Health, Equity, and Community
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AFA 4931
Fall 2025

T/Th Period 4 & 5 (10:40 – 11:30 & 10:40 – 12:35)
Office Hours: T/TH 9:30- 10:30 and 11:45 – 12:45 on Tuesdays
Office: Turlington 1012D

Course Description:

Health, Equity, and Community examines the history of African Americans' experiences with the American public health system from slavery to the present. Through a critical analysis of historical and contemporary issues, students will understand how racism, discrimination, and other forms of structural oppression have shaped African Americans' health outcomes and access to healthcare.

The course will explore the role of African American healers, caregivers, and activists in advocating for health equity and justice and the contributions of African American communities and social movements in advancing public health and healthcare systems in the United States.

Students will engage with a range of primary and secondary sources, including historical documents, scholarly articles, and multimedia materials, to develop a nuanced understanding of the complex intersections of race, gender, class, and health. Topics covered in the course may include the impact of slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow laws on African American health outcomes, the Tuskegee syphilis study, the role of African American nurses in the civil rights movement, the Black Panther Party's healthcare initiatives, and contemporary issues such as COVID-19 and healthcare disparities.

Throughout the course, students will develop critical thinking, research, and writing skills, and learn how to apply these skills to analyze and present historical and contemporary issues related to African American health equity and community health. The course will also emphasize the importance of cultural competence and humility in providing effective and equitable healthcare services to African American patients. By the end of the course, students will have a comprehensive understanding of the history of African Americans' experiences with the American public health system and the implications of this history for current and future public health initiatives.

Objectives

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and analyze the key elements, biases, and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

These general education objectives will be accomplished by:

1. Evaluate the history of African Americans in the United States and the ways racism and discrimination have shaped their experiences of health and healthcare.
2. Analyze the impact of slavery, segregation, and other forms of structural oppression on African American health outcomes.
3. Analyze primary sources and use them to evaluate and interpret African American history in the 20th century.

4. Develop critical thinking and analytical skills to assess the ways race has influenced political, social, and cultural developments in the United States during the 20th century.
5. Engage in independent research and writing, demonstrating proficiency in academic writing and citation styles.
6. Evaluate the contributions of African American healers, caregivers, and activists to the advancement of public health and healthcare systems in the United States.
7. Assess the role of African American communities and social movements in advocating for health equity and justice.
8. Analyze the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in shaping African American health experiences.
9. Critically assess the impact of current public health policies and programs on African American communities.
10. Identify and analyze the social determinants of health that disproportionately affect African American communities.
11. Evaluate the effectiveness of past and present strategies for addressing health disparities and promoting health equity for African Americans.

Required Readings and Course Content

Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination by Alondra Nelson.

All other required readings will be made available through Canvas or Perusall. Class resources, announcements, updates, and assignments will also be made available through Canvas/Perusall.

Assignments:
Participation – 300 points
Attendance – 300 points
Discussion Responses – 100 points
Presentations – 100 points
Final Project Portfolio – 200 points

GRADE/POINT SCALE Grading Scale Score	Percent	Grade	Grade Points
934-1000	93.4-100	A	4.00
900-933	90.0-93.3	A-	3.67
867-899	86.7-89.9	B+	3.33
834-866	83.4-86.6	B	3.00
800-833	80.0-83.3	B-	2.67
767-799	76.7-79.9	C+	2.33
734-766	73.4-76.6	C	2.00
700-733	70.0-73.3	C-	1.67
667-699	66.7-69.9	D+	1.33
634-666	63.4-66.6	D	1.00
600-633	60.0-63.3	D-	0.67
0-599	0-599	E	0.00

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Attendance and Class Participation: Attendance and participation are required; you cannot participate in the class if you are not present. "Excused absences," as outlined in the UF Academic Policies, require appropriate documentation to make up missed work. Following three unexcused absences, one full letter grade will be deducted from the final semester grade. Please visit the link at the end of the course schedule to access UF policies regarding attendance.
Participation in class discussions is required; please review the participation rubric at the end of the syllabus for details on how you will be evaluated.

Discussion Responses: For each assigned reading, students will hand write a response, which they will use to guide in class discussions. Each response should consist of a **question** about the reading, a **comment** on the reading, and a **quotation** from the reading. Responses should be a minimum of 5 sentences and should be turned in at the end of each class session.

