American University of Beirut

**PBHL 307**

**Public Health in Armed Conflict**

 Fall semester AY 2023 - 2024

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***Instructors***

Fouad M. Fouad

Office: Van Dyck Hall / Room 209, x4654, m.: +961-71583313 (WhatsApp), mm157@aub.edu.lb

Office hours: By appointment

***Class time and location***

Class date/time: Thursdays 12-2:30

Classroom: In person or online via Zoom

***Description***

General: This is a graduate (3-credit) course that focuses on applying a health lens to understanding war and conflict, and the humanitarian position and response to the health and related challenges they bring. In this course, we employ an interdisciplinary approach, with public health at the core of it, to the study of war/conflict-humanitarianism-health, interrogate a broad range of health-related issues brought on by wars/conflicts, review imperatives and priorities for addressing the health challenges, including through public health interventions, and interrogate the role of humanitarian action. Our scope is broad and covers the continuum from pre-war/conflict phase through during-conflict phase to transition/post-conflict phases. The course explores dimensions of health and war/conflict across several disciplines and fields of practice and thus applies inter-disciplinary thinking and methods. The course offers conceptual and out-of-the-box insights and applies such insights to specific conflicts in this and other regions.

Course structure: The course has three parts. In Part I (Introduction and Approach), we examine trends and drivers of war/conflict and develop an approach to the health and humanitarian dimensions of war/conflict. In Part II (Health-related toll of war/conflict), we examine an approach to understand the toll of war, from a health and humanitarian perspective, and then examine specific categories of this toll. In Part III (Health and humanitarian interventions) we examine a variety of health and humanitarian interest related to war/conflict across the phases from pre-conflict through during-conflict to transition-from-conflict to post-conflict.

Target students: The course is of interest to a broad range of students including those interested in war/conflict (e.g. sociology/anthropology/political students) as well as students from various health disciplines (public health including public health nutrition, nursing, medicine). The course is offered as part of the ‘Certificate in Public Health in Conflict and Protracted Crisis’[[1]](#footnote-1) in the MPH degree of the Graduate Public Health Program in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at AUB.

Geographic scope: The course draws on regional experiences of war/conflict, humanitarianism and health, and on relevant scholarship and experiences of AUB faculty, but the course has a global scope and will equip students with the critical approach and tools needed to examine war/conflict, humanitarianism and health globally, bringing examples to highlight salient issues in other regions affected by war/conflict.

Format: The course is primarily lecture-based, with class discussion and assignments. Students are involved in preparation and delivery of specific lectures and facilitation of class discussions (see Course requirements).

Faculty: In addition to the course instructors, AUB professors from different faculties and external experts from reputable international institutions will contribute as guest speakers.

Learning platform and tools: Course instructors will use MS Teams to administer the course. The course will utilize readings, presentations and class discussions, problem-solving exercises, reflective writing, and assignments to achieve its learning objectives. Students’ input and engagement is welcome to improve the learning experience for all, and this will help improve the future editions of the course.

***Learning objectives (LOs)***

**Content LOs**

By the end of the course, the student will be able to achieve three broad objectives:

1. **Develop a systematic approach** to war/conflict and health. This includes the following sub-objectives:
	1. Understand war/conflict through examining recent trends of wars/conflicts and the major drivers globally and regionally
	2. Highlight the implications of conflict trends and drivers for health policy, practice, and research and for humanitarian action
	3. Apply an interdisciplinary approach to the study of war/conflict through reviewing the evolution and major milestones and critically examining frameworks in health and humanitarian health approaches and initiatives on war/conflict since the 1960s
2. **Analyze the health-relevant toll** of war/conflict. This includes the following sub-objectives:
	1. Outline the range of health-relevant consequences of war/conflict based on a structured framework of analysis
	2. Analyze specific acute and long-term health-relevant consequences of war/conflict from a population health perspective
	3. Analyze the differential health effects of war/conflict on specific populations/groups
3. **Propose health and humanitarian approaches and interventions to address the health challenges** of war/conflict. This includes the following sub-objectives:
	1. Define priority health-influencing interventions, and role of health and humanitarian actors, at three stages: pre-conflict (primary prevention of war/conflict), during conflict (secondary prevention), and during transition/post-conflict (tertiary prevention)
	2. Outline interventions to address specific health challenges in relation to defined current wars/conflicts

**Skill-building LOs**

By the end of the course, students will be able to demonstrate progressive ability to:

1. Apply critical thinking to issues/observations raised in and/or the course
2. Conduct effective literature search and carry out literature synthesis
3. Carry out sound analysis of context and of problem at hand
4. Develop an approach to addressing identified challenges through evidence-informed interventions
5. Engage in effective communication, both orally and in writing, generally and more specifically in the area of war/conflict and health
6. Facilitate quality discussions among peers about issues of health and conflict

***Student evaluation***

Student evaluation is based on the following components:

