Graduate Program in Health – Health Policy and Equity  
School of Health Policy and Management  
York University

COURSE INFORMATION:
Course Title: Health & Politics  
Course Code: GS/HLTH 5030  
Term: Fall 2018  
Class Time: Fridays 11:30 AM – 2:30 PM  
Location: Ross Building N812

COURSE DIRECTOR:
Instructor: Professor Claudia Chaufan  
Office: HNES 418  
Tel: N/A  
Email: cchaufan@yorku.ca  
Office hours: Before and after class & by appointment

Course Description:
Considers how the dynamics of power structuring the relationship among markets, civil society and the state, influence the domain of health studies and policy, driving health inequities at the national and global levels. Explores the integration of scholarship, practice, and citizen activism.

Revised by: Prof. Claudia Chaufan  
Date: August 27, 2018
York University
Fall 2017 - HLTH 5030
Health & Politics

Professor: Claudia Chaufan, MD, PhD
York University, Graduate Program in Health
Fall 2017, HLTH 5030 – Health & Politics

Professor: Claudia Chaufan
E-mail: cchaufan@yorku.ca
Office: HNES 418, before/after class

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Course description

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argued that an assessment of ethics, i.e., the concepts of right and wrong conduct, necessarily led to an assessment of politics, i.e., a philosophy of human affairs that a community needs to promote human welfare, health included. Over 2000 years later, Frederick Engels argued that the poor health of the English working class, including alcoholism, bone defects, or severe child malnutrition, was directly attributable to the exploitative nature of the capitalist system, i.e., a question of politics, and asserted that it was “unpardonable to sacrifice to the greed of an unfeeling capitalist class the time of children which should be devoted only to their physical and mental development.” However, research into, and debate around, how politics shapes public policy, including health policy, and subsequently the health of populations, are limited.

This reading-intensive graduate seminar addresses this gap by analyzing how politics broadly understood, and its expression through public policy, institutional arrangements, social practices, and popular struggles shapes health and quality of life at local, national, and global levels. Topics will include the history and globalization of capitalism and of key institutions and events within this history, the corporatization of health governance, the concept and theories of development, the health implications of areas of public policy rarely seen as significant to health, such as mining policy and foreign policy, and conceptions democracy and their relevance to health equity.

Course learning outcomes: Upon completion of the course, students will be able to

- Trace the historical trajectory of neoliberal globalization and its impact on health outcomes, especially health inequalities, in wealthy and poor countries
- Discuss the process of the corporatization of global health governance and its implications for health policy and equity at the local, national, and global levels
- Define health-relevant concepts (e.g., development) and analyze the political dynamics underlying the relationship between these concepts and health outcomes
- Evaluate the ideological role of the dominant narrative in the normalization of health inequalities and develop tools of critical analysis to unpack this narrative
- Articulate steps to take as scholars, citizens, and activists towards greater health equity
- Communicate successfully orally and in writing on health policy matters
Course organization
This course is organized as a seminar meaning that its quality will depend almost entirely on the quality of your preparation and participation. I will open the session with brief remarks to lay out the framework of these themes and we will dedicate the remaining time to analyze and discuss the implications and applications of weekly readings, led by rotating student facilitators. The syllabus includes questions to orient your reading. We will complement our discussions with analyses of film, media, science and policy literature, brief interactive lectures and occasional guest speakers.

Course instructional material
I expect all students to complete all readings before coming to class. They are all available on the course Moodle website. To prepare, I recommend that you complete some preparatory work during the summer. The Shock Doctrine by Naomi Klein and The Value of Nothing by Raj Patel offer readable yet intellectually sophisticated introductions to key themes in our seminar. This preparation will be especially useful to students with little or no background in critical political economy, yet also to students with a background in this discipline. Inexpensive copies of both books are available at Amazon.ca. Familiarity with world systems theory is also recommendable (World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction, 2007 edition, by Immanuel Wallerstein, provides a good overview).

Course requirements

Participation: reflecting the importance of a solid preparation by seminar participants, it includes:

1. Active attendance: New York filmmaker Woody Allen once said that “95% of life is showing up, and indeed, the 1st requirement of this seminar is excellent attendance. Arriving on time, staying through the duration of the meeting, completing the required readings prior to meetings, and contributing your best to facilitated discussions will be worth 15% of your grade, yet 100% of your learning experience. I will do my best to make seminar activities worth your time and I trust that I will succeed if everybody collaborates. If you must arrive late/leave early, please do so only exceptionally and inform me ahead of time.

