

***History of Northwestern University's
Program in Global Health Studies***

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Program in Global Health Studies
Northwestern University

The 2023-24 academic year marks the 20th Anniversary of the founding of Northwestern's Program in Global Health Studies. Here we provide a brief history of the origins, growth, and successes of the GHS Program.

2000-2004: Developing Global Health at Northwestern

The foundations of the GHS Program were established in 2000 when Dévora Grynspan and her office of International Program Development secured an institutional grant from the National Security Education Program (NSEP) on "International Health, Medical Cultures and the Law." The goals of this grant were to establish interdisciplinary training in international (global) health that would bridge the Evanston and Chicago campuses. The NSEP grant fostered the development of courses that eventually became the core of the Global Health Studies curriculum and helped support the creation of signature Northwestern Global Health Study Abroad programs in China, Mexico, and South Africa. These initiatives expanded campus-wide interest in global health.

The first global health courses were offered during the 2001-02 academic year through a collaboration between faculty in the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences (WCAS), the Feinberg School of Medicine (FSM), and the Pritzker School of Law (PSL). During the fall quarter of 2001, Introduction to International Public Health (Anthropology 390/Public Health 390) was offered on the Evanston campus and was co-taught by William Leonard (WCAS-Anthropology) and Claudia Morrissey (FSM-Preventive Medicine). During the winter quarter of 2002, two additional courses were offered on the Chicago campus, International Perspectives on Violence: Public Health and Law (co-taught by Katherine Christoffel, FSM-Preventive Medicine and Cynthia Bowman, PSL) and International Organizations: Regimes for International Public

Health, (taught by Kenneth Abbott, PSL). All three classes quickly filled during pre-registration, indicating that there was substantial student interest in these topics.

These same three classes (Introduction to International Health, International Perspectives on Violence, and International Organizations) were offered again during the subsequent two years of the grant, 2002-03 and 2003-04. Additionally, during the spring quarter of 2003 a new course on HIV/AIDS was offered by Kearsley Stewart (WCAS-Anthropology).

The NSEP grant also fostered the creation of the first Northwestern Global Health Study Abroad Programs in partnership with institutions in Mexico (Universidad Panamericana, Mexico City), China (Capital University of Medical Sciences and Tsinghua University, Beijing) and South Africa (University of Cape Town). The Public Health in Mexico program was launched during the summer of 2001, followed by the programs in China and South Africa in 2003 and 2004, respectively.

Three major conferences were supported by the NSEP funds. These conferences brought together leading researchers and policy experts on a wide range of global health topics, including: “Pediatric and Adolescent HIV/AIDS” (September 28, 2001), “The International Trade in Small Arms: Health and Legal Perspectives” (November 8, 2003), and “Poverty, Gender, and Health in Latin America” (October 23, 2004).

By the 2003-04 academic year, it was clear that there was strong student interest in a formal, undergraduate curriculum in Global Health. During the winter of 2004, Leonard and Grynspan submitted a proposal to the WCAS curriculum committee for the creation of a new, interdisciplinary minor in Global Health Studies. The proposed minor was a 7-course curriculum (3 Global Health classes and 4 Electives) that also required students to study abroad or have a

substantial international health experience. The [GHS minor](#) was approved by the Weinberg faculty in the spring of 2004 and began enrolling students the following fall. Global Health Studies was the [first Northwestern undergraduate program to require a Study Abroad/international experience](#).

2004-2012: Launching and Growing the Global Health Studies Program

In the fall of 2004, the Program in Global Health Studies was formally launched under the directorship of William Leonard in WCAS and Dévora Grynspan in IPD. The initial curricular requirements for the minor included: (1) Introduction to International Public Health, (2) two other Global Health classes, (3) four 300-level elective courses, and (4) an international health experience. In response to very strong student demand, curricular offerings rapidly expanded to include new courses on global bioethics, mental health, and emerging global health challenges.

Between 2004 and 2006, much of global health teaching was done by Professors Leonard and Stewart in Anthropology as well as Professor Mark Sheldon in Philosophy (teaching Global Bioethics). In the fall of 2006, Rebecca Seligman was appointed as an Assistant Professor in Anthropology and Global Health Studies and began offering GHS courses on Gender and Health and International Perspectives on Mental Health. During the 2006-07 academic year, Michael Diamond was also hired as a Visiting Lecturer in Global Health, offering new courses on Managing Global Health Challenges and Global Health: Achieving Global Impact Through Local Engagement.

In the fall of 2009, Elizabeth Barden was appointed as the first full-time faculty member in the GHS Program. Professor Barden was appointed as a Continuing Lecturer, teaching six

courses per year. During her three years in the program Professor Barden regularly taught the introductory course as well as new courses on Nutritional Surveillance, Community Health Programming, and Anthropology and Global Health.

Between 2009 and 2012, several faculty members from FSM offered courses in the program, including Sarah Rodriguez (Directed Research, International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health), Rowland Chang (Introduction to Epidemiology), Rebecca Wurtz (Introduction to Public Health), Robert Murphy (Infectious Disease and Global Health), and Bechara Choucair (Refugee & Immigrant Health). By the end of the 2012, both Professors Barden and Stewart had left Northwestern to pursue other career opportunities. Professor Rodriguez formally became a half-time Lecturer in GHS in the fall of 2012.

