Film and Public Health Course (Preliminary Syllabus)
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General Description

This course will combine feature films and documentaries with discussions of relevant public health issues. Topics will include the U.S. health care system, poverty, environmental degradation, social injustices, occupational safety and health standards, labor rights, organ transplants, incarceration and the death penalty, religious influences on public health, reproductive rights, obesity, women’s rights, the role of corporations, the AIDS epidemic, world hunger, the tobacco and pharmaceutical industries, homosexuality, and gun violence. Readings on the above topics will supplement the films.

Course will be 4 units, graded, meeting twice a week for two hours each session. One session each week will involve watching the film/excerpts; another session will include a brief lecture on the topics relevant to each film, followed by class discussion and debate.

Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Describe the ways in which feature films and documentaries educate the public about important health topics
- Analyze films by content, point of view, accuracy, tone, style, structure, cinematography, and use of music and images
- Discuss the scientific, ethical, and political ramifications of public health topics covered in films and documentaries
- Articulate individual and policy-level solutions to major public health problems

Films

Constant Gardener
Human subject experimentation in the developing world, the pharmaceutical industry

Maria Full of Grace
The floriculture industry, occupational safety, health, and environmental standards, international drug trade, women’s health

Shawshank Redemption
Jails and prisons, prisoner abuse, rights of the incarcerated, rehabilitation and release

Blue Gold: World Water Wars
Water scarcity, commodification of water, bottled water
Coma
Commodification of body parts, international organ sales, definitions of brain death, controversies over transplant lists, University of Pittsburgh’s history, living related donors, presumed consent

God’s Children
Developing world poverty, starvation

Philadelphia
AIDS epidemic, stigmatization

Dead Man Walking
Death penalty, gun and other violence, forgiveness

Blood Diamond
Diamond industry, the resource curse

Inconvenient Truth
Global warming, environmental degradation

Morgan Spurlock’s 30 Days: Episode on homosexuality
Homosexuality, gay marriage, intolerance, LGBT issues

Scenes from the Following:

The Corporation
Corporations

Blue Vinyl
Environmental toxins

Sicko
US health care system

Adventures in a TV Nation
Pharmaceutical companies, censorship

Supersize Me
Obesity, fast food industry

Bowling for Columbine
Gun violence

Jesus Camp
Religion and state policy
Hell House
Religion and sex, AIDS, gun violence

The Yes Men
Corporate control of environmental resources

Planet Earth
Environmental degradation

**Other Film Possibilities:**

The Mission
The Insider
The Handmaid’s Tale
Bob Roberts
Deadly Deception: GE, Nuclear Weapons, and Our Environment
The Triangle Factory Fire Scandal
Lone Star
Miss Evers Boys
The Devil’s Water
Darfur Diaries
Thirst
Wit
Born into Brothels
Dax’s Case
Sybil
The Thin Blue Line
Tsotsi
Who Killed the Electric Car
King Corn
Flow: For the Love of Water
Black Gold
The Price of Sugar
Million Dollar Baby
The Doctor
Plastic Disasters
Sand and Sorrow
After Innocence
North Country
The Shape of Water
Trade Secrets (Bill Moyers Reports)
A Civil Action
Erin Brokovich

**Grading**
Class participation – 40%
Presentation and brief discussion of 5-10 minute filmclip – 20%
Final paper: Movie review which encompasses not only a critique of the film, but an exploration of the relevant public health topic(s) – reviews can cover a film covered in class, or one chosen by the student in conjunction with the instructor – 40% (Instructors will work with students to assist them in trying to publish exceptionally well-written papers)

**PSU Curriculum Map**

**Campus-Wide Learning Outcomes:**
- Critical Thinking - 4
- Communication - 4
- Ethics and Social Responsibility - 4
- Diversity - 3
- Internationalization - 3
- Sustainability - 2
- Engagement - 3

0 = this outcome is not addressed in this course
1 = students are introduced to concepts related to this outcome
2 = students are given opportunities to practice using knowledge, skills, attitudes related to this outcome
3 = students learn to integrate and synthesize in the area of this outcome; it represents a major theme of the course