



Syllabus

Course Title: Anatomy of a System: Health and Policy in the UK and US

Program and Date: London Maymester; May 16-30, 2026

Academic Department: Public & Community Health

Instructor Name: Elizabeth Gordon, PhD, MPH, CPH

Contact Information:

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Get to Know Your Professor

Meet Elizabeth Gordon – Your Guide to Health, History, and Policy in London!

Dr. Elizabeth Gordon is an assistant professor and program director in the Department of Public & Community Health at Murray State University. With over a decade of experience in public health and healthcare, she brings real-world insight and passion to every class she teaches. A proud Murray State University (MSU) alum and west Kentucky native, Dr. Gordon earned her Bachelor's in Biology at MSU before going on to complete her Master of Public Health and Ph.D. in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology at the University of Louisville. Beyond the classroom, Dr. Gordon is an avid traveler who thrives on discovering stories, people, and cultures from around the world. She's especially excited to lead students through London—uncovering how its rich history has influenced the way we approach health today.

Course Description

Step into the fascinating world of health, medicine, and public policy in one of the most historic and influential cities on Earth. Stand where surgeons once operated without anesthesia in the Old Operating Theatre, examine bizarre medical relics at the Hunterian Museum, soak in ancient wellness rituals at the Roman Baths, and uncover the darker sides of health and history at the Tower of London and Dover Castle. Fast forward to now: how did the UK end up with the world's largest publicly funded health system, and what can it teach us? Through conversations with multidisciplinary health professionals, you'll compare and contrast British and American approaches to uncover how history, politics, and culture continue to shape the health systems we live (and die) by today.

The course is designed for future healthcare professionals across disciplines.

Syllabus

Course Level and Credit Hours

Undergraduate and Graduate Level
Three credit hours

Prerequisite(s)

None

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of all coursework with a passing grade and full participation in course activities, students shall be able to:

- Explain the impact of history and cultural beliefs on knowledge about health and resulting public health policies and medical practice in England
- Describe concrete examples of how history has influenced modern healthcare practices in the United Kingdom
- Compare/contrast healthcare delivery in the United States and the United Kingdom and critically examine how they differ along important aspects, including access, financing, and delivery of services
- Engage in meaningful self-reflection and self-awareness of how their culture and environment influence their perspectives on health and healthcare

Required Readings and Materials

Students will be provided with the assigned course readings before departure. All course readings will be posted to the course shared Google Drive, which will be made available to students. Assigned readings may include supplemental hand-outs, online videos, online readings, journal articles, and chapters from textbooks. Students are expected to complete the course readings before departure for London.

Tentative Required Reading Resource List

- Selected chapters from: Carney, J. K. (2023). *A History of Public Health: From Past to Present* (1st ed.). Burlington, MA. Jones & Bartlett Learning, ISBN 978-1-284-111774.
- What was medieval and Renaissance medicine? *Medical News Today*. Published 2018. Updated 2023. Accessed from: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323533>.
- Poor Law Reform. *Reforming Society in the 19th Century* website. Published 2017. Updated 2017. Accessed from: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/19thcentury/overview/poorlaw/>.
- Morley I. City chaos, contagion, Chadwick, and social justice. *Yale J Biol Med*. 2007 Jun;80(2):61-72. PMID: 18160991; PMCID: PMC2140185. Accessed from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2140185/#:~:text=In%201842%2C%20a%20civil%20servant,the%20world's%20first%20industrial%20society.>

Syllabus

- Shattuck Report. American Academy of Sanitarians. Accessed from: <https://aaosi.wildapricot.org/Resources/Documents/shattuck.pdf>.
- Davis, DL, Bell ML, Fletcher T. A look back at the London smog of 1952 and the half century since. *Environ Health Perspect.* 2002; 110(12): A734-735. Accessed from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1241116/pdf/ehp0110-a00734.pdf>.
- Gawande, A. Is Health Care a Right? The New Yorker. U.S. Journal. October 2, 2017 Issue. Accessed from: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/10/02/is-health-care-a-right>.
- The Best Health Care? American & the World. PBS News hour. August 31, 2020. Accessed from: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/series/the-best-health-care-america-the-world>.
- KFF. Summary of the Affordable Care Act. 2013. Published 2013. Access from: <https://www.kff.org/health-reform/fact-sheet/summary-of-the-affordable-care-act/>.
- The Commonwealth Fund. International Health Care System Profiles: England. 2020. Accessed from: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/international-health-policy-center/countries/england>.
- The Commonwealth Fund. International Health Care System Profiles: United States. 2020. Accessed from: <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/international-health-policy-center/countries/united-states>.

