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Public health advocacy and journalism: Towards a healthy population lessons from Boston University's Program for Global Health Storytelling

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Public Health Advocacy and Journalism: Towards a Healthy Population

*Lessons from Boston University's Program for Global Health
Storytelling*

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Session Overview

- ▶ What Is Global Public Health?
- ▶ Intersection between GH and Journalism
- ▶ Role of Journalism in Shaping Global Health Stories
- ▶ Intersection between Public Health and Journalism
 - ❖ How Are Our Disciplines & Missions Complementary?
 - ❖ How & Why Do We Collide?
- ▶ Boston University's Program for Global Health Storytelling
- ▶ Student Stories

What is Global Public Health?

▶ Public Health Definitions / Examples

- ❖ “All organized measures (whether public or private) to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life among the population as a whole. **Its activities aim to provide conditions in which people can be healthy and focus on entire populations, not on individual patients or diseases.** Thus, **public health is concerned with the total system** and not only the eradication of a particular disease.” (WHO)

OR

- ❖ Art and science of deciding who will die when and in what degree of misery (Dr. Bill Bicknell, Boston University)

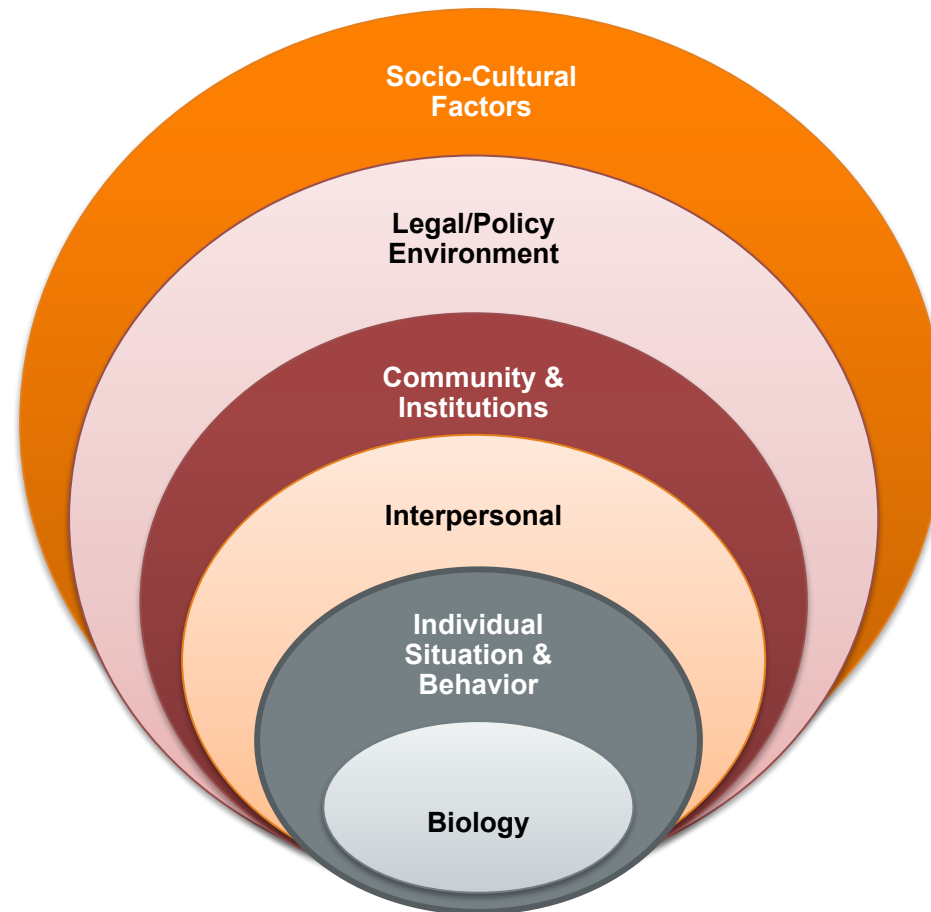
OR

- ❖ Art and science of deciding who lives a longer, less miserable & happier life

Health Care vs Determinants of Health

Infrastructure

Environment



Economics

History

What is Global Health Storytelling

- ▶ Global / Local
- ▶ Global Health / International Health / Public Health / Population Health

