

A History of Health in Cities

Prof. Walker Hanlon

Fall 2015

Details:

Class: Tuesdays 11:00-11:50 in 2238 Public Affairs

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My office: 9357 Bunche Hall

Office hours: 4-5pm Tuesdays and Thursdays or by appointment

Course Overview:

In the past, cities were the least healthy places a person could live. A potent mix of pollution and infection diseases meant that the lifespan of the average city dweller was substantially below that of a rural resident. Some cities were so unhealthy that they required a constant inflow of migrants just to maintain their population. Yet today, in developing countries, city residents tend to be healthier and live longer than rural residents. How did this change occur? What role did policy play? What lessons can we learn from these historical experiences that can help us think about the challenges facing the cities of the developing world today? In this Fiat Lux seminar, we will seek to understand the key forces at work in the health transition of historical cities through a survey of recent academic research in this area. Our discussion will cover some of the key mechanisms at work, including contagion and spillovers, the rule of public and private goods, and increasing returns in public health provision. We will also consider some of the key challenges that researchers face in trying to measure and understand the changing health of cities.

Grading: This is a Pass/Fail course. The workload is relatively modest, but I do expect you to attend and participate in class in order to pass.

Course Requirements:

- Class Attendance and Participation (1/2 of grade) – you are required attend all five class sessions. If you know now that you can't attend one of the sessions, you shouldn't take this course.
- Presentation (1/2 of grade) – the last day of class is reserved for in-class student presentations on a topic of your choice. You can work alone or in groups.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Sept. 29: Overview of health trends over the long-run

Oct. 6: Nutrition and Anthropometrics

Oct. 13: Public health measures and waterborne diseases

Oct. 20: Airborne diseases and pandemics

Oct. 27: Pollution

Nov. 3: Medical care

Nov. 10: Crowding, open space and city design

Nov. 17: Segregation and education

Nov. 24: In-class work time

Dec. 1: Class presentations