Assignments and Grades

Before Travel:

- Self-assessment-5%
- Reading and Discussion Board-10%
- Introduction to London-10%

During Trip:

- Attendance and Participation-10%
- Daily Reflective Journal-25%

After Travel:

- Final Topic Paper-30%:
- *Students enrolled in the Honors or Graduate sections must also create a PowerPoint presentation on the topic they choose for their final topic paper and record a 10-15 minute presentation to be posted in the class discussion board.*
- Final Reflective Discussion-10%:

Syllabus

Grading Scale

The following scale will be used to compute your grade.

90 – 100% = A
80 – 89% = B
70 – 79% = C
60 – 69% = D
Below 60% = F

Evaluation Criteria:

Self-Assessment:	50 points
Reading and Discussion Board:	100 points
Intro to London Assignment:	100 points
Attendance/Participation:	100 points
Reflective Journals:	250 points
Final Topic Paper:	300 points
Final Reflective Discussion:	100 points

Total	1000 points
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Onsite Learning Experiences and Activities

Onsite learning experiences in this class will likely include the following site visits. This is a tentative list, which will be replaced with a detailed daily itinerary of class meetings and field trips prior to the departure date.

- Walking tour of Broad Street Pump & John Snow Pub
- Guided tour of Royal College of Physicians Museum & Gardens
- Old Operating Theatre
- Royal Hospital Chelsea tour
- Royal Society for Public Health
- Florence Nightingale Museum
- Self-discovery day
- Guided walking tour with Discover Medical London
- Dover, England Day Trip
- Bath, England Day Trip

Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory at all scheduled activities and class meetings, as well as field trip excursions. This includes any virtual meetings before and after the onsite experience. Repeated absences, including for ill health, will require documentation to be excused.



Syllabus

Late Work Policy

Late assignments will be accepted only with a valid excuse and at the sole discretion of the instructor, and may result in a 20% grade deduction for that assignment. Technical issues are not acceptable excuses for late submissions. No assignment will be accepted past one week of the due date, and will result in zero points given for the assignment, unless arranged with the course faculty ahead of time.

Academic Integrity Policy

Plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty (see your campus student handbook for definitions) will not be tolerated and will result in failing assignment grades or even a course grade of F. Violations of academic honesty will be reported back to the student's home campus.

Physical Expectations

The program requires walking 3-5 miles per day on uneven pavement in all kinds of weather and long periods of standing. Students must be able to carry their own bags and belongings. Students are highly encouraged to bring at least two pairs of comfortable, broken-in walking shoes and avoid flip-flops and high heels.

Disability Accommodation

CCSA is committed to providing access to education abroad to the extent possible in a study abroad setting. The earlier CCSA and the faculty know the needs, the more likely we can accommodate them. At a minimum, students seeking accommodations are to contact both the CCSA office and the faculty one month in advance of the program's beginning. Students seeking such accommodation must provide CCSA with a copy of the letter on file with their own Office of Disability Services outlining what services they receive on their home campus.

Title IX Policy

Sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature) and sexual discrimination violate CCSA policies. Students experiencing such behavior may obtain support from the Onsite Program Director or the CCSA Executive Director. To report sexual misconduct or sex discrimination, contact either of these two officers. Disclosure to faculty instructors or CCSA officers of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex discrimination occurring on the program or involving a visitor, student, or employee is not confidential under Title IX. Faculty and other CCSA employees are required to forward such reports, including names and circumstances, to the CCSA Executive Director.



Syllabus

Statement about Final Syllabus

Please note that all CCSA syllabi are subject to change, but every effort will be made to ensure participants receive notice of such changes in a timely manner. Specifically, course faculty reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed due to circumstances beyond their control or unanticipated developments while the class is underway. Every effort will be made to inform students of changes as they occur.