**Critical Perspectives**

**in Global Health**

**ANTH 140b**

 Spring 2021

**TIME & LOCATION**

Monday/Wednesday

12-1:30

Class Zoom Link: <https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/92631167065>

**PROFESSOR INFO**

Elanah Uretsky

 Oﬃce: Mandel 113

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**TEACHING ASSISTANT**

Tiffany Kapela-Barlow

Office hours: Friday 12-1

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[https://brandeis.zoom.us/j/958941644445](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://zoom.us/j/95894164445?pwd%3DQ2lxWm9qdWw3aE5xSHMxeEV2SEc4QT09&sa=D&source=calendar&ust=1612111694282000&usg=AOvVaw34CAVlVzy4gl7lBNrDA2yK)

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# Course Description

Over the past century billions of dollars have been invested in programs designed to improve health on a global scale yet millions of people in resource poor regions of the world still lack access to the basic health care and sanitation that can help them realize this goal. This seems like a failure in science but, as this course will argue, it is a failure to understand the socio-cultural and political aspects of disease transmission and prevention that are often overlooked in large global health programs. Relying on critical reading of global health literature, that spans both anthropology and public health, the course will critically explore some of the most pressing debates in global health to try to understand how using an anthropological lens can help to improve global health outcomes.

We will identify the main actors, institutions, practices, and forms of knowledge production at work in the ‘global health’ system today and explore the, social, political, and economic factors that shape patterns and variations in disease and health across societies.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach that combines knowledge from public health and anthropology we will also be able to scrutinize the value systems that underpin specific paradigms in the policy and science of global health and ask questions that reveal the tensions between the Western frames of knowledge that typically inform the field and the local frames of knowledge that inform how communities understand health, illness, and well-being.

**Key course topics include**: the social determinants of health; social inequalities and health disparities; development and the governance of disease; vertical and diagonal health interventions; scientific and technological innovation and public health; social justice in global health; measuring health outcomes; and the shifting role of states, civil society, religion, and public-private partnerships in health care delivery and management.

Throughout the course, students will be encouraged to think critically and creatively about health problems and policies and to envision innovative and effective interventions. We will emphasize the ways in which the field of global health challenges both the social and natural sciences to keep up with changing socio-medical realities, to illuminate both the benefits and unintended consequences of interventions, and to better understand local worlds and the needs, experiences and capacities of people.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the class, students should be able to:

✦ Describe and analyze the major controversies surrounding the field of global health

✦ Ask critical questions about global burdens of disease, popular global health campaigns, and global health disparities

✦ Assess the importance and contribution that local understandings of disease and illness can offer to the global response to disease.

✦ Apply multi-disciplinary perspectives to identify, analyze and address global health challenges.

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To find Grand Rounds schedules at UCI, visit http:// [www.medicine.uci.edu/grand.asp](http://www.medicine.uci.edu/grand.asp) or <http://www.meded.uci.edu/cme/> regularly\_scheduled\_activities.as

Success in this four- credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, online discussions, preparation for exams, field trips, etc.).

# Course Requirements

## Attendance & Participation (15% of grade)

The success of this course requires us to ALL come to class prepared to discuss and engage with the materials. There will be some lecture but for the most part I will foster a classroom dynamic that allows us to discuss and debate the readings and issues they discuss. Preparation for discussion includes identifying puzzling aspects of the text, highlighting passages for analysis, and raising questions for debate. Everybody should make an effort to participate in the

discussion. That will ensure that everyone’s voice is represented and that we are all learning from one another. I recognize that people have different styles of participation and different levels of comfort with speaking in class. I will try, as much as possible, to create different types of opportunities for people to speak. Your attendance and participation grade is not only dependent on coming to class but also showing that you can assist the class in generating lively and meaningful discussion about class topics.

## Blogs (15% of grade)

We will divide the class into 5 groups (A,B,C,D,E). At each class session, two-three students from one of those groups will be responsible for posting a blog and others from the groups will be expected to respond. The blog can include commentary on the readings for that session in addition to questions for discussion in class. Blogs and discussion questions will be used to help you think critically about the material as you are preparing for class. They will also be used to prompt discussion in class and maybe a healthy debate or two. Those who write blogs may be called on in class to help stimulate discussion, so BE PREPARED!. Blogs will be graded on the basis of the their ability to present critical analysis of the readings, question them, and provoke further discussion. Tips for writing good discussion questions can be found in Appendix A. **ALL BLOGS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY 9:00PM ON THE EVENING PRECEDING THE CLASS FOR WHICH THEY ARE SUBMITTED.**