1. ***Reflections on readings and class discussions (30 points or 30% of total grade)***: (Content LOs 1-3 and Skill-building LOs 1 and 5-6) The student will write four (3) short reflections (up to 1 page, or more if the student feels the need, single space Calibri font 11 with normal margin) on the readings assigned and topics discussed in class. The students can draw on any other material that they deem useful for their reflection on the subject (e.g. blogs, films, exhibitions, photos/photoessays, news articles…).
* *Evaluative criteria: Demonstrating comprehension of the subject matter, developing observations and arguments, ability to interrogate a subject critically*
1. ***Class presentation and subject summary (35 points or 35% of total grade)***: (Content LOs 1-3 and Skill-building LOs 2-3 and 5-6) This assessment has two components.
	1. Class preparation, presentation, and facilitation of discussion (15 points of 15% of total grade): Working closely with and under the guidance of a course instructor, the student will choose one topic in the course schedule, review literature and other relevant material on the topic, select class readings, discuss the subject with class instructor, prepare a presentation to class and facilitate an interactive class discussion.
* *Evaluative criteria*: Quality of preparation for the class, comprehension of class material, quality of presentation, and contribution to facilitated discussion.
	1. Subject review summary (20 points of 20% of total grade). The summary (4-8 pages, single space Calibri font 11 with normal margin, including references) should present a solid synthesis of the subject at hand and incorporate salient points from the class discussion that the student has prepared/presented/facilitated (See 1. b. above). The summary should be submitted to the course instructor for sharing with fellow students within 72 hours of finishing the class.
* *Evaluative criteria*: Quality of synthesis (including ability to identify and summarize the key issues) and referencing (including appendices of relevant material with PDFs of relevant articles consulted and of other material given to class instructors using a USB).
1. ***Final paper and presentation (35 points or 45% of total grade)***: (Content LOs 8-10 and Skill-building LOs 1-4) The students will have three options for the final paper.
* The first option is war/conflict-focused. The students will develop a case study of a specific conflict (current or past), applying the health lens and the interdisciplinary approach developed in the course to that conflict. The purpose is to develop a comprehensive case study essentially applying the whole material of the course to a single conflict. In addition to an evidence-based review, the case study will develop concrete recommendations for interventions to address some of the key health challenges identified in the review.
* The second option is issue-focused. The students will identify a key health/humanitarian issue that is either global in scope or important to one or more specific localities experiencing war/conflict (current or past) and employ the interdisciplinary approach developed in the course to interrogate the issue(s) comprehensively and with depth (thick analysis).
* The third option is intervention-focused. The purpose is to develop a concrete and implementable intervention with potential positive implications for public health/population health. The paper must refer to conflicts/contexts where the problem at hand is at play.

For either option, the students will prepare an initial concept note and later develop it into a full paper and give a final presentation to class. A separate guide will be provided to guide students through the various steps of either option.

* 1. Concept note (7.5 points or 7.5% of total grade): The concept note (2 pages, single space Calibri font 11 with normal margin, excluding references) should be structured according to the provide guide.
* *Evaluative criteria*: Quality and strength of what is written under each of the aforementioned components; overall quality of the concept note and how convincing it is.
	1. Presentation (7.5 points or 7.5% of total grade): The student presents the work to the class at the end of the course.
* *Evaluative criteria*: clarity of ideas, ability to convince the audience, quality of slides, and adherence to time.
	1. Final paper (20 points or 20% of total grade): The paper (12 pages, single space Calibri font 11 with normal margin, excluding references) should be structured according to the provide guide.
* *Evaluative criteria*: Quality and strength of what is written under each of the aforementioned components; overall quality of the paper and how convincing it is in terms of proper framing, soundness, detail and consideration of important dimensions, supporting arguments and interdisciplinary perspectives,; quality of writing (flow, English)

**Important notes**

1. The components of the grade to be evaluated before the deadline of withdrawal from course are:

Reading and class reflections: 30%

Class presentation and subject summary: 35%

Final paper – Concept note: 7.5%

Total: 62.5%

1. Submission of assignment after a deadline will incur a 10% grade penalty
2. All submitted assignments will be shared with the rest of the class in order to facilitate joint learning
3. For motivated students willing to go the extra mile, preparing a manuscript for submission to a peer reviewed journal based on class work will earn extra credit

***Applicable AUB policies Conduct, academic integrity, and accessibility***

**Academic integrity**

Education is demanding and you need to properly manage your time. Do not hesitate to use the

resources around you but do not cut corners. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please

review the [AUB Student Code of Conduct](https://www.aub.edu.lb/fas/Documents/Students%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20and%20Forms%20for%20Processing%20Violations%20.pdf) and familiarize yourself with definitions

and penalties related to plagiarism. If you’re in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, ask your

instructor because it is your responsibility to know. The American University of Beirut has a strict

anti-cheating and anti-plagiarism policy. Penalties include failing marks on the assignment in

question, suspension or expulsion from the University and a permanent mention of the disciplinary

action in the student’s records.

