

INTL 4615: The Politics of Disease Control

University of Georgia

Spring 2019, MWF 11:15am-12:05pm

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Welcome!

This is a class about how governments solve (or fail to solve) a core problem facing any society - how to limit the damaging effects of disease. Recent global epidemics like Ebola and Zika have demonstrated that disease can threaten social order and prosperity. What may be harder to perceive is the crucial and complex role that governments play in preventing and controlling disease. Our purpose will be to better understand the link between political institutions and disease outcomes. We begin by asking why disease is such a difficult social problem. We then use contemporary and historical examples of successful and failed attempts at disease control to understand how governments respond in the face of this challenge.

How will you be graded?

I will administer two **exams**, one at midterm and the other at the end of the semester. The end-of-semester exam will focus on concepts covered in the second half of the course. Good performance on the exams requires engagement with the all of the course materials, including readings, lectures and class discussion.

Table 1: Assignments

Item	Prop. of grade
Midterm exam	30%
End-of-semester exam	30%
Very short paper	30%
Attendance	10%

Details on the exams will be provided as they approach. I will offer an optional final exam, which you can use to replace your lowest exam grade. This optional, comprehensive final exam will be administered at the official time and location set by the university. I repeat, the final is optional. If you choose to take the final, I will use the two highest of your three exam grades in computing your final grade. In other words, the final would count for 30% of your grade so long as you score higher than the lowest score you received on the two previous exams.

You will also have a **writing assignment**, due on the final class meeting. Instructions for this very short paper will be distributed later in the semester. Throughout the semester, I will take **attendance** 10 times. Your attendance on each of these occasions is worth one point toward the final grade.

Make-up and extension policy: It is your responsibility to attend all scheduled class meetings, including the times when exams are offered. No make up exams will be allowed. No extensions for assignments will be granted.

Ground rules

You are responsible for being self-motivated, self-directed, active learners. I expect you to comply with university policy and use common sense. You should complete all of the course assignments and participate fully in all of our activities. A complete list of the course policies is posted on my website.

Goals and teaching philosophy

When this course is finished, you should:

- Understand how social choice concepts apply to disease control
- Be familiar with a wide range of examples of disease control, focusing on the role of governance
- Improve your ability to think critically about these topics

As your professor, it is my responsibility to create an environment that fosters your learning. This includes keeping materials up to date on the course elc, and otherwise providing a well-organized course. You are responsible for taking advantage of that environment. If any aspect of the course is impeding your learning, please communicate that to me in whatever way you feel most comfortable.¹

Course Schedule

Most readings will be available via UGA's electronic course reserves system (password: coordination). Please let me know if you have trouble locating the readings.

Weeks 1-2: Foundations

Topics:

- Expectations for the course
- Foundations of social science
 - Stylization
 - Hypotheticals
- Public goods and collective action problems

Required reading:

- Selection from [Krugman \(1995\)](#)*
- [Troesken \(2015, Preface\)](#) *

*These readings are available on elc

Weeks 3-5: Vaccination as a collective action problem

Topics:

- Vaccination today

¹A note about my name: Feel free to call me Micah or Professor Redman or Professor Gell-Redman.

- Vaccination in the past
- Smallpox eradication

Required reading:

- [Nyhan et al. \(2014\)](#)
 - [Nyhan and Reifler \(2015\)](#)
 - [Obaro and Palmer \(2003\)](#)
 - [Troesken \(2015, Chapter 4\)](#)
 - [Stepan \(2011, Chapter 6\)](#)
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Weeks 6-8: Disease control and environmental quality

Topics:

- Control of diseases linked to water quality
- Control of diseases linked to air quality
- Externalities in the provision of public goods

Required reading:

- [Troesken \(2004, Chapter 4\)](#)
- [Cutler and Miller \(2005\)](#)
- [Frerichs \(2016, Selection TBD\)](#)
- [Clay and Troesken \(2010\)](#)
- Additional required reading TBD

March 6, midterm exam

March 8, no class meeting, writing assignment topic submitted

March 11-15: Spring Break

Weeks 10-13: HIV and malaria

Topics:

- HIV and ethnic diversity in Africa and Brazil
- HIV and stigma
- Malaria eradication in the past and today

Required reading:

- [Lieberman \(2009\)](#), Chapter 4
- [Humphreys \(2001\)](#), Chapter 3)
- On the current efforts to eradicate malaria [Newby et al. \(2016\)](#)
- Additional readings on ELC

Apr. 12. First draft due. Peer review assignment in class.

Week 14: Coda, Democracy and disease

Topics:

- Cross-national and subnational studies of democracy and disease
- Causal relationships with observational data
- Building a model of the governance of health

Required reading:

- [Besley and Kudamatsu \(2006\)](#)
- [Dreze and Sen \(1989\)](#), Chap. 11)
- [Miller \(2008\)](#)

Apr. 19 Final quiz

Final draft of writing assignment due April 26

Final exam, official university time and location

References

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