Reading Presentations: Students will be responsible for presenting two assigned readings to the class. Examples will be provided in class; however, each presentation should consist of an author biography, a synopsis of the reading, the author's argument, significant quotes, and a minimum of three discussion questions.

Final Project Portfolio: Students will submit a final portfolio project worth 200 points on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, by 11:59 pm. Additional information about the final project will be shared in class.

Quizzes: Quizzes may be given in class throughout the semester and will become a part of your participation grade.

Course Schedule

Readings are due the day that they appear on the outline.

Week 1: Introduction to the History of Health Equity and Community Organizing
Aug. 21 Th: Overview of course and syllabus

Week 2: The Impact of Slavery on African American Health
Aug. 26 T: Lecture - The health consequences of slavery and its legacy.
         Reading and Discussion - " The Universal Negro Improvement Association, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Black Panther Party: Lessons for Understanding African American Culture-Based Organizing " by Bonnie Young Laing – On Canvas
Aug. 28 Th: Reading and Discussion - "Conjuring Community" in *Working Cures* by Sharla Fett on Canvas. Final portfolio in class work begins.

Week 3: Slavery-Era Medical Practices and Myths
Sept. 2 T: Lecture – Enslaved women and traditional medicine
Sept. 4 Th: Reading and Discussion - "Doctoring Women" in *Working Cures* by Sharla Fett on Canvas. Portfolio preparation.

Week 4: Black Women's Public Health Activism

Sept. 9 T: Lecture – Black Women's Public Health Activism, 1900
Sept. 11 Th: Reading and Discussion – "Private Crusades for Public Health: Black Club Women and Public Health Work" in *Sick and Tired* by Susan L. Smith – On Canvas. Portfolio preparation.

Week 5: Daniel Hale Williams and Provident Hospital: The Origins of the Black Hospital
Sept. 16 T: Lecture – Daniel Hale Williams and Booker T. Washington on Public Health
Sept. 18 Th: Reading and Discussion - "The National Negro Health Week Movement," The Journal of Negro Education by Roscoe C. Brown – On Canvas. Portfolio preparation.

Week 6: The Black Hospital Movement and the NAACP
Sept. 23 T: Lecture – WWI and The Black Hospital Movement
Sept. 25 Th: Reading and Discussion - "'Outstanding Services to Negro Health': Dr. Dorothy Boulding Ferebee, Dr. Virginia Alexander, and Black Women Physicians' Public Health Activism," American Journal Public Health Vol. 106, No. 8 (August 2016): 1398-1404 by Vanessa Northington Gamble - On Canvas. Portfolio preparation.

Week 7: Tuskegee and Progressive Era Racial Science
Sept. 30 T: Lecture - The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment
Oct. 2 Th: Reading and Discussion – "A Notoriously Syphilis-Soaked Race" What Really Happened at Tuskegee? In *Medical Apartheid* by Harriet Washington – On Canvas – Portfolio preparation.

Week 8: The Role of the Civil Rights Movement in Advancing Health Equity
Oct. 7 T: Lecture – Origins of the Civil Rights Movement
Oct. 9 Th: Portfolio work day – no in class meeting

Week 9: Health Activism and Community Organizing
Oct. 14 T: Lecture – Health Activism During the Civil Rights Movement
Oct. 16 Th: Reading and Discussion – Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2 of *Body and Soul* by Alondra Nelson. Portfolio preparation.

Week 10: Activism and War
Oct. 21 T: Lecture – The Vietnam War
Oct. 23 Th: Reading and Discussion **–** Chapters 3 and 4 in *Body and Soul* by Alondra Nelson. Portfolio preparation.

Week 11: Introduction to Food Justice Movements
Oct. 28 T: Food Justice Movements – Twentieth Century
Oct. 30 Th: Reading and Discussion – Chapter 5 and Conclusion in Body and Soul by Alondra Nelson. Discussion post due before class.

Week 12: Youth Food Justice Movements and Health
Nov. 4 T: Lecture - How Food Justice Movements Improve Community Health
Nov. 6 Th: Reading and Discussion – Youtube Video – "A Slice of the Community – Moving from Food Apartheid to Food Justice" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DerZm4c7L-U

Week 13: Food Deserts and Food Justice Today
Nov. 11 T: HOLIDAY
Nov. 13 Th: Portfolio work day – no in person class.

Week 14: Modern Health Movements

Nov. 18 T: Lecture – Maternal mortality
Nov. 20 Th: Portfolio work day – no in person class

Week 15: Final Week
Dec. 3 T:"Rules for Radicals" Class Wrap Up

This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those polices and for resources for students, please see this link.

