

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
College of Health and Human Services

Course Number:	GCH 450 (3:3:0)
Course Title:	Culture, Sexuality and the Global AIDS Epidemic
Faculty:	J. DeWitt Webster, MPH, PhD, CHES Office: Robinson B430 Phone: 703 993- 9709 Fax: 703-993-1908 E-Mail: jwebste5@gmu.edu
Office Hours:	Monday, 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm Wednesday, 11:00 am – noon and by appointment
Course Time and Location:	Thurs, 4:30 to 7:10 pm Innovation Hall Room 135

Course Description

This course will examine how cultural values and mores regarding sexuality shape HIV/AIDS social policy and how these values and mores facilitate and hinder prevention and care efforts globally. Over the semester the course will critically examine several sexuality related topics that interface with culture (e.g. gender, , sexual norms , poverty, stigma, etc.) and also examine the effectiveness of prevention and care initiatives around issues such as condom use, , immigration laws, sex education and HIV testing.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Define culture and critically discuss culture in the context of global public health, particularly related to HIV/AIDS.
2. Examine the role of culture, sexuality and stigma in the context of Global HIV/AIDS policy in specific countries;
3. Analyze the global distribution of HIV/AIDS and the impact of the disease in specific countries,
4. Analyze cultural and environmental factors that act as facilitators and barriers to successful HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment strategies,
5. Compare and contrast effectiveness of HIV prevention and control initiatives in selected high, middle and low income countries through a cultural lens.

Required textbook(s):

Airhihenbuwa, CO (2007). Healing Our Differences: The Crisis of Global Health and the Politics of Identity, New York: Bowman and Littlefield.

Other materials will be provided on Blackboard – <http://courses.gmu.edu> or as handouts in class.

LEARNING METHODS

Class time will consist of lectures, discussions in small and large groups, multimedia presentations (such as DVDS, video clips, Music), guest lecturers and other activities. You should expect to spend approximately 2 hours outside of class preparing for the next class session, with additional time set aside for completing assignments and preparing for exams. When reading is assigned you will need to read the material prior to the class and be prepared for to discuss the material.

ASSESSMENT:

- **Group Project (20%)**
In this project you will work in groups of 3 or 4 students to collect information on a culture-related aspect of HIV for a particular community (to be determined). This information collection will be combined with specific readings and an interview with a member of that community using questions you develop to get at community perceptions, norms , and other cultural issues . A detailed description of the group project will be provided and discussed far in advance of the project due date.
- **5 Reaction/Reflection Papers (10%)**
Periodically throughout the semester, students will be asked to submit critically thought out reaction/reflection papers addressing readings, films and other material presented in the course. Instructions and details will be provided
- **AIDS Quilt Volunteer Activity (10%)**
A committee made up of Faculty, Students, University Administrators , and community agencies are working to bring 100 panels of the AIDS Quilt to George Mason to commemorate the 2009 World AIDS Day Observance (Dec 1). The panels will fill Dewberry Hall and also be displayed around the Johnson Center Atrium. The GMU display of the quilts will be one of the largest ever on a university campus. Students will be needed to help lay out the panels, guard the display, market the event, and help pack the quilt up at the end of the display. For this assignment each student will volunteer at least two (2) hours in some capacity around the World AIDS Day event and write a reflection paper about their experience. If you are a member of a student organization or working in a health related service on campus there is a chance that you might already be committed to this event. You might also be assigned to this event by another instructor. Please let me know as the time gets closer if this is the case so we can make an adjustment to your requirement for this course.
- **Portfolio/Final Project: (40%)**
Each student will develop a final product that will consist of materials collected throughout the semester addressing HIV/AIDS through a cultural lens and focused on a specific topic. The project will have a clear theme, but will allow room for creativity. This is an opportunity for the student to “think outside of the box” and come up with a unique presentation. A detailed description of the group project will be provided and discussed far in advance of the project due date.

- **Participation (20%)**

The class is in the format of a seminar that encourages participation, and includes presentation of questions and reactions to readings and relevant insights to related to media and other findings. In this vein students are expected to have read the required readings for the class and to come to class prepared for discussion. The instructor will act as facilitators as well as contributor to discussions. If a student must miss a class due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances s/he is responsible for catching up on all material. The participation grade is based on the student's willingness to voice opinions, ability to listen closely to others without interruption, and willingness to treat fellow students and the instructor with respect even when disagreeing strongly with the others' views. Class sessions will involve in-depth discussions of course readings. After reading carefully and critically, in preparation for subsequent classes, each student is expected to bring to class two (2) carefully thought out questions/discussion points. We will address as many questions as time will allow and decide how we will treat remaining questions (e.g., drop it, table it until next class, revise to fit into another topic, etc.). Questions/discussion points should be submitted to the instructor on Blackboard no later than 8:00 pm on the evening (Wednesday) before class.