## Notebooks on Current Events in Global Health (30% of grade)

INVESTOR NEWSLETTER ISSUE N°3 FALL 2009

Each student is expected to submit **three** notebook entries during the semester reacting to a story they find on global health in a media source. This assignment is meant to get you in the habit of monitoring the media for stories on global health and forming critical opinions around the way global health is covered for mass audiences. To prepare you may scour newspapers, blogs, radio, and TV for content on global health and record any interesting stories in an electronic type written notebook. Entries can also be made in reaction to television shows you watch, podcasts you listen to, movies you see, propaganda you see on the street, or reading assignments you do for other classes. For each entry you should document the source promoting your reaction (source, date, and any other identifying information) and include a scanned copy or link if it is text based. Each entry should also be accompanied by a one-paragraph reaction not to exceed 350 words. Look for what’s missing in the piece. What makes you angry or just doesn’t seem right. Question it and let me know why you are questioning it. You should draw on the knowledge you’ve built during class discussions and from course readings when writing your reactions. **The first notebook entry is due on March 15th. The second is due April 7th and the third on May 5th.** You should also feel free bring your entries to class to include them as part of our discussion when appropriate. **Tips for writing notebook entries (similar to those for writing a reflection paper) can be found in Appendix B at the end of the syllabus. Notebook assignments will be evaluated on the basis of: whether your essay is a critique of the article you choose to focus on rather than being more of a review and highlight of its weaknesses, strength of your opening thesis sentence, overall strength and development of the essays argument, influence of anthropological analysis in your critique, length, and spelling and grammar.**

## Final Exam (40% of grade)

My ultimate objective in designing this course is to get you to think critically about global health. As a final assignment you will write a concise essay in response to a selection of prompts. This final essay will be 5 double-spaced pages. Prompts will be distributed two weeks ahead of the deadline, which will fall during the final exam period. Extensions will only be granted under extraordinary circumstances.

**100 pts**

**TOTAL**

**FINAL EXAM**

**30 pts**

**Blogs**

**GRADING**

**Attendance &Participation**

**170 pts**

**30 pts**

**Notebook Assignments**

**10pts**

**READING ASSIGNMENTS**

The following are required texts for the course to be purchased. The remainder of the readings are available on LATTE.

João Biehl and Adryana Petryna. 2013. *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. -. **Electronic version available through LTS**

Anne-Emanuelle Birn, Yogan Pillay, Timothy Holtz. 2017. *Textbook of Global Health.* New York, Oxford University Press. (Hereafter referred to as Birn, Pillay, and Holtz) – **Electronic version available through LTS**

McKay, Ramah. 2018. *Medicine in the Meantime: The Work of Care in Mozambique.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. **Electronic version available through LTS**

Biruk, Crystal. 2018. *Cooking Data: Culture & Politics in an African Research World.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. **– Electronic version available through LTS**

Q&A **Course Policies**

INVESTOR NEWSLETTER ISSUE N°3 FALL 2009

URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY FALL 2013

***How do I submit assignments?***

***I missed class. What should I do?***

***Can I use my phone or laptop in class?***

***What if I need an accommodation because of a disability?***

***What is the course policy regarding plagiarism and academic honesty?***

Students are expected to submit all assignments via LATTE by the beginning of the class session on the day they are due. Extensions can be granted in extreme cases with the professor’s permission. All other late assignments will be graded down by 5% of the maximum grade per day.

You are responsible for all material covered in class. In-class activities cannot be made up, although missing one activity will not have an eﬀect on your grade. If you must miss a class session, check the course website to access any handouts and presentation slides, and ask another student for a copy of the notes.

Electronic devices are useful tools but often distract from learning. Make sure your cell phones and mp3 players are silenced and put away during class. You may use a laptop/tablet in class, but only to take notes or access class materials like lecture slides. You may be asked to put your laptop/tablet away to avoid distracting other students.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please come and see me.

In all of your written assignments, please make sure to cite properly any sources that you consulted, whether or not you use direct quotes. You may not simply lift text from any source and incorporate it into your own work, nor can you just change a few words here and there and claim it as your own, even if you do cite the source. You must thoroughly and carefully paraphrase any information that you include. We will go over proper citation style in class.

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the University’s policies on academic integrity and plagiarism (see <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai>). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions, including but not limited to failing grades being

issued, educational programs, and other consequences.

