Health and Human Rights in Kenya

IPBH-3000 (3 Credits / 45 class hours)

SIT Study Abroad Program:
Kenya: Urbanization, Health, and Human Rights

Course Description
The Health and Human Rights in Kenya seminar is designed to provide first-hand academic knowledge of Kenyan healthcare challenges and healthcare systems, together with analyses of locally-informed debates surrounding human rights. Course content is provided via lectures, discussions, readings, presentations, and educational excursions. The course details the mutually constitutive challenges of health and human rights in Kenya, while highlighting successful coalition building efforts, civil society organizations, the private sector, and others pursuing community-based approaches to myriad contemporary issues. Throughout the course, students will record and analyze aspects of the host culture, together with examinations of contemporary development theories and methodologies and current issues related to health and human rights in Kenya.

This seminar explores theoretical links between access to and reliance on Kenyan healthcare services and the conceptions of human rights of individuals and communities in a Kenyan social context. Questions raised will include:

- What does the term “right to health” mean to Kenyans?
- Who are the key actors determining who is granted which types of right to health?
- To what degree does right to health in Kenya coincide with international standards?
- How do these human rights have a direct impact on Kenyans access to healthcare?

To delve into these questions, lecturers and excursions will specifically address healthcare issues experienced by women and youth, in addition to other groups made vulnerable through their social or geographic positions, including those with chronic/stigmatized health conditions and/or in rural communities. The class will focus on the theoretical foundations underlying the assessment of “human rights” in a global and local medical context, while also investigating the intersecting political, economic and social frameworks currently existing in Kenya. Thus, this course emphasizes the overarching economic and political policies of Kenya that have an impact on who accesses healthcare and in what capacity. Students analyze specific case studies that illuminate the problems, prospects, and potential methods of promoting health within the specific socio-cultural environment of Kenya.

Course Objectives

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The Health and Human Rights in Kenya seminar has an interdisciplinary, integrative, and critical focus encompassing 45 academic hours (3 credits). Its main objectives are to:

- Define key social, cultural, political and economic factors affecting current public health status and available health care services in Kenya;
- Gain in-depth knowledge, understanding, and critical analyses of present-day Kenya, with a focus on issues pertaining to health and human rights;
- Identify Kenya’s healthcare challenges in both urban and rural environments;
- Integrate hands-on, experiential learning in-country with academic understanding of current healthcare and human rights policy and theory.

**Learning Outcomes**

By the completion of Health and Human Rights in Kenya, students will be expected to:

- Identify international instruments of human rights and relevant provisions and policies related to health and human rights;
- Discuss strategies for human rights advocacy within Kenya’s public health program planning;
- Understand alternative healthcare systems in Kenya delivered in a variety of different socio-cultural contexts;
- Analyze the role of various state and private actors and institutions in healthcare policy in Kenya;
- Demonstrate the connections between a modern public health agenda and notions of human rights as they intersect with processes of social, economic and political change.

**Course Requirements**

This seminar provides students with an overview of the healthcare systems in present-day Kenya. Students will be exposed to the philosophy and practice of traditional healing and will also study modern healthcare practices in both rural and urban contexts. Students will explore a number of issues with an impact on healthcare, such as demographics, public health education, HIV/AIDS, orphaned and vulnerable children, women’s healthcare needs, differential access to healthcare, and issues regarding mental healthcare in various cultural contexts.

**Readings**

You are responsible for all the required readings, and should be prepared to bring them to bear on discussions in class. The readings will help you place the classes in their context, to challenge and engage lecturers, to generate questions for class discussions and to deepen your knowledge of particular aspects discussed in class.


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PLEASE NOTE: COURSE CONTENTS, LECTURERS, AND READINGS MAY BE MODIFIED AS NEEDED. SHOULD ANY CHANGE OF CLASS TOPICS OR LECTURERS BE NECESSARY, STUDENTS WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED.

**Evaluation and Grading Criteria**

**Assignments**
Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late hand-ins will be penalized. All assignments are evaluated according to organization, analytical quality, depth of understanding, argumentation and presentation of evidence. The final grade for the Health and Human Rights seminar will comprise three assignments:

- **Health and Human Rights Paper** 70%
- **Discussion Leadership and Participation** 20%
- **Rural Profile** 10%

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Health and Human Rights paper
For this assignment, students expand on a chose topic addressed in lectures and readings. To gain in-depth knowledge of current scholarship in this area, students are expected to undertake at least two site visits to organizations (institutions, hospital, etc.) or NGOs associated with their topic. They should conduct a minimum of two interviews on site with a list of questions prepared in advance and based on issues raised in the course readings and lectures.

The resulting theoretical and fieldwork research should be compiled into an 8-page paper. The goal of the paper is to demonstrate the students’ understanding and synthesis of the subjects addressed in the corresponding lectures, readings, site visits and discussions, and analyze this knowledge within the specific context of Kenya. Successful completion of the paper requires a thorough discussion of the topic of choice, including the socio-economic circumstances in which the topic is embedded. Students are required to use a minimum of four secondary sources to evidence their arguments. It is expected that the Health and Human Rights paper will be rigorously edited. Thus, it should be free of grammatical errors and typos. It should also follow standard citation formats for both primary and secondary sources. Most importantly, the paper should persuasively argue points in a concise and logical manner.

