

Traditional Vietnamese Medicine and Community Health

IPBH 3000 (3 credits)

Vietnam: Traditional Medicine and Community Health

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course introduces students to Vietnamese public health issues in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, with a major emphasis on the traditional Vietnamese medical system (TVM). This includes the philosophy that lies behind TVM and its connection with traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Students have an unparalleled opportunity to observe in a clinical setting. Through the introduction of key techniques associated with traditional Vietnamese medicine, such as herbal remedies, medicinal preparation, Vietnamese massage, and acupuncture with the added benefits of gentle electric stimulation, students will interact ethically and responsibly with Vietnamese medical doctors, hospital staff, and certified practical healers. Students also participate in local social activities, educational excursions, and group discussions. In this manner, students simultaneously develop a well-rounded understanding of TVM and some associated elements of TCM and intercultural skills required for successful learning and communication. Based in Ho Chi Minh City, the largest city in Vietnam, students engage with diverse methods and approaches of traditional healing and learn how the Vietnamese interact and support each other. Particularly, students can visit and observe how the local Chinese community in Ho Chi Minh City has preserved Chinese traditional medicine through centuries. Students spend four days of the rural excursion in Mekong Delta and participate in a one-week field excursion to the ethnic minority areas in Da Lat City in the Central Highland areas of Vietnam in which indigenous medical systems in rural areas are introduced. The excursion includes meetings with local medical practitioners.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Define Vietnamese concepts and the philosophy that underlies traditional Vietnamese medicine;
- Analyze the concept of “holistic health” and discuss its significance in diverse Vietnamese/Asian philosophical perspectives;
- Demonstrate how traditional health practices are both supportive of and alien to a modern allopathic health approach, with examples drawn from case studies observed in Mekong Delta and Da Lat in Central Highlands;
- Analyze the intersections of globalization, a modern development agenda, and environmental change with traditional health and medicine practices in southern Vietnam;
- Identify the pressing community health issues that Vietnam currently faces, especially ethnic minorities.

- Differentiate commonalities and differences between Vietnamese and Western health practices.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English or in Vietnamese with English translation.

Methodology

Lectures are presented by professors and doctors from the Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) Provincial Traditional Vietnamese Medicine Department of University of Medicine in HCMC, the HCMC Provincial Traditional Medicine Hospital, HCMC Medical University, and the clinics in China Town in HCMC. Experts working with local and international NGOs, and outside scholars present additional lectures in HCMC and during educational visits in Mekong Delta and in minority areas in Da Lat City, Lam Dong Province. Field excursions include the rural villages in Mekong Delta and minority areas, a visit to a traditional Vietnamese FITO Museum in HCMC, a first-hand experience of a foot massage, a visit to a women's and children's hospital, a visit to a rural medical facility, a visit to the Department of TVM of HCMC University, and visits to a number of religious and cultural sites which enable students to experience firsthand the material covered in the course lectures.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate in all lectures, discussions, and educational excursions previously listed, and complete the required readings. They are given examinations covering the major content of these lectures and readings. In addition, students are encouraged to read newspapers and periodicals in both Vietnamese, Chinese, and English. There will be discussions, presentations, and a final essay. In addition, regularly scheduled processing and group discussions are held to review the material covered over the course of the program.

Recommended Texts

Recommended for reading prior to arrival

Thompson, M. (2015). *Vietnamese Traditional Medicine: A Social History*. Singapore: University Press

Kaptchuk, Ted J. *The Web That Has No Weaver: Understanding Chinese Medicine*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2000.

Course Content

***Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.**

Module 1: The Context of Traditional Medicine in Vietnam

This module provides a broad overview of the history and development of traditional Vietnamese medicine. Students also learn about the impacts of Chinese traditional medicine on Vietnamese traditional medicine. Sessions may include:

- Introduction to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- History of traditional Vietnamese medicine (TVM)
- Impact of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) into Vietnam

Field visits and activities in this module include:

- Ho Chi Minh City drop-off exercise with local volunteers
- Medicinal plant identification at the FITO Museum

- Walking tour at Chinese medicine outlets
- Community and group exercise at Tao Dan Park

Readings

Thompson, M. (2015). *Vietnamese Traditional Medicine: A Social History*. Singapore: University Press. (excerpts)

Monnais, L. Thompson, M. and Wahlberg, A. (2012). *Southern Medicine for Southern People: Vietnamese Medicine in the Making*. ISBN: 1-4438-3497-1 (excerpts)

Module 2: Introduction to the Vietnamese Health Care System

This module introduces key aspects of the Vietnamese health care system and some of the natural ways Vietnamese communities use to stay healthy.