Journalism

- ▶ Informing citizens in a democracy of all sides of an issue.
- ▶ An act of gathering and verifying FACTS.
- ▶ Committed to the values of Accuracy, fairness, balance/context, objectivity and INDEPENDENCE from friends, owners, political or corporate actors.
- ▶ Loyalty is to Truth and the Reader.
- ▶ Telling True Stories that engage, inform, enlighten and *sometimes entertain* the reader, listener, viewer
- ▶ It does NOT advocate for particular solutions or take sides in controversial issues. (Unless it is labeled as an Opinion or and Editorial)

Advocacy

- ▶ Actively supports one agenda often to the exclusion of others.
- ▶ Does not necessarily include all points of view
- ▶ May be funded by a partial/biased source
- ▶ Maybe truthful or may leave out important contrary information
- ▶ Loyalty is to the cause, the organization



Intersection between GH and Journalism

Power of Stories

Collaboration

Collision

Journalism & Ethics

- ▶ Vultures in a crisis? Or shedding light in dark places = aid
- ▶ Re-traumatizing victims? Or giving opportunity to share?
- ▶ Photos - what is consent?
- ▶ Language - addicts vs. person with substance abuse disorder
- ▶ Fake News, False equivalency: two completely opposing arguments appear to be logically equivalent when in fact they are not. Examples: Climate Change, Vaccinations.
- ▶ Student Story: Ballot Question 3



Anti-Vaxxers or Vaccine Hesitators? Bad Things Can Happen When PH Doesn't Listen

'The Worry Is Not Overblown': Local Doctor On Measles Uptick, WGBH

Medical Anthropologist Explores 'Vaccine Hesitancy,' NPR

Facts alone don't sway anti-vaxxers. So what does?., USA Today

Pharma's tarnished reputation helps fuel the anti-vaccine movement, Stat



BU Program for Global Health Storytelling

Partnership with Pulitzer Center

Student Fellows

Global Health Storytelling Class

Stories by BU Pulitzer Center Student Fellows

- ▶ Child marriage in Nepal
- ▶ Cholera outbreak in Haiti
- ▶ Trafficking of brides along Myanmar / China border
- ▶ Cash assistance to improve health and financial stability of families in Malawi
- ▶ Cervical cancer in Uganda
- ▶ Health and other challenges faced by Syrian refugees in Turkey
- ▶ Impacts of economic migration on families in Nepal
- ▶ Need for water safety education among seaweed farmers in Zanzibar
- ▶ Female genital cutting in Mali
- ▶ HIV sanitariums in Cuba
- ▶ Khat addiction in Bangladesh
- ▶ Challenges faced by people living with disability in Mumbai
- ▶ Cancer screening and treatment in Botswana
- ▶ Sexual & reproductive health in El Salvador in the era of Zika
- ▶ Pharmaceutical pollution
- ▶ Suicide in Guyana
- ▶ Women living with mental illness in Ethiopia
- ▶ Organ transplants in Venezuela
- ▶ Bidi addiction in India
- ▶ Climate change in China and Japan



Global Health Storytelling Course

Goals

Assignments

Course Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- ▶ Explain how public health and journalism complement each other and sources of tension;
- ▶ Articulate the difference between topics, stories, characters, advocacy, marketing, academic writing, and narrative journalism;
- ▶ Use audiovisual equipment to capture interviews and scenes;
- ▶ Find compelling characters and craft narrative arcs;
- ▶ Find and interview experts and members of the public under tight deadlines;
- ▶ Create compelling mixed media narratives that combine written text with audio-visual narratives;
- ▶ Adhere to standards of ethical journalism;
- ▶ Explain the core tenets of scientific research ethics;
- ▶ Find and use relevant background information and scientific evidence.

Course Assignments

- **Audio Postcard: MBTA stop sound scene = 5% (2 minutes)**
- **Story 1: Text Story for Internet & Audio = 35% (3-4 minutes + written text 700 words)**
- **Story 2: Text Story for Internet & Audio = 35% (3-4 minutes + written text 700 words)**
- **Submit Revised version of Story 1 & Story 2 to BU News Service = 5% (Audio mix, web text, and 1 photo)**
- **StoryCorps Audio Narrative: 10%**
 - 20-40 minute interview with someone you know well or can develop a relationship with during the semester about the topic of home. Family member, homeless person, immigrant, etc...
 - 4 minute audio highlights = 5%
- **Class participation = 10%**

Conversion of a Die-Hard Advocate/Activist

Story on Gun Rights: Spring 2018