2012-present: Growing the GHS Faculty & Expanding the Curriculum

Since the fall of 2012, the GHS faculty has grown considerably and the curricular offerings have expanded to include an adjunct major, a joint BA/MPH degree (the Accelerated Public Health Program), and an approved PhD Certificate in Global Health.

Expansion of the Core GHS Faculty

Between 2012 and 2022 the GHS Program hired six full-time, teaching-track faculty (Professors Sullivan, Locke, Rodriguez, Reyes, Hoominfar, and Mitchell), one tenure-line faculty member (Professor Young, jointly with Anthropology) and one Visiting Assistant Professor (Professor Au). The program has benefitted from a steady trajectory of growth in size, diversity, and professional advancement of its faculty over the last decade:

- In the fall of 2012, Professor Noelle Sullivan was recruited from the University of Florida to join the GHS faculty as a full-time Lecturer, filling the line vacated by

Elizabeth Barden. Professor Sullivan was promoted to Assistant Professor of Instruction in the fall of 2015, Associate Professor of Instruction in 2018, and Professor of Instruction in 2023. She currently serves as the program's Associate Director.

- Professor Peter Locke joined the GHS faculty in the fall of 2014 as an Assistant Professor of Instruction. He was promoted to Associate Professor of Instruction in the fall of 2019, and he is currently being reviewed for promotion to Professor of Instruction. Professor Locke currently serves as the co-DUS for the program (with Sarah Rodriguez).
- Professor Beatriz Reyes joined the GHS Program as a Postdoctoral Fellow in the fall of 2016, teaching two GHS courses per year. In the fall of 2019, Professor Reyes was appointed as a full-time Assistant Professor of Instruction in GHS. She currently serves as the DUS for the Native and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) Program.
- Professor Sera Young was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Global Health Studies in the fall of 2016. Professor Young was promoted to Associate Professor (with tenure) in the fall of 2019, and she is currently being reviewed for promotion to full Professor.
- Professor Sarah Rodriguez was appointed as a full-time Lecturer in GHS in the fall of 2017. Professor Rodriguez was promoted to Senior Lecturer in the fall of 2019, and Associate Professor of Instruction in 2021. She currently serves as the co-DUS for the program (with Peter Locke).

- Professor Elham Hoominfar was appointed as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the fall of 2021. The following year, Professor Hoominfar was appointed as a full-time Assistant Professor of Instruction.
- Professor Charlayne Mitchell was appointed as a Visiting Assistant Professor in the fall of 2021. The following year, Professor Mitchell was appointed as a full-time Assistant Professor of Instruction.
- Professor Sokhieng Au was appointed as a Visiting Assistant Professor in GHS in the fall of 2022. She currently serves as the DUS for the Science in Human Culture (SHC) Program.

The program now has a rich and dynamic mix of interdisciplinary scholars from diverse backgrounds, including: Anthropology (Locke, Mitchell, Seligman, Sullivan, Young, & Leonard), History (Rodriguez & Au), Nutritional Science and Global Health (Mitchell), Public Health (Reyes), and Sociology (Hoominfar). The growth of the GHS faculty now allows for all the program's core required classes to be offered multiple times per year. Additionally, the strong collaboration and collegiality among the GHS faculty ensures that the burdens of teaching the larger introductory and core courses are shared.

Expansion of the GHS Curricula

The growth in faculty size and diversity has fueled tremendous expansion of course and curricular offerings in the program. During the 2014-15 academic year, the GHS minor requirements were shifted to now require 4 Global Health courses and 3 electives. Students pursuing the minor are now also required to take either *Global Bioethics* (GH 302) or a methods course in addition to the Introductory Course (GH 201).

Further expansion of the GHS curriculum came in 2017 with the establishment of both the [Adjunct Major](#) and the Accelerated Public Health Program (BA/MPH, jointly with TGS and FSM). The interdisciplinary GHS major is an 11-course curriculum that has strong emphases on bioethics, research methods, health disparities, and engaged collaborative research and learning. All students take 4 core GH courses, including the introductory course, *Global Bioethics*, research methods, and a choice of *Social Determinants of Health*, *Biomedicine and World History* or *History of Reproductive Health*. In addition, majors take 3 additional GH courses from the slate of over 20 options and 4 elective courses in fields outside of global health.

The Accelerated Public Health Program bridges the Evanston and Chicago campuses providing a 5-year combined BA/MPH degree. The program is open to all current NU undergraduates who apply during their junior year. Students accepted into the program can begin taking Graduate Public Health classes during their senior year. Students in the program can take up to 4 Public health classes during their senior year, and GHS majors and minors may count up to 3 of their 300-level GH courses towards the MPH degree.

Most recently, in spring of 2023, TGS approved the creation of a 5-course PhD Certificate in Global Health. This certificate program will be open to doctoral students across the social sciences, humanities, and biomedical sciences and is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2024.

