health, the Uninsured, and the US Health Non-system

**Kahn**

February 9

Readings:

Optional readings provided on CD:

Comparative health system readings provided on CD:


**Film:**


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V. Plagues of Poverty: The Re-emergence of Infectious Disease in the Modern Era

Holtz, Finlay

February 16

Readings:


Optional TB readings provided on CD:

- Reichman LB. How to ensure the continued resurgence of tuberculosis. Lancet 1996;347:175-177.


Other readings provided on CD:
- MSF website: www.msf.org
- MSF Access to Essential Medicines campaign: www.accessmed-msf.org/index.htm

Film:
- Your Money or Your Life, Film by Médecins Sans Frontières, 2002.

VI. The Global Practice of Torture and the Role of the Physician

Readings:
- Newspaper articles, torture during wartime in US

Optional readings about torture provided on CD:
- Pincock S. E xposing the horror of torture. L an e t 2003;362:1462-1463.

Asylum and care of survivors:
- Eisenman D, K eller A, K im G. S urvivors of torture in a general medical setting: how often have patients been tortured, and how often is it missed? W est J M ed 2000;172:301-304.
- G ormley L. V isiting detainees to prevent torture. L an e t 2003;361:1557.

Trauma and mental health:
- M any articles by Richard M ollica.

Involvement of physicians:


Film:

Death and the Maiden, Directed by Roman Polanski, with Ben Kingsley and Sigourney Weaver, 1994.

**VII. Confronting Institutionalized Racism: Race and Disparities in Health in the US**

*Jones March 1*

Readings:


Optional readings provided on CD:


Film:
- Miss Evers' Boys, Directed by Joseph Sargent, with Alfre Woodard, Laurence Fishburne, and Ossie Davis, 1997.

VIII. HIV: Equity and Human Rights in Resource Poor Settings

Del Rio

March 15

Readings:


Optional readings provided on CD:


Film:

- And the Band Played On (Book by Randy Shilts), Directed by Roger Spottiswoode, with Matthew Modeine, Alan Alda, Nathalie Baye, Richard Gere, Angelica Huston, 1993.

IX. Dying for Growth: The Political Economy of Global Human Rights Abuses

Holtz

March 22

Readings:


Optional readings provided on CD:


Film:


X. Militarism, War, and Health

Kohrt, Lor

Readings:


### Optional readings on war provided on CD:


### Embargoes:


### Landmines:


### Nuclear war:


**Arms trade:**


**Post-conflict setting:**


Peace and health:

Film:

XI. Physicians and Humanitarian Assistance (Can be substituted by optional class)
Holtz, Mathieu, Shetty
April 5
An evening with health professionals from Medecins Sans Frontieres, Doctors for Global Health, and Doctors of the World.
Readings:

Other readings provided on CD:

Health of humanitarian aid workers:

Film:
- Three Kings, Directed by David Russell, with George Clooney, Mark Wahlberg, Ice Cube, and Spike Jonze, 1999.

XII. Social Responsibility of Health Professionals

Holtz, Finlay

Readings:
- Sidel VW. Asklepios and Zeus. Harvard Medical School Alumni Bulletin 1982;Fall:30-32.
- Sidel VW. The social responsibilities of health professionals: lessons from their role in Nazi Germany. JAMA 1996;276(20):1679-1681.
- Iacopino V, Waldman RJ. War and health: from Solferino to Kosovo – the evolving role of physicians. JAMA 1999;281:479-481.

Optional readings provided on CD:

Film:

XIII. Presentations by students - 1 April 19
Students from the class will present the results of their research projects.
Z1. Addressing Social Suffering in the Individual and Community

TBD

Readings:


Z2. Women’s health and human rights

TBD

Readings:


Optional readings provided on CD:


**Z3. Bioterrorism and the Reconfiguration of the US Health Care System**

**Unknown**

**Readings:**


Z4. Social Medicine in Latin America

TBD

Readings:

Z5. The Role of Social Epidemiology

To be determined

Readings:


Z6. Inequities, Globalization, and Macroeconomics
To be determined

Readings:

- Feacham RGA. Globalisation is good for your health, mostly. BMJ 2001;323:504-506.