The paper may explore a topic such as the following:

- Public health systems in Kenya
- Right to health and healthcare
- Social determinants of health
- Gendered dynamics of health and human rights
- Malnourishment
- Health equity and human rights
- Mental health issues in Kenya
- Reproductive health
- HIV/AIDS in Kenya and access to ARVs
- Health financing
- Impacts of globalization on public health in Kenya
- Pharmaceutical industry and drug pricing

Discussion-leadership and Participation
This assignment combines classroom-based lectures, readings, and active participation in educational excursions with student and faculty-led discussions. Each student is required to lead at least one synthesizing discussion session during the course. Students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the material in order to facilitate group analysis of key themes and ideas related to health and human rights in Kenya and to draw on lectures, readings, and site visits. In addition to the discussion leadership, this grade will also reflect the active engagement and participation in the discussions led by your colleagues in the program. Thus, you are each expected to contribute to the discussion sessions led by your classmates as an active listener and engaged participant.

Rural profile
To be conducted during the rural homestay, students will produce a rural profile detailing issues pertaining to health and human rights in the village host community. In particular, students are encouraged to view the village in tandem with – rather than isolated from - nearby urban areas and to provide an overview, informed by their experiences during the homestay and conversations with members of the community, to elucidate the specific health issues unique to the area.

Grading Scale: The grading scale for all classes is as follows:

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Grading Criteria
An “A” grade for an assignment entails superior (not just “very good”) performance in terms of structure and organization of assignments, analysis, logical argumentation, consistency, and the provision of factual, numerical and/or historical evidence. In terms of class participation, an “A” grade refers to full attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all seminar lectures, discussions, field trips and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior. The level, frequency, and quality of student participation will be monitored and taken into account.

All written assignments should be typed and double-spaced. Always remember to keep back up files or email files to yourself so that nothing gets accidentally lost or erased.

Program Calendar
Lecture topics in the course may include:

- Introduction to Kenya
- International principles of public health and human rights
- Kenya’s public healthcare system
- Traditional healthcare systems in Kenya
- Patients rights as human rights
- Individual and community rights to health and healthcare
- Social determinants of health
- Human rights roles and responsibilities of the pharmaceutical industry
- Malnutrition and preventative care
- Gender-based violence in Kenya
- Mental health and relevant issues and challenges
- Major communicable and non-communicable diseases: TB, malaria, and polio
- Reproductive health and HIV/AIDS

Educational Excursions may include:

- **Rural Homestay** - Students spend 10 days living in a rural community to provide a comparative approach with health and human rights issues in Kenya’s urban areas
- **WOFAK** (Women fighting AIDS in Kenya) - This organization was established by women to provide quality care, support and empowerment to women and children infected and affected by HIV & AIDS, to enable them to live positively with the infection.
- **Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR)** - Students become familiar with the role of KNCHR in Kenyan society and the challenges faced by the Commission in its protection and promotion of human rights in Kenya.
- **Kibera School for Girls/Shining Hope** – Co-founded in 2009 by a former SIT student, Kibera School for Girls is the first tuition free school for girls in Kibera, serving an at-risk population with an innovative K-8 curriculum, integrated healthcare facilities, and after-
school programs, psychosocial support, and a boarding facility for those young girls experiencing violence, extreme neglect, and sexual assault in their home environment.

- **Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC)** - Students learn about GVRC and their efforts to mobilize resources to provide free medical treatment and psychosocial support to survivors of gender-based violence.

- **World Agroforestry Centre** – Here students learn of the Centre’s vision of rural transformation of the developing world, where smallholder households massively increase their use of trees in agricultural landscapes to improve their food security, nutrition, income, health, shelter, energy resources and environmental sustainability.

- **TIOMIN Resource Inc** - Students visit TIOMIN’s titanium mining areas on the Kenyan coast with a focus on the associated activities and their impact on the environment, economic development, health, and the related resettlement program of local villages.

- **Kisumu Youth Olympic Centre** – HIV/AIDS and Human Rights advocacy program in Kisumu

- **AMREF (African Medical and Research Foundation)** - This visit introduces students to AMREF strategies to strengthen local health systems and to design and enhance interventions that improve people’s access to health through their active participation.

- **KEMRI (Kenya Medical Research Institute)** – Students learn of the different activities KEMRI employs in "Meeting the Health Challenges of the 21st Century."

- **UNITID (University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases)** - At the Institute, students are introduced to various research projects pursued by UNITID.

**Student Expectations**

**Class Participation**
Participation in class refers to attendance, punctuality, attentive listening and active engagement in all lectures, discussions, educational excursions and other activities. It also means polite and respectful behavior.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.