Social Aspects of AIDS in Africa

SOCI 513

Winter 2010
Tuesday 11:35 a.m. – 1:25 p.m.
Peterson 310

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Office Hours: Thursday 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
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Short course description:

A quarter of a century after its emergence, the HIV/AIDS pandemic remains one of the most critical and intractable threats to global health. Nowhere is its impact more severe than in eastern and southern Africa where prevalence rates are as high as 18.8% in South Africa, 24.1% in Botswana, and 20.1% in Zimbabwe. In all places, including sub-Saharan Africa, HIV/AIDS is deeply rooted in social structures and institutions, making it a particularly important disease for studying the social aspects of health. In the first part of this class, we will focus on the social factors that are shaping the AIDS pandemic in Africa including gender inequality, sexual behaviors, poverty, marital systems, and migration patterns. We will then explore how this pandemic is altering social, demographic and economic conditions. These classes will examine the effect of HIV/AIDS on mortality, fertility, education, labor, and family structures (including the rising number of orphans). For the remainder of the course, we will address the effectiveness of both health policy and social policy in minimizing the risks and coping with the repercussions of this disease. This course will draw on research from sociology, demography, economics, medicine, and policy. The objective of this course is to expose students to some of the major research techniques and analytic findings from multiple disciplines through their application to the specific example of HIV/AIDS.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.
Grading Policy:
Students are expected to actively engage in all discussions and to have read the assigned readings before each class. Each student is asked to prepare three questions based on the readings prior to class. Readings preceded by an asterisk are strongly recommended, but not required. Web links for most readings are provided below. Downloading articles from AIDS is somewhat more complicated. You should use this link and then navigate your way to the specific article indicated.
http://mclink.library.mcgill.ca/sfx/az/default?param_perform_value=searchTitle&param_jumpToPage_value=&param_type_value=textSearch&param_textSearchType_value=startsWith&param_pattern_value=AIDS

Students will be assigned to give one or two class presentation(s). These presentations will address one of the main questions listed under each topic. Students may also present on a related question, if they are given prior approval. Presentations will last approximately 20 minutes. Students may rely on power point presentations and/or assign additional class readings. The objective of this assignment is not to give a general overview of the issue under discussion. Rather students should present a strong argument in response to the question posed or provide in-depth analyses of each side of the question.

Each student will turn in an independent research paper on a topic related to the social aspects of HIV/AIDS. The paper should be focused, well-researched, and clearly written. It should be approximately 25 pages long, double-spaced, not including references. The topic cannot be identical to the topic of the student’s presentation and must be approved by the instructor at least two weeks before the paper’s due date on November 30.

20% Class participation
30% Class presentation
50% Research paper

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Plagiarism:
McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).
Part 1: Overview of the AIDS Pandemic

Week 1: Global Overview and the African Context (September 7)


http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=125603051&SrchMode=1&sid=2&Fmt=6&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1166730015&clientId=10843


Week 2: Biology, Epidemiology, and Data Controversies (September 14)


Fiala, Christian. 2008. “AIDS : Are We Being Deceived?” *NRC Handelsblad*
http://www.nrc.nl/international/Opinion/article1984104.ece/AIDS_are_we_being_deceived

Part II: The Social and Economic Determinants of HIV/AIDS

Week 3: Poverty, Education and HIV Risks (September 21)

- Does relative poverty or absolute poverty matter more?
- Why did the most educated population contract the virus first?
- Are educational campaigns effective prevention interventions?

http://www.aidsonline.com/pt/re/aids/toc.00002030-200711007-00000.htm;jsessionid=J5zXbvyQ9d1F2p61T1b2BxJ5Q5n5p8jsW1Xylj8xxGTmKhX3gz5Z!2738385061181195628180911-1


Week 4: Gender Inequality (September 28)

- Stephen Lewis has asserted that gender inequality is the driving factor behind the epidemic. Is this true?
- Are women or men more “vulnerable” to HIV/AIDS?
- Are gender inequalities amenable to systematic policy intervention?


