Health and Human Biology Possible Capstone Seminar Courses

Below is a list of seminar courses HHB students have used to fulfill the senior capstone requirement. These courses are pre-approved by the HHB concentration advisors. Not all of these courses are offered every year so students should consult COURSES@BROWN for the most up to date schedule. Additional seminar courses, not listed here, may better suit student interests in fulfilling their capstone requirement. Students are encouraged to discuss potential capstone seminars early with the concentration advisor.

Capstone Seminar Requirements: Seminars that students identify which are senior/graduate level, capped to a size that facilitates advanced discussion (max 15 students), and which have assignments that offer a clear opportunity to demonstrate critical and independent thinking in the concentration (i.e. final papers and projects) are also possible. Students should discuss these with the concentration advisor and obtain formal approval to use the seminar as a capstone via the ASK declaration.

BIOLOGY

BIOL 1920B - Health Inequality in Historical Perspective (Not to be offered Academic Year 2018-19)

This seminar takes a historical perspective to explore causes of health inequality in the US. The course draws on studies from the 19th century-present. Students will examine the socio–political and economic context of health/disease, focusing on how race, class, and gender shape the experience of health, disease causality, and public health responses. Topics include the health consequences of immigration, incarceration, race-based medicine, the Chicago heatwave, and Katrina. BIOL 0200 and work in Africana Studies and/or science-technology courses are SUGGESTED. This is suitable as theme course or senior capstone seminar for HHB. Enrollment restricted to 20, third- AND FOURTH-year students. Instructor: Lundy Braun.

BIOL 1920D - Race, Difference and Biomedical Research: Historical Considerations (Not to be offered Academic Year 2018-19)

This course will situate the current debate over race, health, and genetics in biomedicine in its historical context. An overarching goal of this course is to understand the social context of the scientific questions we ask, the design of research studies, and the interpretation of findings. Drawing on recent historical accounts of the debate, we will examine the socio-scientific processes by which contemporary research on health inequalities became racialized, such that race as an analytic category became privileged and structural racism marginalized. Taking a case-study approach, we will address the following questions: How have the theories and practices of science and technology produced knowledge of “race” as innate/genetic difference historically? How does “race” intersect with other categories of difference, such as gender and class? What are the terms of contestation? What are the implications of this debate for understanding health inequality? Although we will take a transnational perspective, the majority of the case studies derive from the US. Previous course work in Africana Studies, history of science, science and technology studies, biology, and/or history is preferred. For advanced undergraduate and graduate students in the life sciences, humanities and social sciences. Enrollment limited to 20. (This is a WRIT course.) Instructor: Lundy Braun.
SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

SCSO 1700P - Neuroethics

In this course, we will examine ethical, social, and philosophical issues raised by developments in the neurosciences. Topics will include: neurodevelopment and the emergence of persons; the impact of child abuse on brain development; aging, brain disease, and mental decline; life extension research; strategies and technologies for enhancement of human traits; "mind-reading" technologies; agency, autonomy, and excuse from responsibility; error and bias in memory; mind control; neuroscientific and evolutionary models of religious belief and moral judgement. Weekly position papers, group and individual research papers, as well as participation constitute the grade. Enrollment limited to 20. Instructor permission required. LILE.

Instructors: Jeffrey S. Poland

PUBLIC HEALTH

PHP 1680T - Translation, Diffusion and Cultural Relevance of Health Promotion Interventions