Assignments are expected to be submitted on time. Five points will be deducted for every day an assignment is submitted late (includes weekends).

Course Assessment Detail

Component	Due Date	% of Final Grade
Group Project	Week 7	20
5 Reaction Papers	Ongoing	10
Final Portfolio	Week 15 (Finals Week)	40
AIDS Quilt Volunteer and Reflection Paper	Week 14	10
Participation	Ongoing	20
TOTAL		100

COURSE TOPICS CALENDAR

Week 1 (Sept 3)	Course Intro and Culture Workshop
Week 2 (Sept 10)	HIV/AIDS 101 - The Basics
Week 3 (Sept 17)	Defining Health, Community and Culture
Week 4 (Sept 24)	To Think Locally and Act Globally
Week 5 (Oct 1)	Language Elasticity: the Intersection of Senses
Week 6 (Oct 8)	Ethics and Politics of Professionalism
Week 7 (Oct 15)	Ethnicity and Race: A Double Consciousness?
Week 8 (Oct 22)	The Cultural Meanings of Childhood
Week 9 (Oct 29)	Where Motherhood meets Sisterhood
Week 10 (Nov 5)	Healing Illness and Affirming Health
Week 11 (Nov 12)	Health Education and Empowerment
Week 12 (Nov 19)	Spirituality: The Site of True Otherness
Week 13 (Nov 26)	Thanksgiving Break
Week 14 (Dec 3)	Conceptualizing HIV/AIDS Communication
Week 15 (Dec 10)	Bringing it all together

COURSE POLICIES AND COMMUNICATION

Because oral and written communication skills are critical to your professional development, I will evaluate your work not only on content, but also on spelling, punctuation, and grammar. You are strongly encouraged to use spell and grammar checks, to seek assistance from the writing tutors at the University's Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/students.html>) and to ask for peer reviews of your work prior to submission.

CELL PHONES, PAGERS, AND MISCELLANEOUS COURTESIES

If you bring a cell phone or pager with you to class, please turn it off or put it on vibrate if possible, as the ringing can disrupt class activities.

LAPTOP COMPUTERS

Students are welcome to use laptops to take notes in the class during lectures, but not for any other activities, such as surfing the web, emailing, or working on assignments for other classes.

ONLINE CLASS MATERIALS

Materials for this course are available on WebCT at <http://webct41.gmu.edu> or GMU library e-References. The online resources include the usual course materials (e.g., syllabus and schedule, assignments, and lecture outline slides available before each class) and other health promotion information (e.g., job search sites, public health graduate school information, health promotion tools, and government press releases) that may be useful to you.

ACCESS TO STUDENT WORK

Copies of your work in this course including copies of any submitted papers may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. All work used for these purposes will be submitted anonymously.

OTHER CONCERNS

If you have concerns relating to the content or conduct of the class, please talk with me directly. Although the specifics of these conversations are confidential, they may provide me with useful suggestions to share indirectly with the class to improve the learning experience. As a matter of policy, I do not respond to anonymous e-mails.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Disability

Any student with a documented disability or other condition that may affect academic performance should: 1) make sure this documentation is on file with the Office of Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 211; 993-2474; www.gmu.edu/student/ods) to determine the accommodations you might need; and 2) talk with the instructor to discuss reasonable accommodations.

Academic Honesty and Collaboration

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. GMU has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you

are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct.

With collaborative (group) work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Collaborative projects may be divided up so that individual group members complete portions of the whole, provided that group members take sufficient steps to ensure that the pieces conceptually fit together in the end product. Other individual homework assignments are designed to be undertaken independently. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your instructor expects that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using APA format. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see the instructor. You can read the University policies on academic integrity, which includes information on plagiarism at: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

E-mail Accounts: Please remember that due to new privacy policies at GMU, we will send all e-correspondence to your GMU accounts. Feel free to forward emails from the GMU account to another address (e.g., yahoo, gmail, aol, etc.).

OTHER RELEVANT CAMPUS AND ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Counseling Center

Student Union 1 (SUB 1), Rm. 364; 993-2380;
www.gmu.edu/departments/csdc
SUB 1, Rm. 345; 993-2700; www.gmu.edu/student/msaf/index.html

Student Technology Assistance and Resources (STAR) Center

Johnson Center 229; 993-8990; media.gmu.edu

Writing Center

Robinson A116; 993-1200; writingcenter.gmu.edu.