2. Facilitation: Seminar participants will facilitate discussions on a rotating basis, individually or in pairs. We will distribute topics in our first meeting and I will provide guidelines to conduct productive discussions, keep track of time, and clarify/enrich/expand/redirection discussion when appropriate.

3. Weekly reflections: these reflections (200 to 300 words, graded pass/fail, completing only 10 of 12 is required for full credit) are designed to be written in about 15 minutes and to provide you with a space to reflect on the insights you draw from engaging with weekly instructional material (readings/viewings) & in person seminar activities. These are not summaries of material but reflections that show that you have engaged with both and elaborated on the implications for policy, equity and your own work. Because there is much going on in everybody’s lives reflections must be completed while your thoughts are fresh, no later than Sunday by 11:55 PM.

Research project: Seminar participants will conduct research and write a paper engaging themes in the seminar, on a topic of their choice, of quality and with potential for publication in a refereed journal or related to their Major Research Paper or doctoral dissertation. You are welcome to use my prompt to guide your investigation if you find the structure and approach (critical discourse analysis) helpful. We will devote class time to select a research topic and question, discuss the proposal, and peer-edit drafts.

Steps in the project include:
1. **Roadmap**: Towards the middle of the term, you will submit a proposal of your research project/paper (i.e., roadmap), including a working title, a research question, a brief background on the topic of your choice, one or two lines on its potential implications for health policy and equity, and an annotated bibliography including no fewer than 5 sources that can inform your investigation. Your free to draw from seminar sources but at least 2 must be specific your topic. Your proposal should also argue, even if tentatively, how the topic is relevant to the relationship between health and politics. I will provide a detailed outline to prepare this proposal and we will hold a peer review session for students to share their work and provide one another feedback.

2. **First draft**: Towards the end of the term, you will submit a full, first draft of your paper, as close as possible to your final draft. I will evaluate and provide feedback in a mandatory face-to-face conference (in person or via Skype) and we will hold a peer review session to as well.

3. **Presentation**: In our last meeting, you will offer a brief, 5-minute presentation (modeled after the program “3-minute theses, more info on our course Moodle website) laying out your topic, research question, relevance to health and politics, findings, and practice, policy and equity implications of your investigation. I will also provide a detailed prompt to prepare this presentation.

4. **Final draft**: You will turn in your final draft a week after our last face-to-face meeting. Evaluation will be based on the originality and depth of your research, the insight of your analysis, its relevance to the themes and learning objectives of the seminar, and the quality of the writing and formatting (e.g., sentence structure, free from typos or spelling errors, numbered pages, etc.).

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**Course evaluation**

Evaluation will be based on active attendance, preparation and participation, research proposal/1st and final draft/presentation, and timely submission of work. Marks will be distributed as follows:

**Participation**: 30%
- Active attendance: 15%
- Facilitation: 5%
- Weekly reflections: 10%

**Research project**: 70%
- Roadmap: 5%
- First draft: 10%
- Presentation: 5%
- Final draft: 50%

**Lateness policy**:  
If you need an extension for your final project, please discuss it with me before the deadline so that I have time to consider your request. Unless prearranged, papers will receive 5 p. less per late day. Extensions for the proposal (roadmap), first draft and presentation cannot be granted, as they are tightly intertwined with course activities (e.g., peer reviews). If you run into trouble with this portion of the assignment, please turn in at least a basic outline. Some credit is better than no credit!

**Accommodations**:  
Please refer to the guidelines and academic accommodation for students with disabilities, counseling and disability services, for detailed description on the responsibility of course directors and students. If you require accommodations, please let me know no later than the second meeting, preferably in person, so that I can best support your learning.
Topics @ a Glance

Unit 1
*History and Political Architecture of Health, Health Policy and Health Inequalities*

Module 1 – Health, policy, and politics
Module 2 – Health, politics, and neoliberal globalization
Module 3 – Health, politics, and the crisis of Eurocapitalism

Unit 2
*The Politics of Health Governance and the Political and Social Determination of Health*

Module 4 – Health and equity implications of the corporatization of health governance
Module 5 – Health and equity implications of the politics of trade policy
Module 6 – Health, politics, and the development of underdevelopment