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN GLOBAL HEALTH SPRING 2021

**Course Schedule & Assignments** (Changes to this schedule may be made as necessary).

URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY FALL 2013

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| **TOPIC** | **DATE** | **WHAT TO READ** | **WHAT’S DUE?** |
| **Week 1**: **Introduction to thinking about global health in a critical way** | Mon, 2/1 | Brown and Closer, Chapter 37 – “Looking Back in Time from Ebola: The History of Global Health”**In Class:** Rx for Survival A Global Health Challenge – Deadly Messengers |  |
| Wed, 2/3 | **FILM:** Bending the Arc (2017) – Pedro Kos |  |
| **Week 2**: **The History of Global Health*** How did we get from ‘international health’ to ‘global health’?
* Is it all just ‘colonial health’?
* What does the ‘health’ in global health mean?
 | Mon, 2/8 | **Structuring the Field of Global Health**Birn, Pillay, and Holtz, Chapter 1Brown, T.M., M. Cueto, and F. Fee. 2006. “The World Health Organization and the Transition from ‘International’ to ‘Global’ Public Health.” *AJPH* 96(1):62-72.Koplan, Jeffrey, et al. (2009) “Toward a Common Definition of Global Health.” *The Lancet* vol. 373, pp. 1993-1995. |  |
| Wed, 2/10 | **The New World of Global Health**Birn, Pillay, and Holtz, Chapter 2, pp. 43-67; end of 75-88. Biehl, João and Adriana Petryna. 2013. “Critical Global Health.” In *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. 1-22.Cohen, Jon. 2006. “The New World of Global Health.” *Science* 311(5758):162-167 |  |
|  |  | **Monday, February 15 – President’s Day – No University Exercises** |  |
| **Week 3:** **The Structure and Politics of Global Health*** What are the primary models used to understand health, globally?

  | Wed, 2/17 | Birn, Pillay, and Holtz, Chapter 4 |  |
| Mon, 2/22 | Birn, Pillay, and Holtz, Chapter 3James, Erica. 2010. “The Aid Apparatus and the Politics of Victimization.” In *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti.* Berkeley,CA: University of California Press.Shiffman, Jeremy 2009. “A social explanation for the rise and fall of global health issues.” *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 87: 608-613 |  |

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| **TOPIC** | **DATE** | **WHAT TO READ** | **WHAT’S DUE?** |
| **Week 4:** **The Role of Anthropology in Global Health**What tensions exist between the anthropologists and global health practitioners?  | Wed, 2/24 | Janes, Craig and Kitty Corbett. 2009. “Anthropology and Global Health.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 38:167-183.Nichter, Mark. 2008. *Global Health: Why Cultural Perceptions, Social Representations, and Biopolitics Matter.* Chapter Three “Why is Research on Local Illness Categories Important?  |  |
| Mon, 3/1 | Birn, Pillay, and Holtz, Chapter 8Redfield, Peter. 2012 “The Unbearable Lightness of Expats:  Double Binds of Humanitarian Mobility.”  *Cultural Anthropology*, 27: 2: 358-382. |  |
| **Week 5:** Magic Bullets * What’s behind this push toward ‘magic bullets’?
* Why has technology become such a powerful force in health?
 | Weds, 3/3 | **FILM:** *The New Barbarianism* (2017) – Stephen Morrison |  |
| Mon, 3/8 | Cueto, Marcos. 2013. “A Return to the Magic Bullet: Malaria and Global Health in the Twenty-First Century.” In João Biehl and Adriana Petryna (eds.) *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health.* Moran-Thomas, Amy. 2013. “A Salvage Ethnography of the Guinea Worm: Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic [Bullets] in a Disease Eradication Program.” In João Biehl and Adriana Petryna (eds.) *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health.* ***FILM:*** *The Water of Ayole* |  |

