

BIOLOGY 190 (003): Freshman Seminar: The Science, Politics, and Economics of Health and Disease in the Developed and Underdeveloped Worlds – Fall 2009
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Tuesday, August 25, 2009

Dear Class:

I am sorry I will not be there for your first and second classes of this semester, but I am not sorry about my reason for not being with you. I will be at a Microbial Evolution meeting on the Galapagos archipelago. I will be back on September 1 and in class on Thursday, Sept. 3. I will arrange for times for to make up for my transgression. You will have your all of the hours allotted for this course and more, if you want.

The topic of this class is important to the world beyond as well as that within our precious Ivy towers (metaphorical ivy for Emory). As a Biomedical Scientist doing research on infectious diseases and their treatment, I consider the subject of this seminar important scientifically as well as socially. The primary focus of our discussions will be to evaluate and understand the nature and magnitude of the contribution that science – based public health, medicine and surgery and biomedical research has made (and can make) to improving human health and increasing lifespan. I hope your enthusiasm for the topic of this seminar is, or will become, at least as great as my own.

I am not going to prepare a formal syllabus until after we meet. This is a seminar and I want your input about what we will be covering and how we cover it before I prepare that syllabus. For our first class next Thursday, I will give a lecture to orient you about the material and the problems we will be considering. You will have access to the Power Points of that lecture.

At this time, I am not planning on formal examinations or a term paper. Your grade will be based primarily on how well prepared you are (really seem to be) for discussions, the magnitude of your contributions to these discussions and your Powerpoint-assisted oral presentations of specific topics, at least two for each of you. A good motto for this course and much of life beyond is ***'its more important to be interesting than to be right'***.

In the announcement for this course, I listed five topics that I would like to cover in this seminar.

- (1) Why the cost of health care in the US is more than twice that of other developed nations
- (2) Why the expected healthy lifespan in the United States is substantially less than that of most other developed countries, and rates of infant mortality greater.
- (3) The science (or lack thereof) behind the plethora of sometimes conflicting recommendations about health, life styles, diet, and exercise.
- (4) Biases and conflicts in biomedical research funded by the Federal government, private foundations, the pharmaceutical and other health-related

(5) The 1918 influenza pandemic and preparation for the next pandemic.

Think about other topics you would like to see included, political, social and economic topics as well as scientific. We will discuss the syllabus on Tuesday September 8.

Part of the motivation for this seminar is the current, embarrassingly acrimonious, debate about health care reform the United States is now engaged in. To provide you a sense of this debate, its history and the various arguments involved, in preparation for this first class and the seminar I'd like you to click on, read, listen to and/or watch the material on the below-listed websites. I've also put a few editorials and articles into our class Part 1 Readings folder on LearnLink site. Please read these as well. These readings as well as message can also be found on our lab website, www.eclf.net. You will see it under Class Stuff in the drop down menu under TOOLS & INFO.

In selecting this material and probably all other material I will provide you with, I will admit to a bias, one I am sure you will see no matter how hard I want to mask it. If you want us to consider other material and alternative perspectives, feel free to send it to me or put into our class folder. Your positions on issues will have no effect on your grade.

I look forward to seeing you in class on Thursday, September 3.

With best wishes,
Bruce

Websites to check out.

<http://crowhill.net/blog/?p=6278>

http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=113851103434

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CHBvKGmevI>

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/08212009/watch.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/07312009/watch2.html>

<http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/07312009/watch.html>

<http://dirtyworldnews.com/audio/ronald-reagan-socialized-medicine.mp3>