**Special Needs**

AUB strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience

academic barriers due to a disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical

conditions), please inform me immediately so that we can privately discuss options. In order to

help establish reasonable accommodations and facilitate a smooth accommodations process, you

are encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Office: accessibility@aub.edu.lb; +961-1-

350000, x3246; West Hall, 314

**Non-Discrimination – Title IX**

AUB is committed to facilitating a campus free of all forms of discrimination including

sex/gender-based harassment prohibited by Title IX. The University’s non-discrimination policy

applies to, and protects, all students, faculty, and staff. If you think you have experienced

discrimination or harassment, including sexual misconduct, we encourage you to tell someone

promptly. If you speak to a faculty or staff member about an issue such as harassment, sexual

violence, or discrimination, the information will be kept as private as possible, however, faculty

and designated staff are required to bring it to the attention of the University’s Title IX

Coordinator. Faculty can refer you to fully confidential resources, and you can find information

and contacts at www.aub.edu.lb/titleix. **To report an incident**, contact the University's Title IX

Coordinator Trudi Hodges at 01-350000 ext. 2514, or titleix@aub.edu.lb. An anonymous report

may be submitted online via EthicsPoint at [www.aub.ethicspoint.com](http://www.aub.ethicspoint.com).

***Schedule***

The following course schedule is subject to change to fit the learning needs of enrolled students. Dates will be specified once a class day/time is agreed.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Wk** | **Date** | **Topic** |  |
|  |  | **PART I. INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH** | **Speaker/guest speaker** |
|  | Aug 31 | **Review of course syllabus**  | **Fouad** |
|  |  | **Deadline for Drop & Add** |  |
|  | Sep 7 | **Trends and drivers of wars/conflicts** * Definitions;global and regional trends of conflicts; changing nature of wars and conflicts
* Explanatory models of drivers of conflict. What do health indicators tell us about risk of conflict?
* Relevance to humanitarian and health research and practice
 | **Fouad** |
|  | Sep 14 | **How do we approach / study health and humanitarianism in relation to war/conflict?*** The evolution of health and humanitarian approaches to war/conflict. Who defines the agenda? Who leads the field?
* An interdisciplinary approach to war/conflict and its translation in various frameworks
 | **Ghassan** |
|  |  | **PART II.** **THE HEALTH-RELATED TOLL OF WAR/CONFLICT** |  |
|  | Sep 21 | **How do we assess the impact of war/conflict?*** The total toll of war approach

**Impact on health determinants** * Key health determinants impacted by conflict (e.g. economic collapse, environmental damage)
 | **Fouad** |
|  | Sep 28 | **Impact on populations (including deaths)*** Key dimensions of population impact
* Understanding the challenges of describing population impact (e.g. assessing conflict mortality and loss of life expectancy)
* Special populations defined by strategies of war/conflict (e.g. siege and torture)
* Special population groups (e.g. women and children)
 | **Karim** |
|  | Oct 5 | **Impact on health status – 1** * Injuries and disabilities
 |  |
|  |  | **Concept note of final paper is due** |  |
|  | Oct 12 | **Impact on health status – 2** * Infectious disease epidemics (e.g. COVID-19)
* Chronic conditions (e.g. heart disease, cancer)
 |  |
|  | Oct 19 | **Impact on health system*** What happens to health systems in conflict?
* How strategies of war impact health systems: Weaponization of health care
* Assessment of health system under stress
 |  |
|  |  | **PART III. HEALTH AND HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS** |  |
|  | Oct 26 | * Interventions in pre-conflict phase
* Primary prevention of war/conflict: Principles and approaches
* What role for health and humanitarian actors in primary prevention?
 |  |
|  | Nov 2 | **Interventions during conflict*** Protection and human security: principles, approaches and translation into programming
* Protection of aid/health workers
 | **Lina Ech** |
|  | Nov 9 | **Interventions during conflict*** Humanitarian assistance: Architecture, actors, economy, challenges of access, examples
* Planning & organizing public health and medical services: Principles and approaches
* Emergency management systems
 |  |
|  |  | **Last day for withdrawal from courses** |  |
|  | Nov 16 | **Interventions during transition & post-conflict phases*** Conflict as a window of opportunity for health and social rebuilding – Historical examples
* Role of health and humanitarian actors in transition to postconflict
 |  |
|  | Nov 23 |  **Wrap up*** Review of course material
* Reflections on the learning experience
 |  |
|  |  | **Start of Reading Period**  |  |
|  | Nov 30 | **Final paper presentations** |  |
|  |  | **Final paper is due** |  |

***Readings***

The course will reply mostly on article readings and other material (including websites and AV material) made available by the course instructors and guest speakers for different sessions. For each week, up to 3 articles or other material (amounting to up to 1 assigned reading or material per hour of class time) will be made available, or with links, on Teams. **Note**: When a large report is assigned, the students are not expected to read it front to cover but rather to read the Executive Summary (if available) and become familiar with the contents of the rest of the report so as to be able to engage in a meaningful discussion of the material during class.

See a separate Word document with a list of class readings which is updated on a weekly basis to add readings for the following week.

1. Students can register and take this course without the need to enroll in the Certificate. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)