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| **TOPIC** | **DATE** | **WHAT TO READ** | **WHAT’S DUE?** |
| **Week 6: Local Illness Categories and Health Systems** | Mon, 3/15 | Groce, NE and ME Reeve. “Traditional healers and global surveillance strategies for emerging diseases: Closing the gap.” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 2:351-353, 1996.Pfeiffer, James. (2005). Commodity fetichismo, the Holy Spirit and the turn to Pentecostal and African independent churches in Central Mozambique. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry.* 29(3): 255 -283. |  **Notebook #1** |
| **Week 7: Disease Eradication**Where do politics and altruism lie on the spectrum of disease eradication programs?What is and should be the role of the community in disease eradication programs? |  Weds, 3/17 | Birn, Pillay, and Holtz, pp. 67-75, 565-574.Enserink, Marin. 2010. “What’s Next for Disease Eradication?” *Science* 330, pp. 1736-1739.Stepan, Nancy. 2011. *Eradicaiton: Ridding the World of Diseases Forever.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 7. |  |
| Mon, 3/22 | Birn, Anne-Emmanuelle. 2005. “Gates’ Grandest Challenge: Transcending Technology as Public Health Ideology.” *The Lancet* 366, pp. 514-519.Closser , Svea. 2010. “Polio Eradication in Practice.” In *Chasing Polio in Pakistan: Why the World’s Largest Public Health Initiative Might Fail.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.Renne, Elisha. 2009. “Anthropological and Public Health Perspective on the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in Northern Nigeria.” In In Robert Hahn and Marcia Inhorn, eds. *Anthropology and Public Health: Bridging Differences in Culture and Society( 2nd. ed.)*, pp. 512-538.Mark Nichter. 1995. “Vaccinations in the third world: A consideration of community demand.” *Social Science and Medicine* 41(5):617-632. |  |
| **Week 8: Primary Health care**What is the difference between primary health care and a vertical approach to disease?What do you think is the more effective approach? | Weds, 3/24 | Birn, Pillay, and Holtz, pp. 496-500Basilico, Matthew, et al. 2013. “Health for All?: Competing Theories and Geopolitics.” In Farmer, Kim, Kleinman, and Basilico (eds.) *Reimaging Global Health*: An Introduction. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Cueto, Marcos. 2004. “The Origins of Primary Health Care and Selective Primary Health Care.” *AJPH* 94(11):1864-1874 |  |

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| **TOPIC** | **DATE** | **WHAT TO READ** | **WHAT’S DUE?** |
|  |  | **Monday March 29th – Passover – No University Exercises** |  |
| **Week 8: Primary Health care** | Weds, 3/31  | Paluzzi, Joan. 2004. “Primary Health Care Since Alma Alta: Lost in the Bretton Woods?” In Arachu Castro and Merrill Singer (eds.) *Unhealthy Health Policy: A Critical Anthropological Examination.* New York:Alta Mira Press.Storeng, [Katerini T.](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Storeng%20KT%5Bauth%5D) . 2014. “The GAVI Alliance and the ‘Gates approach’ to health system strengthening.” *Global Public Health* 9(8):865-879. |  |
| **Week 9: Health Systems and Health Policy**What comprises a health system?What is required, politically, for health equity?How can we ensure that health policy is actually healthy? | Mon, 4/5 | Birn, Pillay, and Holtz – The rest of Chapter 11Cheng, Tsung-Mei. 2012. “Early Results of China’s Historic Health Reforms: The View from Minister Chen Zhu.” *Health Affairs* 31(11):2536-2544. |  |
| Weds, 4/7 | Brotherton, Sean, 2012. *Revolutionary Medicine: Health and the Body in Post-Soviet Cuba.* Durham, NC:Duke University Press. Introduction, Chapters 3, & Conclusion.  | Notebook #2 |
| **Week 10: The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Global Health**   | Mon, 4/12 | Pfeiffer, James, et al. 2008. “Strengthening Health Systems in Poor Countries: A Code of Conduct for Nongovernmental Organizations” *AJPH* 98(12):2134-2140.McKay, Ramah. 2018. *Medicine in the Meantime: The Work of Care in Mozambique.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Introduction, Chapters 1,2. |  |
| Weds, 4/14 | McKay, Ramah. 2018. *Medicine in the Meantime: The Work of Care in Mozambique.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Introduction, Chapters 3,4, &5. |  |