Sessions in this module may include:

- Vietnamese health care system and its reform
- Causes of disease and Vietnamese diagnostic techniques
- HIV/AIDS, Covid-19 Pandemic and CDC prevention Center in HCMC
- Vietnamese's reproductive policy/women and children's health care
- Manipulation for common diseases

Field visits and activities in this module include:

- Visit Vietnamese University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Ho Chi Minh City
- Discussions with the doctors and students at the public health and TVM Departments
- Visit Tu Du Maternity Hospital and children hospitals in Ho Chi Minh City
- NGOs related to women health and reproductive health, such as the Breast Cancer Network Vietnam (BCNV)
- Visit HIV/AIDS and CDC Prevention Center in HCMC

Readings

Shillabeer, A. (2016). 1st ed. *The Health of Vietnam*. Springer: New York. (excerpts)

Lincoln, M. (2021) *Epidemic Politics in Contemporary Vietnam: Public Health and the State*. Bloomsbury Academic (excerpts)

Module 3: Fundamentals of Traditional Vietnamese Medicine

In this module, students learn about the fundamental components of Vietnamese traditional medicine. The module includes theories of the body, acupuncture, massage therapy, and the use of herbal medicine. The combination of western medicine and TVM is also addressed in this module.

Sessions may include:

- Theory of the body, meridians, and channels
- Uses of herbal medicine
- Acupuncture point location
- Introduction to therapeutic massage
- Vietnamese therapy and Five Animal Movements
- Combination of western medicine and TVM
- Blind people's massage training and education for the blind in Vietnam (optional)

Field visits may include:

- University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Ho Chi Minh City
- Shadowing the doctors around at the TVM hospital - Vietnamese Traditional Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, 187 Nam Ky Khoi Nghia street, district 1
- Herbal medicine preparation and decoction with TVM doctors
- Vietnamese medicinal food cooking
- Medicinal tea making
- Tam Duc Traditional Medical Clinic, focused on acupuncture in district 7
- Guided acupressure practice with TVM doctors at Tam Duc Clinic
- Demonstration of Vietnamese diagnostic techniques by TVM doctors
- Visit Blind Association and its training center in Ho Chi Minh City at 185 Cong Quynh, district 1, Ho Chi Minh City (optional)

Readings

Thê Giói Publishers. (2016). (Third Edition). *Vietnamese Traditional Medicine* Thê Giói Publishers, Hà Nội (excerpts)

WHO Regional Publications for Western Pacific. (2011). *Medicinal Plants in Viet Nam*. ISBN13: 978-9290611011 (excerpts)

Module 4: Influences of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Vietnam

This module introduces the methods of foreign traditional medicine as practiced in Vietnam, such as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Students visit with Chinese traditional healers and learn about the spiritual philosophy of Chinese traditional medicine and participate in yoga classes.

Sessions may include:

- Daoism and the philosophical basis of traditional Chinese medicine
- History of Chinese medicine
- Keeping healthy in a natural way
- Chinese health care system and its reform
- Theory of the body, meridians, and channels

Field visits and activities may include:

- Medicinal plant identification at the *Cho Lon* (China Town) in District 5
- Demonstration of Chinese diagnostic techniques by TCM doctors in Chinese clinics in *Cho Lon*
- Guided practice of *tuina* massage with TCM doctors
- Foot massage clinic in *Cho Lon*
- Yoga activities in youth clubs in Ho Chi Minh City

Readings:

Wu Changguo, Zhu Zhongbao (trans). (2004) *Basic Theory of Traditional Chinese Medicine*. Publishing House of Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (excerpts)

Wang Lufen, Li Zhaoguo (trans). (2004). *Diagnostics of Traditional Chinese Medicine*. Publishing House of Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (excerpts)

Jin Hongzhu, Yang Hongying (trans). (2004). *Chinese Tuina (Massage)*. Publishing House of Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (excerpts)

Module 5: Ethnic Approaches to Traditional Medicine

This module focuses on sample traditional medicine approaches as practiced by farmers and Khmer ethnic people in Mekong Delta and ethnic minorities such as K'ho local ethnic views on indigenous health practices and Thuoc Nam (southern medicine) in pagodas and visit Truc Lam Buddhist monastery. A few of the sessions in this module are delivered during excursions.