Participation is consistent with university policies in the undergraduate catalog. Missed assignments require appropriate documentation. Missed work due to technology problems will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but completing work at least one hour before the deadline is the best way to accommodate challenges.
For issues with technical difficulties for Canvas, please contact the UF Help Desk, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (https://it.ufl.edu/helpdesk/) , 352) 392-HELP (4357), helpdesk@ufl.edu.
Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from the Help Desk when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

CLASSROOM DECORUM
Students are expected to arrive at class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and fellow students. Cell phone use is not allowed in class. If you are watching videos on your phone or working on another class's assignments during my class, I will drop your grade by 100 points. Opinions held by other students should be respected in the discussion.

COMMUNICATIONS
Please allow 24-48 hours during the week. I do not check work emails during the weekend, so plan ahead. Emails sent on the weekend will be answered the next Monday or Tuesday. Again, manage your crisis by being prepared—do not email the night before a deadline as you probably will not get an answer. If you email me the morning of class, you will not get a reply until later that day or the next day.

Rubric for Assessing Student Participation

	Exemplary (90%- 100%)	Proficient (80%-90%)	Developing (70%-80%)	Unacceptable (<70%)
Frequency of participation in class	Student initiates contributions more than once in each recitation.	Student initiates contribution once in each recitation.	Student initiates contribution at least in half of the recitations	Student does not initiate contribution & needs instructor to solicit input.
Quality of comments	Comments always insightful & constructive; uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions.	Comments mostly insightful & constructive; mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion.	Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not use appropriate terminology; comments not always relevant to the discussion.	Comments are uninformative, lacking in appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion & personal taste, e.g., "I love it", "I hate it", "It's bad" etc.

Listening Skills	Student listens attentively when others present materials, perspectives, as indicated by comments that build on others' remarks, i.e., student hears what others say & contributes to the dialogue.	Student is mostly attentive when others present ideas, materials, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others' remarks. Occasionally needs encouragement or reminder from T.A of focus of comment.	Student is often inattentive and needs reminder of focus of class. Occasionally makes disruptive comments while others are speaking.	Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others speak; detracts from discussion; sleeps, etc.

Generative AI Policy

One of the key goals of this course is to help you develop and strengthen your writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills. To become a better writer, you must write, revise, edit, and write some more. Therefore, all assignments must be prepared by the student. AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism. **Any assignment suspected of using AI in any capacity will be automatically graded a 0 and will not be allowed the opportunity to resubmit for credit.**

Work created by AI tools may not be considered original work and instead, be considered automated plagiarism. It is derived from previously created texts from other sources the models were trained on, yet doesn't cite sources.

AI models have built-in biases (i.e., they are trained on limited underlying sources; they reproduce, rather than challenge, errors in the sources). There are several reasons why AI systems can perpetuate discrimination:

- Bias in the training data: If the training data contains biases, the AI system may learn and replicate them in its decision-making.
- Lack of diversity in the training data: If the training data does not include a diverse range of examples, the AI system may not perform well on diverse inputs, which may lead to discrimination.
- Lack of transparency: Some AI systems can be difficult to understand and interpret, making detecting and correcting biases challenging.
- Lack of accountability: Identifying and addressing discrimination in AI systems can be challenging without proper oversight and accountability.
- It is important to remember that these biases can be unconscious, unintended, and hard to detect, but they can have serious consequences if not addressed.

AI tools have limitations (i.e., they lack critical thinking to evaluate and reflect on criteria; they lack abductive reasoning to make judgments with incomplete information at hand).

Finally, AI servers produce electronic waste. Each ChatGPT search uses significant amounts of electricity and water. It is essential to seriously consider the impact of AI use on the environment. As indicated on the UN Environmental Programme websiteLinks to an external site. , "They are large consumers of water, which is becoming scarce in many places. They rely on critical minerals and rare elements, which are often mined unsustainably. And they use massive amounts of electricity, spurring the emission of planet-warming greenhouse gases." An article by J. Coleman, "AI's Climate Impact Goes Beyond Its EmissionsLinks to an external site. ," provides information on the environmental impact of AI and its potential for fighting climate change.

With these concerns in mind, any use of AI-generated content to complete assignments in this course is prohibited, constitutes academic dishonesty, and will result in an automatic zero on the assignment.