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| **TOPIC** | **DATE** | **WHAT TO READ** | **WHAT’S DUE?** |
| **Week 11: Global Mental Health** | Mon, 4/19 | Grinker, Richard (unpublished manuscript). *The Road Out of Bedlam A History of the Stigma of Mental Illness.* Introduction**IN CLASS:** Richard Grinker TED Talk: [Nobody’s Normal – Challenging the Stigma of Mental Illness](https://mail.google.com/mail/u/4/#search/grinker/FMfcgxwDrHpLrVjrvXspTbgJXJsWCJfl?projector=1)Richard Grinker – “[Why a Nepali Doctor is Treating the biology and the sociology behind mental Illness](https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-04-04/mental-illness-brain-disorder-culture)” LA Times, April 4, 2021. |  |
| Weds, 4/21 | Collins, Pamela, et al. 2011. “Grand Challenges in Global Mental Health.” *Nature* 475: 27-30.Becker, Anne and Arthur Kleinmnan. 2013. “Mental Health and the Global Agenda.” *New England Journal of Medicine.* 369:66-73. Han, Clara. 2013. “Labor Instability and Community Mental Health: The Work of Pharmaceuticals in Santiago, Chile. In *When People Come First, pp. 276-301.*Yang, Jie. 2018. *Mental Health in China: Change, Tradition, and Therapeutic Governance.* Medford, MA: Polity Press. Chapter 1: Mental Health and Mental Illness: Concepts and Contradictions. Pp. 24-48.**IN CLASS:** Andrew Solomon. “Notes on an Exorcism” |  |
| **Week 12: Chronic Disease**What do we mean by ‘chronic’ disease?Why is it so hard to get chronic disease onto the global health agenda? | Mon, 4/26 | UN General Assembly. 2011. “Political Declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases.”Manderson, Lenore and Carolyn Smith-Morris. 2010. Introduction: Chronicity and the Experience of Illness. In Lenore Manderson and Carolyn Smith-Morris (eds.) *Chronic Conditions, Fluid States: Chronicity and the Anthropology of Illness.* New Brunswick, NJ:Rutgers University Press. Pp 1-20.Whitmarsh, Ian. 2013 The Ascetic Subject of Compliance: The Turn to Chronic Diseases in Global Health. In, *When People Come First*. Pp. 302-324. |  |

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| **TOPIC** | **DATE** | **WHAT TO READ** | **WHAT’S DUE?** |
| **Week 13: Measuring Global Health** | Wed, 4/28 | Erikson, S. L. (2016). Metrics and market logics of global health. In V. Adams (Ed.), *Metrics*: What counts in global health (pp. 147–162). Durham, NC: Duke University Press. –[Lauren Carruth](https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/action/doSearch?ContribAuthorStored=Carruth%2C+Lauren) (2018) “The Data Hustle: How Beneficiaries Benefit from Continual Data Collection and Humanitarian Aid Research in the Somali Region of Ethiopia.***”*** *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 32(3).McKay, Chapter 6 |  |
| Mon, 5/3 | Biruk, Crystal. 2018. *Cooking Data: Culture and Politics in an African Research World.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Introduction, Chapter 1, 4, and 5Duflo, Esther and Michael Kremer. 2008. “Use of Randomization in the Evaluation of Development Effectiveness.” In Easterly, William R., ed., *Reinventing Foreign Aid.* Cambridge: MIT Press. pp. 93-120. |  |
|  | Weds, 5/5 | **FILM: *The Life Equation*** | Notebook #3 |
|  | Weds, 5/12 | **FINAL PAPER DUE @ 5:00PM** |  |

**APPENDIX A:** TIPS FOR WRITING GOOD DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Format**

A good question for spurring active conversation is generally structured in two parts: a set-up and a pay-off. The set-up tells your listeners what the subject is, and the pay-off actually asks the question or questions that you want to explore. An off-topic example is: (**set-up**) In the Declaration of Independence, the framers wrote that "all men are created equal." (**pay-off**) Did they really think that all men were created equal? Did they only mean men? Why or why not (i.e. what evidence exists to say one way or another)? If they only meant men, how should this change our usual interpretation of the Declaration's meaning?

In this example, the set-up could have led to many different pay-offs; for instance, it could have been a question about what was meant by equality, or about whether the ideal of equality was betrayed by the Constitution, or any number of different things. At the end, it asks us to think about the bigger theoretical issue raised, and offers some different possibilities for how to answer the question. Doing the latter is important because it helps guide discussion.

Your set-up can be fairly long. It could be, for example, a quote from the reading, a controversial point from something not in the reading, or an argument of your own. If today's reading reminds you of something we read earlier in class, this is a good place to bring that up as a part of your set-up. For example, you could say: "Last week, Author A said X. This week, Author B says Y, the polar opposite of X. How can we explain the differences in their interpretation/theory?" and suggest some possible ways to answer that, such as different underlying assumptions, different theoretical or ideological perspective, etc.