Growth of Study Abroad Opportunities

With the success of the initial [Global Health Study Abroad Programs](#) established from the NSEP grant, additional global partnerships and programs were established through Dévora Grynspan's leadership as IPD Director and Vice-President of International Relations. New Study

Abroad Programs were established in France (with Sciences Po; “Public Health in Europe”), South Africa (with Stellenbosch University; Public Health & Development in South Africa; Global Health Technologies), in Uganda (with Makerere University; Public Health in Uganda), Israel (with Tel Aviv University; Public Health and Society in Israel), Cuba (with the Casa de las Américas and Universidad de las Artes; Public Health in Cuba), Chile (with IES Abroad and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; Public Health in Chile), Tanzania (with the University of Dar es Salaam; Field Research in Public Health: Tanzania), and Serbia & Bosnia-Herzegovina (with the University of Belgrade and the University of Sarajevo; Comparative Public Health: Serbia & Bosnia-Herzegovina).

The innovative programs in Tanzania and Serbia/Bosnia were developed by Professors Noelle Sullivan and Peter Locke, respectively. Under the Directorship of Professor Sullivan, the Tanzania program was launched in the summer of 2014 and ran for four years through the summer of 2017. The program in Serbia/Bosnia was initiated in the summer of 2016 under the Directorship of Professor Locke and is ongoing.

In the Spring of 2017, Professor Sarah Rodriguez launched an innovative research-oriented study abroad opportunity: Maternal Health in the 20th Century: Historical Research in London’s Wellcome Library. Students who are admitted to this program travel to London to work in the Wellcome archives on trends in maternal health. During the subsequent quarter, all the participating students enroll in GH 310: Supervised Global Health Research: Maternal Health in the Twentieth Century. This program is currently offered during fall quarter and is funded through the generous support of the Radulovacki Endowed Fund.

In the spring of 2020, the GHS program paused the study abroad requirement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The program currently does not require a study abroad experience for

majors and minors, but strongly encourages students to participate in these programs if they are able.

GHS Staff Growth & Contributions

Since its inception, the GHS Program has benefitted tremendously from the contributions of its dedicated staff. Their efforts have been critical in supporting the faculty and students, growing the curriculum, and expanding research and training opportunities.

From 2004-2015, staff support for the GHS Program was provided through the International Program Development (IPD) Office. With the dissolution of IPD in 2016 and Dévora Grynsman's appointment as Vice-President of International Relations, support for the program moved into WCAS. Greg Buchanan was appointed as Assistant Director of the program and Rebecca Haines, a graduate of the program, was hired as the first GHS Program Assistant in WCAS. In 2017, Rebecca left to pursue graduate training in Public Health & Social Work at UIC and was replaced by Micki Burton. Micki served as the program's PA from 2017-2022, leaving to pursue her MA in Counseling at NU. We formally welcomed Lauren Carr as the GHS PA in the fall of 2022.

Awards and Recognition

The GHS Program has been recognized with multiple awards for curricular innovation and expanding global education. In 2008, Northwestern University was awarded a grant from the National Institutes of Health. The grant supported the development of additional undergraduate courses in global health, provided funding for research and study abroad, and increased collaboration among global health programs across the University. The program also received

the Senator Paul Simon [Spotlight Award for Campus Internationalization](#) in 2013 and the [Heiskell Award for Innovation in International Education](#) in 2018.

Concluding Remarks

To date, the GHS Program has graduated over 1300 students, with ~40% of them going on to pursue advanced training in medicine and the health sciences. The program is now one of the largest in WCAS, with over 400 majors and minors.

After graduation, many of our students pursue international fellowships or work opportunities before going on for further graduate or professional training. Over the last seven years, Global Health students have received 16 Fulbright, two Princeton in Latin America, as well as Princeton in Africa, Emerson National Hunger, Global Health Corp, and Projects for Peace Fellowships.

The program has also succeeded in *being truly interdisciplinary* as evidenced by the wide range of different majors among GHS students. In addition to the biological sciences, there is strong representation from students in the social sciences – as well as students from the Medill School of Journalism, the McCormick School of Engineering (Biomedical and Industrial Engineering), the School of Education & Social Policy, and the School of Communications. This diverse mix makes for dynamic classes, with students from different backgrounds and expertise coming together to evaluate the nature of health disparities across the globe and propose new collaborative directions for addressing these long-standing problems.

Our students also benefit from a strong and passionate alumni network. The program also sponsors alumni panels and workshops, where our alumni share their experiences and talk about how the program shaped their professional/career directions. In addition, we also have hosted a

formal mentoring program in which current students are paired with alumni in their areas of interest. Alumni mentors work closely with students across a range of career paths, including international development, reproductive health, rehabilitation medicine, and health communications. These mentors are tremendously generous in providing thoughtful advice and highlighting additional training and professional opportunities for our students.

Northwestern's Program in Global Health Studies is now regarded as one of the premier programs of its kind. We are inspired to work with and help train the next generation of leaders in this field who are committed to addressing global health disparities and improving the quality of people's lives around the world. The growth and success of the program would not have been possible without the strong commitment of the College and University as well as the generous and visionary support from our Alumni and Donors. We look forward to the program's continued growth and success for many years to come.