HMED 8220: Pharmaceutical Geographies, Pharmaceutical Economies

Fall 2014
Monday 2 – 4 pm
Ford Hall 155

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Course Summary

This seminar examines the emergence and persistence of global disparities in pharmaceuticals by providing historical, political, economic, and cultural analyses of the manufacturing, regulation, and distribution of pharmaceuticals. It covers historical and contemporary issues that underscore the paradoxical nature of the global pharmaceutical enterprise. On the one hand, the pharmaceutical industry’s remarkable potential to intervene in major health problems with advances in scientific knowledge and manufacturing capacity has led to an abundance of pharmaceutical resources in Western countries, and has led to what some observers characterize as the over-pharmaceuticalization of American society. On the other hand, global regulatory mechanisms and the prohibitive pricing policies of major pharmaceutical firms have restricted the global circulation of pharmaceuticals and led to pharmaceutical scarcity in many regions of the world, particularly in Africa, Asia, and South America. Disparities in the distribution of pharmaceutical resources also map onto geographic differences in the epidemiology of disease. Numerous chronic diseases with large patient populations in Western industrialized countries, such as hypertension, hypercholesteremia, erectile dysfunction and generalized anxiety disorder, have garnered the attention and significant resources of pharmaceutical firms. This has led pharmaceutical firms to develop scores of new and not-so-new (me-too) drugs to treat these chronic diseases, which in turn has helped generate billions of dollars of profit for the industry. In contrast, however, numerous acute and lethal diseases (such as malaria, diarrhea, and dysentery), which afflict large numbers of people in non-Western and less industrialized (and thus less profitable) regions of the world, suffer from a scarcity of research attention and resources.

In our analysis of these global disparities, we will examine early models of pharmaceutical production in the United States and Europe; the emergence of the politicized patient-consumer and their influence on the development of drugs to treat specific diseases; the development of intellectual property rights under the World Trade Organization in the 1980s, which required global recognition of patents and led to restrictions on the circulation of generic drugs and vaccines; the FDA as a necessary but flawed organization tasked with assuring safety and efficacy of new pharmaceutical therapies; the potential brought by advances in biologics, virology, immunology, and genetics; and finally, the promise and limitations of newly formed public-private partnerships to develop drugs for neglected diseases. In doing so, our seminar will highlight a series of themes that characterize both the history and current state of the
pharmaceutical enterprise: the contested role of the state in the production of essential 
vaccines and medicines; the historically contingent process by which pharmaceutical 
 firms gained significant political power in the national and global economy; the growing 
 challenge for regulatory agencies such as the FDA of ensuring the safety of new drug 
 products amidst pressing patient demand for faster access to those new drugs; and the 
 shrinking role of governments in assuring equitable access to even essential drugs.

Course Requirements
The focus of this graduate seminar is on detailed and careful reading of the assigned 
texts, and lively and engaged in-class discussion of the texts. As such, evaluative 
emphasis will be placed on class participation and short weekly response papers to the 
reading. There will be no final writing assignment for this course.

Leading Discussion and Participation (35%): At each of our meetings, one or two 
students (depending on final class numbers) will lead discussion of the weekly reading. 
This will mean formulating a list of discussion questions ahead of time and steering the 
course of the discussion during the seminar.

Weekly Response Papers (35%): Students will write weekly response papers to the 
week’s reading assignments (3-4 pages). A good response paper not only consists of a 
summary of the texts but also includes your critical response to the texts as well as your 
analysis of the material found in the texts. This means that you will be assessing the 
information found in the texts and stating your position towards it. It isn’t necessary to 
analyze and respond to every aspect of a text. In fact, it is usually better to select from the 
text two or three specific things to respond to and analyze—perhaps something that 
particularly interests you, raises questions for you, or troubles you. Or you may want to 
contrast and compare the perspective presented by one author to the perspective offered 
by another. Whatever approach you wish to take is fine, as long as you provide evidence 
to support your position, and as long as it demonstrates your comprehension of the 
material and your ability to think critically about it.

Your response paper should have an introduction (just one paragraph)—a mini 
overview of your paper—that includes your thesis statement. This is a sentence or two in 
which you state the argument you will be making in this paper. Your paper should also 
include a brief summary of the texts you are responding to that includes a concise 
statement of the authors’ arguments and an overview of how they made their case. In 
other words, what evidence did the author use? It is very important that you demonstrate 
that you understand what the author is trying to communicate, but it is equally important 
that you do this as concisely as possible. The remainder of the paper should be your 
critical response to the reading; it is where you evaluate the author’s argument, and where 
you tie this reading into other readings and the themes of the course. Be sure to include 
why you responded as you did, offering relevant supporting ideas, examples, details, and 
explanations from the text itself, other readings, and from class.

Annotated Bibliography (30%): In consultation with the professor, students will prepare 
an annotated bibliography on a topic within the broad subject of global pharmaceuticals 
that is of specific interest to them. After identifying a selection of books and articles to be
reviewed, you will prepare one to two paragraphs on each text that summarizes the text’s argument, sources, strengths and/or weaknesses, and contribution to the literature. The annotated bibliography will be due at the end of the semester.

**Required Books**

**NB. All required articles and book chapters will be available on the course Moodle site**


**Recommended Books** (not required)


**Syllabus**

**Mon 9/8  Drugs in the Global Economy**

- **NB Please read before the first class!**

Mon 9/15 The Science, Culture, and Politics of Pharmaceutical Innovation
• Tobbell, *Pills, Power, and Policy*

Mon 9/22 The Science, Culture, and Politics of Bio-Pharmaceutical Innovation
• Rasmussen, *Gene Jockeys*

Mon 9/29 Global Productions
• Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories*

Mon 10/6 Global Circulations Part I
• Hayden, *When Nature Goes Public*

Mon 10/13 Global Circulations Part II
• Peterson, *Speculative Markets*

Mon 10/20 Pharmaceutical Abundance
• Greene, *Prescribing by Numbers*

Mon 10/27 Expanding Abundant Markets
• Andrew Lakoff, “High Contact: Gifts and Surveillance in Argentina,” in *Global Pharmaceuticals*, pp. 111-135.
Mon 11/3  On Scarcity: Orphan Drugs and Neglected Diseases
- Susan Reynolds White, Michael A. Whyte, Lotte Meinert, and Betty Kyaddondo, “Treating AIDS: Dilemmas of Unequal Access in Uganda” in *Global Pharmaceuticals*

Mon 11/10  The Lived Realities of Pharmaceutical Scarcity
- Nguyen, *The Republic of Therapy*

Mon 11/17 Pharmaceutical Governance
- Biehl, *Will to Live*

Mon 11/24  Biocapital
- Sunder Rajan, *Biocapital*

Mon 12/1  Globalizing Clinical Trials: An Ethics of Access?
- Petryna, *When Experiments Travel*

Mon 12/8  Constituting Pharmaceutical Citizenship