Program: CET Vietnam: Development Studies
Course Title: Public Health in Vietnam: An Interdisciplinary Approach
Course Code: VS270
Total Hours: 45
Recommended Credits: 3
Suggested Cross Listings: Asian Studies; Anthropology, Sociology, Environmental and/or Gender Studies, where appropriate
Language of Instruction: English
Prerequisites/Requirements: Required for all program students

Description
This seminar introduces students to public health issues in Vietnam, with reference to Asian and global problems. The focus is on the public health impacts of armed conflict (refugee crises, environmental impacts of Agent Orange), rapid economic change, and new global epidemics and pandemics. Each class is co-taught by the Program Director and a guest lecturer, such as a scholar or practitioner in the field. Students examine key topics in public health—their challenges, nuances and attempted solutions—in modern-day Vietnam and in other parts of Southeast Asia and the developing world. The course provides students context for many of their day-to-day experiences in Vietnam, giving them the opportunity to focus on the broader, global relevance of issues they encounter in their immediate environment.

Objectives
During this course, students gain the following:

- An overall introduction to public health issues in modern Vietnam and their historical origins and specificity.
- An introduction to key public health research methodologies.
- An understanding of key development challenges in Vietnam and Southeast Asia today, and how these affect public health and health care.
- Awareness of the impact of economic growth and rapid social change on the evolution of public health in Vietnam.
- A general understanding of regional variation, uneven development, poverty and marginalization in contemporary Vietnam—and their impact on health issues.

Course Requirements
Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field trip, and participate actively in all discussions. They need to read all required materials before coming to class, and be ready to discuss readings and topics thoughtfully. Readings average around 30-50 pages per class session.

Students are required to complete weekly reading reflection papers. These are each two pages in length, and should demonstrate the student’s active engagement with the week’s readings. Students should use these papers as an opportunity to raise questions, discuss new theories, and tie in readings to previous field trips, classes or practicum experiences.
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Students submit a final research paper of at least 10 pages. Paper topics will be approved in advance by the course instructor. Students must consult relevant secondary sources and conduct basic fieldwork, such as a survey, personal interviews, case study, etc. Final papers need to be polished, and describe the student’s methodology, explaining how he/she overcame language and methodological challenges when conducting the research.

Methods of Evaluation
The final grade is determined as follows:

- Weekly reflection papers 30%
- Participation 30%
- Final research paper 40%

Primary Texts
A course reading packet will be available, with readings available electronically as well. Readings will be selected from the following sources (given here as examples):


Supplementary Texts
Selected articles and films.

Outline of Course Content
Note: Students cover approximately 1 topic or critical question every two weeks. The order of topics may vary slightly according to the availability of guest lecturers and scholars.

Topic: Overview of Public Health Issues in Vietnam (and Southeast Asia)
- What are the key public health issues in Vietnam today?
- How do we address poverty, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, and new emerging healthcare challenges?
- Can Vietnam benefit from experiences of other countries in Southeast Asia and Asia?
- What are the impacts of collaboration from foreign governments and non-governmental organizations?
- What is the picture of foreign investment in healthcare in Vietnam today, and why does it matter?
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Topic: Postwar Development Challenges and Globalization – Emerging from Mass Poverty
- What were some of the main environmental and health impacts of 30 years of war in Vietnam?
- What major political, economic and social challenges has Vietnam faced since then, and how have these changes impacted public health?
- What are the impacts of globalization on Vietnamese society (since the 1990s)?
- How have these affected public health and health care provision in Vietnam?

Topic: Health Impacts of Deep Poverty – Widespread Postwar Malnutrition
- Why was malnutrition such a widespread problem in the postwar period?
- How have poverty and malnutrition been tackled, and by whom?
- What roles have foreign organizations and NGOs played in poverty reduction and health interventions in Vietnam, alongside government interventions?

Topic: Environmental Impacts of War – Ongoing Impacts of Agent Orange
- What are the health impacts of Agent Orange in Vietnam today?
- What governmental policies and NGO interventions about Agent Orange?
- How and why did Agent Orange issues become prominent in the 2000s?

- What health issues do Vietnamese women face today?
- How are Vietnamese gender roles affecting women’s health in contemporary Vietnam?
- What are the key reproductive health challenges in Vietnam?

- Why did the Vietnamese government originally see HIV/AIDS as a criminal problem in the 1990s?
- Where did the stigma originate from and manifest itself? Why was it a problem?
- How did local and international interventions help reframe HIV/AIDS as a public health issue, and help avert a health crisis?

Topic: Emerging Health Challenges – New Wealth and New Pandemics
- What are emerging discourses on childhood nutrition, growth and childhood obesity?
- How has Vietnam mobilized in the face of SARS and Avian Flu? Were these interventions fully successful?
- Are new notions of “health” and well-being emerging as Vietnam is developing (in terms of eating, drinking, smoking)?