**Content**

The questions should be about ideas or approaches, and are meant to get us talking. They should not be merely factual, i.e. they should not ask what the author said on p. 132, or what the author meant by a particular term or phrase, or be answerable by a single word or phrase. (They should also not require knowledge of empirical information we have not covered.) Always ask for analysis. To this end, it is OK if questions are controversial, though it is not acceptable if they are purposely offensive. Good questions will ask your classmates to put the readings in perspective or in context of previous readings, to figure out authors' viewpoints, and generally to think critically about the readings. How does your question make us think differently about what we have read? How does it challenge the authors' interpretations? What is the theoretical significance of your question?

A good set of questions will address the entire set of readings, demonstrating among other things that you have done all of the reading, but also meaning that you are comparing, contrasting, and analyzing the differences and similarities among readings, when there are multiple readings.

A good question has a clear purpose. Make it clear why what you are asking is significant and worthy of discussion, and what your point is. What do we learn from discussing your question?

**APPENDIX B:** TIPS FOR WRITING A GOOD RESPONSE PAPER

A response paper is a good way for reacting to and offering your analysis on a published piece of literature. Just because someone published something doesn’t mean they’re right and a response paper offers the author the opportunity to comment and offer a critical view on the literature. Such papers require that you have comprehensive understanding of the text you’ve read and are prepared to comment on how well it completed its objective. If you are responding to multiple texts then you should also comment on how they relate to each other or comment on a theme you see that connects the texts. A response paper may also include a discussion of interesting questions that a certain reading prompts for you., but such a discussion is not sufficient itself.

Response papers are brief but don’t let their brevity fooling you into thinking they are simple. They require a lot of thought before putting finger to key (or pen to paper if you’re old fashioned). It’s not simply a matter of reading the text and expressing your opinion about it. You must allow yourself enough time to digest the text and synthesize its meaning for yourself and how it relates to other texts and your opinion. In preparing your response paper then it is crucial that you allow yourself enough time to both read and synthesize the material you are writing about.

**Some questions you may want to ask in preparation for writing your response paper**

* What is the main problem the author is addressing (both content and conceptually)?
* What is the author’s central argument or point?
* What assumptions does the author make?
* What evidence does the author use to support their argument?
* What are the strengths or weaknesses of the text?
* What the possible counterarguments to the text’s claims?
* Why are these problems and arguments interesting and important to you? To a wider audience?

**When considering texts collectively – think about**

* How they relate to each other. Do the author’s perspective coincide or diverge?
* In what way does the information and analysis from one text strengthen or weaken that of the other? Can we integrate the claims in these multiple texts to form a better, more complete understanding of the issue at hand?

**Other things to consider when writing a response paper:**

* Explain key terms, main arguments, and assumptions of each text
* Do your best to characterize each text’s arguments and assumptions fairly and accurately
* Evaluate the evidence that each text present and point out the strengths and weaknesses both internal to the text and in relation to others. For example, if one text makes an argument based on a certain assumption that another confirms or refutes then you can use the latter text to evaluate the plausibility of the claim made in the former.
* Explain how the text relate to or ‘speak’ to one another and how this relation to one another helps you to evaluate the situation.
* Try considering both sides of an argument even if all the texts you read come down on one side of an issue.
* Think about what else can be said or asked? What other evidence the authors need to strengthen their argument to the point where you think it is valid.
* This is your opinion, your reflection so make your voice heard by weighing in on the argument, evaluating the evidence through your lens and raising critical questions that the author may not have raised. If you think there’s an important part of the story that the authors left out then raise it as an area of concern and provide basis for its significance.
* Keep an eye out for omissions that the authors may have made along the way and raise counterarguments when you detect an author’s arguments are weak.

**What not to do**

* Do not wait too long to start writing. Reading and understanding the texts are only the first steps in completing your assignment. Give yourself time to write and edit because, as brief as it is, an assignment like this requires revision to make it sound right.
* Response papers are not about how you feel about something – even about how you feel about the texts. They are not simply a venue for you to say whether you like or dislike a text. Give praise or blame where it is due through a critical lens but do not simply commend or condemn a text.

**Additional Resources**

**Johns’ Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health** - **Global Health NOW:** <https://www.globalhealthnow.org/>

**Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) – Take as Directed:** <https://www.csis.org/podcasts/take-directed>

**Council on Foreign Relations – Think Global Health:** <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/>

**The Lancet Global Health** <http://www.thelancet.com/global-health>

**Global Public Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy, and Practice:** <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rgph20/current>

**Health Affairs Global Health Policy Initiative**: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/topic/69>