



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit - 2020-2021

Future Challenges in Global Health

Course Code	AB_1042
Credits	6
Period	P1
Course Level	300
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Science
Course Coordinator	dr. N. Blignaut-van Westrheden
Examiner	dr. N. Blignaut-van Westrheden
Teaching Staff	prof. dr. J.E.W. Broerse, dr. D.R. Essink
Teaching method(s)	Study Group, Lecture, Partial Exam

Course Objective

- The student can list the five future challenges in global health and classify examples of health problems under each of these challenges.
- The student can explain how new developments in health and life sciences interact with global health challenges.
- The student can examine different policies developed at both the national and international level to address global health challenges.
- The student can compare policy-making processes between countries and the different visions that exist on policy.
- The student can apply certain methods, such as causal analysis and document review to perform a policy analysis within a team of students, on a real-world global health challenge.
- The student can develop a policy brief on the basis of different sources of information (policy documents, scientific publications, grey literature), justify and present a synthesis of his/her findings verbally and in written form.

Course Content

The course 'Future Challenges in Global Health' is the first course within the minor 'Biomedical and Health Interventions' as well as the minor 'Global Health' of the Bachelor's programs Health Sciences, Biomedical Sciences and Health & Life (and other health-oriented Bachelors programs).

The world of biomedical and healthcare interventions is in constant flux – new and emerging infectious diseases, changing disease patterns, demographic changes, rising costs of health care; all of which add complexity to the already considerable challenges. At the same time, some innovative answers to these challenges have emerged, such as novel pharmaceuticals, neurotechnologies, gene therapy, e-Health and m-Health (e.g. using a smart phone as a heart rate monitor or as a tool in losing weight or enhancing physical activity), and field test kits replacing

entire laboratories. This begs the question: How can we make these answers fit the challenges, which are constantly emerging? History reveals a number of health interventions, which have shown to not be that effective, as well as a numerous unintended consequences (for example how does an anti-malaria campaign lead to collapsing roofs and to cats being parachuted over Borneo?). This course explores how we can learn from these experiences, and use the evidence on effective biomedical and health care interventions to develop better health policies.

The beginning of the course provides you with an overview of both current and future challenges, in addition to scientific advancements in global health. We will also study how various countries and organizations, like the WHO, UN, and EU have addressed and dealt with these challenges, and why their policies have (not) been effective. We will use policy models to analyse real-world problems, solutions and policies (e.g. intervention programs). Addressing challenges in global health means both having a thorough knowledge of the health problem and potential interventions and perhaps more crucially, to understand the policy process and gain insight into how interventions can be effectively put into practice.

A prominent example of this is the following. We know there is an ideal intervention to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS: a condom. Yet, the disease still spreads, and this is not due to a lack of knowledge. This leaves us with lingering questions such as when is scientific knowledge important? Where do politics come in? Do we need to involve more people in setting up health interventions? Do we need to work in public-private partnerships?

In the practical part of the course, you will use your newly acquired knowledge and apply it in small project teams. As researchers with a thorough knowledge on a particular global health challenge (e.g. poor maternal health outcomes in women in a low-income country like Tanzania, or the effects of climate change on population health) you will write a policy brief, with the ultimate aim to influence policy-making on this health challenge. By doing this, you will learn to work with the interdisciplinary practice of policy research and project management. The problem, as well as the policy and legislative context in which the selected global health challenge occurs, should be critically analysed and written down in a concise, to the point policy brief and presented to other course participants.

Teaching Methods

Lectures (18 hrs), training workshop (2 hrs), working groups assignment (16 hrs), self study (125.5 hrs), exam (2.5 hrs)

Method of Assessment

Written exam (50%) and assignment (50%). Both parts need to be passed.

Entry Requirements

The course is open to students from all fields of study.

Literature

Selected materials are made available through Canvas.

Target Audience

Course for students within the minor Global health and the minor Biomedical and health interventions.

Additional Information

Part of the minor Global health and the minor Biomedical and health interventions.

This minor course requires a minimum of 25 participants to take place.