

FINAL REPORT to the South Carolina Sustainable Universities Initiative

2000-2001 Minigrant

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1. Background and Grant Activity

An interdisciplinary elective course entitled “Global Bioethics” has been offered to students in all colleges of MUSC each year since 1989. With the SUI Minigrant, important changes were made in this course in Spring 2001, and these changes have been sustained in the two years since that time.

First, the former course was re-conceptualized to sharpen the focus on globalization in reference to health and health care, while also including an expanded discussion of environmental ethics and environmental issues providing a critical context for grasping global health issues. The course was re-named *International / Environmental Health and Ecological Medicine (Global Bioethics)*. While the course title is unwieldy, we wanted the title to describe accurately the concerns of the course, including the concern of giving a whole new slant or interpretive frame to the study of medicine. That frame is ecology. Everything in the course was designed to re-cast students’ thinking into an ecological mode, such that the way of thinking itself might influence not only this study of globalization and environmental issues but the rest of their medical education. A course syllabus is attached with a description of the content of each seminar.

Second, the course was cross-listed in the Masters of Environmental Science (MES) Program at the College of Charleston and publicized within that program. This action was taken at a time when the MES Program was offered jointly with MUSC’s similar masters-level program. The intent was to provide an ethics course that would impact environmental science students on both campuses along with medical students, providing a rich, interdisciplinary milieu for learning. Before the course was launched in the Spring, however, a division of the two programs occurred, making recruitment of MES students much more problematic—but not impossible, as the participation of one or two students from that program each year attests.

Third, a “track” system using learning contracts was instituted to allow students of somewhat divergent interests to pursue the course of study that was most relevant to their needs. The divergence was expected to be between medical (and other health science) students interested in public health and clinical service in the less developed world, and MES students primarily interested in environmental ethics. The “Learning Contract” which was filled out by each student is included in the syllabus.

Fourth, because of funding, it was possible to bring in more faculty resources from outside Charleston to enrich the academic offering of the course. In earlier years, we

relied more on readings, video, and local faculty to direct the seminar discussion. The visiting faculty who participated in 2001 are as follows:

Reuben Brigety II, honor graduate from the Naval Academy, Annapolis, and PhD candidate in international affairs at Cambridge University (course co-director, three lectures and other seminar resourcing).

Samuel Nelson, PhD, Professor of African History, US Naval Academy
Shane Green, MS, extensive experience in AIDS pharmaceuticals distribution in Africa, Jacksonville, FL

Joy Zarembka, MA, Associate Professor of Nursing, University of Maryland
Jennifer Osorno-Fayhe, MPH, RN, Washington, D.C.

Mel Goodwin, Director, The Harmony Project and Adjunct Instructor, the College of Charleston

Jim Rushing, PhD, Professor, Clemson University Coastal Research Center
Margaret Davidson, PhD, Regional Director, NOAA, Charleston and Washington

2. Enrollment in the course

The course enrolled 12 students in Spring 2001:

College of Medicine	8
College of Nursing (graduate students)	2
College of Graduate Studies	1
College of Charleston MES	1

For those seminars in which guest faculty were brought in from Washington D.C. or elsewhere, the seminars were publicized more widely at MUSC and others invited to attend. For example, the number attending the lectures/seminar on AIDS in Africa and the developing world was approximately 25, including members of the Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, and resulted in Dr. Nelson also being invited back to MUSC for a lecture in a different context the following academic year.

3. Course Evaluation

Students evaluated the course in two ways. First, at the end of each seminar students were asked to respond in writing to two questions: “What was the most useful or meaningful thing you learned during this session?” and “What questions remain uppermost in your mind as we end this session?” (The question sheet is called *The Minute Paper*.) The course director read each response, normally making comments in writing and returning the papers at the beginning of the next class. The feedback was helpful in monitoring the course and making adjustments as we went along.

Second, at the end of the semester students were asked to evaluate the course as a whole, by assessing on a Likert-type scale (1 – 5) how each of the course seminars succeeded as a learning experience for them, with written comments. They also responded to

questions asking the most valuable seminar, their least valuable, how the course might be improved, and whether or not they would recommend the course to others in their college or program.

With 7 evaluations returned, the degree of satisfaction with each seminar ranged from 3 to 5, with helpful information in written comments. Without exception, students would recommend the course to others and commented on the course's value to their professional formation.

My informal evaluation of the course is that the revisions instituted in 2001 as a result of the SUI minigrant made the course more impactful and valuable for the participants, and that the course succeeded in fulfilling its promise of helping to "create the moral wisdom necessary to sustain life and health on the planet" with a strategic target-set of students. Significantly, I believe, in 2002 the course enrolled 16 students and in 2003 there are 23, even without significant numbers from the MES program.

4. Reporting results of the work

Learnings from this course were reported at the Southern Group for Educational Affairs, American Association of Medical Colleges, March 14-16, 2002, at both a Luncheon Roundtable and a formal Workshop; and at a workshop in the Charleston Higher Education Connections Conference, May 31, 2002. A proposal was also made to present a workshop on "Ecological Medicine" at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine this May in Toronto, but the proposal was not accepted. The course may be considered a model of adapting globalization and environmental concerns to the education of a specific professional group—in this instance, students in the health sciences. The course director is always ready to discuss both the theory and the application of ecological medicine/global bioethics to educators in other domains as well.