Unit 3
*The Politics of Health Policy and Beyond*

Module 7 – Health and equity implications of the politics of food policy (focus on indigenous health)
Module 8 – Health and equity implications of the politics of mining policy (focus on indigenous health)
Module 9 – Health and equity implications of the politics of militarism and empire (focus on refugee health)

Unit 4
*Democratizing Health*

Module 10 – Theorizing power, conformity and resistance
Module 11 – National case studies in health and resistance: Dispatches from Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia – lessons for Canada
Module 12 – Conceptions of democracy and the politics of health
### General plan @ a glance

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<tr>
<th>Week / Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Assignment due</th>
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| 1 / September 7 | Health, policy, and politics                        | ✓ Introduction to course participants, objectives, organization, readings and requirements.  
|              |                                                      | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings                                           | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)             |
|              |                                                      | ✓ Distribution of facilitation                                            |                                                    |
|              |                                                      | ✓ Critical image analysis                                                |                                                    |
|              |                                                      | ✓ Weekly reflection (in class)                                            |                                                    |
| 2 / September 14 | Health, politics, and neoliberal globalization | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings                                           | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)             |
|              |                                                      | ✓ Critical video analysis                                                |                                                    |
| 3 / September 21 | Health, politics, and the crisis of Eurocapitalism | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings                                           | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)             |
|              |                                                      | ✓ Critical video analysis                                                |                                                    |
| 4 / September 28 | Health and equity implications of the corporatization of health governance | ✓ Research project: brainstorm research topic/question  
|              |                                                      | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings                                           | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)             |
| 5 / October 5  | Health and equity implications of the politics of trade policy | ✓ Research project: peer review roadmap  
|              |                                                      | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings                                           | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)             |
|              |                                                      |                                                                       | Research project:  
|              |                                                      | ✓ Roadmap (hard copy draft for peer review AND Moodle)                   |                                                    |

**READING WEEK OCTOBER 6 – 12**

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<th>Week / Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<td>6 / October 19</td>
<td>Health, politics, and the development of underdevelopment</td>
<td>✓ Discussion of weekly readings</td>
<td>Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)</td>
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<td>✓ Critical video analysis</td>
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<td>7 / October 26</td>
<td>Health and equity implications of the politics of food policy</td>
<td>✓ Discussion of weekly readings</td>
<td>Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)</td>
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<td>✓ Critical policy analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 / November 2</td>
<td>Health and equity implications of the</td>
<td>✓ Discussion of weekly readings</td>
<td>Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)</td>
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<td>Topic</td>
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| 9 / November 9 | Health and equity implications of the politics of militarism and empire | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings  
✓ Guest lecture: Yves Engler, author and peace activist | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)  
Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)  
Research project: First draft (Moodle AND hard copy) |
| 10 / November 16 | Theorizing power, conformity and resistance | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings  
✓ Research project: peer review first draft | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)  
Research project: First draft (Moodle AND hard copy) |
| 11 / November 23 | National case studies of health and resistance: Dispatches from Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia -- Lessons for Canada | ✓ Discussion of weekly readings  
✓ Guest lecture: Dan Kovalik, human rights, labor rights, and peace activist | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)  
Setup one-on-one, mandatory conference to discuss term paper/research. |
| 12 / November 30 | Conceptions of democracy and the politics of health | ✓ Research project: presentations & collective reflections  
✓ Conclusions | Weekly reflection (by Sunday 11:30 PM)  
Research project:  
• Presentation  
• Final draft due December 8 (Turnitin AND hard copy) |

### Course schedule (detailed)

#### UNIT 1

**History and Political Architecture of Health, Health Policy and Health Inequities**

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<tr>
<th>Module 1</th>
<th>Health, policy and politics</th>
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**Guiding questions**
- What is political about health? How does politics influence health policy?
- What do we mean by “health is socially determined” and what is political about this determination?
- How is the politics of health relevant to social justice?

