

HONORS 1510

SPECIAL TOPICS:

HEALTH JUSTICE: ISSUES FOR MEDICINE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND LAW

Professor Mary Crossley, University of Pittsburgh School of Law
Spring 2018

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:30-3:45



*“Of all the forms of inequality,
injustice in health care is the most
shocking and inhumane.”*

-- Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Course description:

Although the United States likes to pride itself on having the most advanced medical care in the world, our citizens' experiences diverge widely with respect to the care they receive, as well as their health status and outcomes. Significant health disparities call into question both the justice and the quality of the U.S. health care system.

This new Honors College course examines evidence of and explanations for health disparities along several axes, focusing on race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, and sexual minority status. After reflecting on how theories of justice regarding health and health care apply to disparities, the course explores the roles that medicine, public health, and law can play in responding to disparities and how the professions can collaborate to address health disparities.

The course is intended for a broad range of students. While it may be of particular interest to those contemplating a career in law, medicine, public health, or other health sciences, it is designed to engage students in history, sociology, philosophy, African-American studies, gender and sexuality studies, and general humanities who would like to develop a deeper understanding of why health disparities in the U.S. are so persistent and pervasive and of efforts to advance health justice.

Methods and Evaluation

Class meetings will be devoted primarily to discussion of assigned readings, which will include journal articles, reports, and issue briefs relating to health disparities. On occasion, guest lecturers (from law, medicine, and public health) will visit to address topics within their expertise. Each student will write two papers (8-10 pages each) on a topic of the student's choosing relating to a particular health disparity and make a presentation to the class on the topic. The grade will be based on class participation (20%), the two papers (55%), and the presentation (25%).

About the Instructor

Mary Crossley is a Professor of Law and former Dean at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law who specializes in examining issues of inequality in health care financing and delivery. Her scholarship has covered topics ranging from the application of disability discrimination law to infants infected with HIV, to how health insurance discriminates against unhealthy people, to how hospitals can become more involved in addressing racial disparities in their communities.