New Special Topics Course:

BH 597  Ethical Issues in the Food System and Public Health

Course Description:
This course provides an opportunity for students to consider the complexities of the modern food system from a lens of public health ethics and social justice. Every time we make a food-related choice or policy, there are both good and bad consequences. But in our complex food system, we see only pieces of the whole, which leads to a great deal of uncertainty around the risk and benefits of these decisions. Drawing from both peer-reviewed literature and popular media, we will examine current issues of food in society, considering impacts on health and health disparities, distribution of risks, benefits and structural violence within the system, how power and privilege impact what we see and know, while asking how to make societal decisions around food. The first half of the course will focus on science and biotechnology, while the second half will focus on social aspects, food sovereignty, and public health policy.

We will apply ethical frameworks such as social justice theories, feminist ethics, public health/communitarian ethics, principles, consequentialist, and virtue ethics to frame our discussions about what we should do as individuals and a society around topical domains in the food system. Students will practice making an ethical case for a policy on a topic of their interest.

Course Objectives:
1. Identify ethical issues in food-related case studies as they relate to individual and community health and well-being.
2. Facilitate discussion around challenging food issues, in an environment of limited or conflicting information, to consider policy or action alternatives.
3. Present and apply a set of ethical theories to food-related decision-making.

Spring 2014
Special topics course
for graduate and
professional students.

Thursdays
1:30-4:20pm
Health Sciences TBD

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