**Required readings**
Activities
- Introduction of course participants, objectives, organization, and requirements.
- Discussion of weekly readings and distribution of discussion facilitators
- Interactive lecture: Dominant and counter narratives and the politics of health
- Weekly reflection (complete in class)

Further readings and viewings

Module 2  
Health, politics, and neoliberal globalization

Guiding questions
- What is “globalization”? What is the dominant narrative about globalization? What are the challenges to this narrative?
- What is the relationship between “globalization”, neoliberal policies, and the making of global capitalism as an economic system?
- What is the history of the institutional structure supporting neoliberal globalization?
- How does the history of this structure illustrate the political nature of health?

Required readings.

*Dominant narrative*
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) - Fact Sheets

*Counter narrative*
- Gindin, Sam & Leo Panitch (2013), The Making and Unmaking of Global Capitalism, Jacobin Magazine
- Maher, S (2016), Against Liberal Nostalgia. The Bullet, No 1343
### Activities
- Discussion of weekly readings
- Critical video analysis: Is the world “flat”?

### Further readings and viewings
- Richard Wolff (2009), Capitalism Hits the Fan https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0HTkEBloxBA
- Breaking the Spell: A history of the 1999 Seattle WTO protests https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=11&v=D2MxtwAmeOY

### Module 3 Health, politics, and the crisis of Eurocapitalism

#### Guiding questions
- What are “austerity policies”? What are their effects on health?
- What is a dominant narrative about austerity policies and sovereign debt? Which key social actors uphold this narrative in the specific case of Greece?
- How can the case of Greece illuminate the relationship between health and politics and what lessons can we draw for Canada?

#### Required readings

##### Dominant narrative
- BBC 2012, Eurozone Crisis Explained.
- Toronto Star 2015, The Greek Bailout, Explained
- McNamara, Kathleen 2015. A Less Perfect Union: Europe after the Greek Debt Crisis, Foreign Affairs,

##### Counter narrative
• Craig Roberts, P. 2016, The Looting Stage of Capitalism & Greece Must Leave the Eurozone to Regain Its Sovereignty, Counterpunch & Truth-out.
• John Perkins, Confessions of an economic hitman (video clip, 25 min.)

Critical media analysis

Activities
• Discussion of weekly readings
• Critical media analysis

Further readings and viewings
• George, S., (1994). A Fate Worse Than Debt.
• Commission for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt, http://www.cadtm.org/
• Yanis Varoufakis: Greece and The Future of the Eurozone https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74eFXJmcgwY
• Naomi Klein (2009), The Shock Doctrine https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6yceBTf_Vs

UNIT 2
The Politics of Health Governance and the Political and Social Determination of Health

Module 4 | Health and equity implications of the corporatization of health policy

Guiding questions
• What is the dominant narrative concerning private wealth influences on health governance? How does the NPO-NGO-state/interstate-corporate complex shape governance in health matters? What are the objections of critics?
• What is civil society, how was it originally conceived, and what is the perspective of critics on its contemporary role? What would a radical reinterpretation of this concept involve?
• How does the corporatization of health governance illustrate the political nature of health?

Required readings
Dominant narrative
• Selections from World Bank and Civil Society (WB & Civil Society website and Review of Fiscal Years 2010-2012)
• WHO (2008). "Closing the gap in a generation: Health equity through action on the social determinants of health -- Executive Summary."

Counter narrative

Activities
• Research project: brainstorm research topic/question
• Discussion of weekly readings

Further readings and viewings
• Barry-Shaw, N. and Dru Oja Jay (2017), Paved with Good Intentions: Canada’s development NGOs from idealism to imperialism (excerpts)

Module 5 | Health and equity implications of the politics of trade policy

Guiding questions
• What are trade agreements about? Who agrees to what and under what conditions?
• What are the institutional and historical underpinnings of current trade policies, practices and treaties, and how have they affected overall the health and wellbeing of Canadians?
• How do current trade policies, practices and treaties reveal the political nature of health?

Required readings.
Favorable to trade treaties
• Global Affairs Canada (selection)
• U.S. Department of Commerce (selection)
• Toronto Star (selection)
• World Trade Organization (selection)
• World Health Organization (selection)
• World leaders (Trudeau, Obama and Pena Nieto)

Critical of trade treaties
• Independent media (selection)
• Grassroots and think tanks (selection)
• Global Health Watch (Volume 3)

Activities
• Research project: peer review roadmap
• Discussion of weekly readings
Further readings and viewings


Module 6 | Health, politics, and the development of underdevelopment

Guiding questions

- What is development? What explains it? How do we measure it? How and why is it relevant to health?
- What are the different conceptions and theories of development? How does power influence these conceptions and theories?
- What is the dominant narrative about development? What do critics mean by the “development of underdevelopment”?
- How do different conceptions and theories of development affect measurement, policy, and equity in health?