Week 5: Adolescents: Transactional Sex and Early Marriage (October 5)

- What explains the higher rates of HIV/AIDS among adolescent females than among males?
- Is evaluating sexual behavior as “transactions” a useful tool?
- Does early marriage increase or decrease the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS?


Week 6: Concurrent Partnerships and Sexual Networks (October 12)

- Why are concurrent partnerships riskier than serial monogamy?
- Are the systems of extra-marital sexual partnerships and polygamy interlinked?
  - If so, how?
- To what extent can differences in sexual networks explain levels of the HIV epidemic?


Week 7: Stigma and Cultural Practices (October 19)

- To what extent is stigma a cause and to what extent is it a consequence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic?
- Are “cultural practices” to blame for the high rates of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa?
- How are stigma and cultural norms related to each other?


Week 8: Migration and Urbanization (October 26)

- Who bears the “risks” of migration?
- Should HIV/AIDS policies seek to limit migration?
- Is urban poverty worse than rural poverty?


Dodoo, F Nii-Amoo, Eliya Zulu. and Alex Ezeh. 2007. “Urban-Rural Differences in the Socioeconomic Deprivation-Sexual Behavior Link in Kenya.” Social Science & Medicine, 64(5): 1019-1031. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=PublicationURL&_tockey=%23TOC%23235925%23232007%233999359994%233643811%23FLA%23&_cdi=5925&_pubType=J&_auth=y&_acct=C000022002&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=458507&md5=2b4cb47a7b8e03d0b1c3b7de4699f30f


Part III: The Social, Economic and Demographic Consequences of HIV/AIDS

Week 9: Impacts on Education and Work (November 2)

- What does it mean that AIDS is depleting “human capital”?
- How large is the impact on education?
- How large is the impact on labor?


Week 10: Impacts on Families and Orphans (November 9)

- Are orphans better or worse off in their foster homes?
- Does the extended kinship network help or hinder care for orphans?
- What are the most important long-term consequences of orphanhood in sub-Saharan Africa?


http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VBF-4FR3NR3-1&_user=458507&_rdoc=1&_fmt=&_orig=search&_sort=d&view=c&_acct=C000022002&_version=1&_userid=458507&md5=b2d2c993619d5b3cf9a8cb195efe5070

Week 11: HIV/AIDS and Development (November 16)

- Has the HIV/AIDS epidemic thwarted economic development in Africa? If so, how?
- In what ways might the AIDS epidemic benefit African economies?
- Does the AIDS epidemic obligate developed countries to spend more on development assistance? If so, what kind?
- What can or should businesses do to fight AIDS?


http://www.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/324/7331/232


http://www.aidsonline.com/pt/re/aids/abstract.00002030-20040602-00005.htm?sessionid=FCQf1QDt5ht17zF2JyynzhM2wg9SKgwJgptvLTKdLLd13KBqv9L9P!1853810205!-949856144!8091!-1
Part IV: Social Policies, Funding, and Priorities

Week 12: Effective Policy Interventions: Prevention and Treatment (November 23)

- Should intervention dollars be spent on prevention or treatment?
- Should prevention interventions focus on behavioral change or biomedical technologies?
- Will ARV therapy stem the tide of AIDS?
- Is male circumcision the answer?


http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=PublicationURL&_tockey=%23TOC%234886%23232008%233996270361%2323695977%2323FLA%23&_cdi=4886&_pubType=L&_auth=y&_acct=C000022002&_version=1&_userid=458507&md5=a6d21e24b53b54f6065fb51089e51ed0

http://mclink.library.mcgill.ca/sfx?sid=google&auinit=JS&aulast=Montaner&atitle=The+case+for+expanding+access+to+highly+active+antiretroviral+therapy+to+curb+the+growth+of+the+HIV+epidemic&id=pmid:16890841

http://www.springerlink.com/content/j145x6635347wt21/fulltext.pdf


Week 13: The Politics of Policy-Making and Funding (November 30)

- Who is setting the AIDS agenda in Africa?
- Where have the PEPFAR dollars been spent?
- Is too little or too much spent on HIV/AIDS programs?