Sessions may include:

- Rural farmers and Indigenous views on health preservation
- Herb use and practices by Viet and Khmer people in Mekong Delta
- Central Highland Medicine by local K'ho ethnic group and Indigenous music and dance
- Vietnamese Zen meditation and meditation philosophy
- Truc Lam Buddhism and meditation practices

Field visits and activities may include:

- Can Tho City and Hoa An Village in Mekong Delta
- Visit to rural healthcare clinic in Mekong Delta
- Truc Lam Monastery
- Lach village by ethnic K'ho Lach group
- Lat Village by ethnic Chieng group
- Trek on Bidoup Mountain and learn about herbal medicine by local ethnic people

Readings

Long T. Nguyen, et al.(2016) *The Use of Traditional Vietnamese Medicine among Vietnamese Immigrants Attending an Urban Community Health Center in the United States*. National Library of Medicine: New York (excerpts)

Thich Thanh Tu. (2002). *Vietnamese Zen in the Late 20th Century*. Vietnamese Buddhist Meditation Congregation (excerpts)

Thich Nhat Hanh (1990). *Peace is at every step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life*. CA: Random House Publishing Group. (excerpts)

Discussion Sessions

- Discussion on TVM and TCM theory, herbal medicine, and community health
- Discussion on Vietnamese massage, the field excursion, and community health
- Discussion on acupuncture, acupressure, and community health

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Students are expected to prepare for, attend, and participate in all lectures, discussions, presentations and educational excursions, and complete the required readings. In addition, students are encouraged to read newspapers and periodicals in both Vietnamese, Chinese, and English.

Evaluation of student performance for the Vietnamese Traditional Medicine and Community Health and course is based on the following components:

Short Quizzes - 30%

Throughout the seminar, short quizzes consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions will be given, based on content from assigned readings, lectures, and field visits. Students are expected to be up to date with all assigned readings and to take notes during lectures and during visits to clinics, hospitals, and other organizations. Short answers will be evaluated based on accuracy of information, evidence of reflection on relevant program themes as applied to the topic at hand, and clarity of presentation.

Discussions and presentation - 20%

Students are required to participate in and occasionally facilitate weekly discussion sessions designed to synthesize readings and lectures and analyze information gathered within the larger academic questions of the course. Students must prepare study questions for the discussions and show their understanding of readings by explaining key points to their peers. Students are required to conduct small group or individual presentations after the Ho Chi Minh City Drop Off excursion and on TVM treatment techniques.

The Final Research Paper – 40%

The focused study period in Ho Chi Minh City and the two-week excursions in Mekong Delta and Da Lat form the basis of this research paper. The various topics of Vietnamese traditional healers in urban and rural settings allows students a window into the complexities of community health dynamics, gender roles, and faith-based healing. Based on their topic, students will have opportunities to travel in small groups to observe such healers and conduct group interviews. They will then be expected to discuss their impressions and findings in a six-to-eight-page paper, which addresses the specific functions of these traditional healers in a socially stratified context. The goal of the paper is to demonstrate the students' understanding and synthesis of traditional healing in Vietnam through discussion and analysis of a case study of a particular type of healer in an urban or rural setting. Successful completion of the paper requires a thorough discussion of the topic of choice, including a socio-economic and cultural dimension of analysis. Students are required to use a minimum of four secondary sources to evidence their arguments. It is expected that the paper will be rigorously edited so that it exhibits the following attributes: freedom from grammatical errors and typos; compliance with a standard format of citation for both primary and secondary sources; and, most importantly, a concise and logical argument.

Participation - 10%

Students are expected to attend all scheduled seminar activities and demonstrate engagement in lectures and excursions by active listening, note-taking, and asking relevant questions.

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

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Expectations and Policies

Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.

Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.

Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak

Attendance. All students are required to attend all lectures and to participate in all bi-weekly discussion and analysis sessions. All excursions are mandatory, and students must discuss absences with the Academic Director before the planned departure.

Participation. Participation is not the same as attendance. All students are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the course. This means asking pertinent questions to the course's guest lecturers, engaging in discussion and analysis during lectures, group discussions and on excursions. Students are expected to complete the required reading in a timely fashion, and to demonstrate their understanding of texts through reflection, writing, and discussion.

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