PHP1680T is intended to help students become familiar with three key aspects of disease prevention/health promotion: (1) how “existing” behavioral and social science (BSS) concepts and health promotion strategies are applied to new contexts (i.e., translation); (2) how programs with demonstrated effectiveness, in one or more local settings, are introduced and adopted more broadly (i.e., dissemination/diffusion); and (3) how cultural relevance is involved in both translation and dissemination/diffusion. Translation and Dissemination/Diffusion will comprise the two main sections of the semester. Cultural relevance will be a theme integrated into both sections. Early in the semester, each student specifies an “advocacy context” (population group and health promotion objective). Those advocacy contexts are used throughout the semester for discussion of generic the concepts/themes of translation, diffusion, and cultural relevance. The class format will integrate presentation of substantive content with class discussion. The course relies heavily on discussion of journal articles. Active participation by students is expected and necessary. This is not a “lecture” course. Eligible exam content will be pointed out as we discuss content of the readings. PHP1680T is appropriate for undergraduate seniors and juniors with a course background in public/community health, as well as for Behavioral/Social Science Intervention Masters and MPH students. Multiple writing assignments, a term project, discussions, and exams determine the grade. Instructor: William Rakowski.

PHP 1920 - Social Determinants of Health

This course provides an overview of social determinants of health. Examples of topics include health effects of educational attainment, social integration, racial discrimination, childhood psychosocial environment, mindfulness and job strain. Mixed teaching methods will be used, such as small and large group discussions, debates, student presentations, and lectures. The human body is embedded in communities with particular attributes such as collective lifestyles and health practices, population-based health programs, economics, health services, built environments and social characteristics. Those communities are embedded within contexts of the natural environment, culture and politics, which all exist within a particular place and time in history. These upstream factors influence health and physiologic underpinnings of disease. Course is open to graduate students and advanced undergraduate students. Each class session will be approximately 2.5 h
duration (with a 10 min break half-way through), involving lectures, group discussions, and informal student presentations. Classes will typically be arranged to use mixed teaching methods, including a blend of lectures and group work to ensure that the class remains dynamic and interesting to the students as much as possible through the duration of each session. Assigned readings will be provided with clear reading objectives. Work load will be designed so that students are expected to need to spend no more than 5-7 hours per week on the course outside of class. Assignments include written and oral projects, discussions and participation. Instructor: Eric B. Loucks.

AMERICAN STUDIES

AMST 1601 - Health and Healing in American History

This course surveys the history of American medicine in its social and political contexts from the colonial era to the present. We will focus on the ways that gender and race have informed how patients and healers have made sense out of pain and disease. Topics include the history of health care institutions and practitioners, patient perspectives on health and disease, the relationship between science and medicine, and interactions among epidemic disease, environment, and society. We will evaluate the role of medicine in addressing social needs as well as the social and economic factors shaping patterns of health and disease. Multiple writing assignments, discussions, and exams determine the grade. Instructor: Deborah Weinstein.

HISTORY

HIST 1977I - Gender, Race, and Medicine in the Americas

This seminar explores the gendered and racial histories of disease and medicine in nineteenth and twentieth century Latin America and the United States. From the dark history of obstetrics and slavery in the antebellum U.S. South to twentieth-century efforts to curb venereal disease in revolutionary Mexico or U.S.-occupied Puerto Rico, to debates over HIV policy in Cuba and Brazil—together we will explore how modern medicine has shaped both race and gender in the Americas. Topics we will explore include environmental health and the body; infant mortality; the medicalization of birth; and the colonial/imperial history of new reproductive technologies. Course is capped at 20 and meets Wednesdays 3-5:30. Instructor: Daniel A. Rodriguez.

OTHER

Group Independent Study Projects (GISP)

Group Independent Study Projects are cooperative ventures in which students and Brown faculty develop credit-bearing courses that are not a regular part of the Brown curriculum. Participating students bear major responsibility for researching the course topic, constructing a syllabus, and planning and conducting the academic coursework. Each Group Study is sponsored by an instructor who holds a teaching appointment at Brown and who is prepared to play an active role in the course. The College Curriculum Council reviews all proposals, and courses appear on the academic transcript with a unique number and title.
The development of a GISP proposal is an intrinsic part of the course. Each student participant is therefore expected to contribute to the course syllabus. Students who have not played a part in planning the course may not register after the fact. Any student who is in good standing and who has completed at least one semester at Brown is eligible to initiate and participate in a Group Study Project. Proposal forms and other information about GISP are available at the Curricular Resource Center and on the CRC web site.