Required readings

- Brief reading selection on indicators, concepts, and theories of development (WWW)

Dominant narrative

- Truman, Harry (1949), Inaugural Address

Counter narrative

- Bond, Peter (2015) UN MDG replaced by new "distraction gimmicks".
- IMF and World Bank are Weapons of War, John Pilger (26 min. version)

Activities

- Discussion of weekly readings
- Critical video analysis: Why are some countries rich and others poor?
### Further readings and viewings
- John Pilger (1992), War by Other Means (full version)
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bfDOGNboE8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8bfDOGNboE8)

### UNIT 3
#### The politics of health beyond health care

**Module 7** | Health and equity implications of the politics of food policy
---|---
**Guiding questions**
- How do the political economy and politics of food production and distribution relate to global health? How does corporate power influence these factors?
- How does the state facilitate corporate involvement and how could this practice be challenged?
- How can concepts such as "accumulation by dispossession", "reserve army of labor" and surplus value" help explain these processes and their global health effects?

**Required readings**
- Brief reading selection on indicators, concepts, and theories of food production and distribution (food security/insecurity vs. food sovereignty)

*Dominant narrative*
- TBA

*Counter narrative*
- TBA

**Activities**
- Discussion of weekly readings
- Critical policy analysis

**Further readings and viewings**
- TBA

**Module 8** | Health and equity implications of the politics of mining policy
---|---
**Guiding questions**
- What do we mean by mining policy? What are some of the effects of mining practices on the health of populations, at home and abroad? Which subgroups are most affected by these practices?
- What is the mining policy of the Canadian state? Whose interests are best served by it?
- How does mining reveal the relationship between politics and health?

**Required readings**
**Establishment**
- The Mining Association of Canada (http://mining.ca/resources/mining-facts)

**Counter Establishment**
- Global Health Watch Vol. 3 (2011), Extractive Industries and Health
- Mining Watch Canada (http://miningwatch.ca/)
- Rights Action (http://rightsaction.org/)

**Activities**
Discussion of weekly readings
Guest lecture: Grahame Russell, lawyer and human rights activist, with Rights Action

**Further readings and viewings**
- Lands to die for: The Garifuna Struggle in Honduras https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mr0aqHzZXx0&feature=youtu.be
- Face to Face with Grahame Russell: Are Canadian mining companies getting away with murder? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71mB0JuJSpE
- La Voz del Pueblo: The Making of the Refugee Crisis in Central America https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2ZQx34dGZ0

**Module 9 | Health and equity implications of the politics of militarism and empire**

**Guiding questions**
- What’s the dominant narrative about the refugee crisis, i.e., what is causing the crisis, who is responsible for it, what should be done about it and who should do it? Who are the “good guys” and “bad guys” according to this narrative? What makes his narrative persuasive?
- What is the counter narrative about the refugee crisis, i.e., what does the dominant narrative conceal about relevant social actors and accountability? What evidence supports this narrative and how can we know whether the evidence is of good quality?
- How does the case of international refugees relate to the militarization of modern, Western, and specifically Canadian, society? How does this militarization relate to global capitalism, politics, and human health?

**Required readings**
- Reading selections on international refugees (dominant and counter narratives)

**Activities**
- Discussion of weekly readings
**UNIT 10**

**Democratizing health**

**Module 10**

**Theorizing power, conformity and resistance**

**Guiding questions**
- What is power? How do we resist? Why do power and resistance matter to health justice?
- How can we identify the role of social practices (i.e. what people do or what institutions command) to achieve social control?
- Theory toolbox
  - Manifest and latent function (Robert Merton)
  - Concept and social psychology of power (S. Asch, S. Milgram, P. Zimbardo)

**Required readings**
- None

**Activities**
- Research project: peer review first draft
- Interactive lecture: Introduction to the social psychology and sociology of power

**Further readings and viewings**
- Selections from classic experiments and social psychology (Asch, Milgram, Zimbardo)
- Selections on macroeconomics and politics of power (C. Wright Mills, Merton, Perelman)

**Module 11**

**National case studies of health and resistance:**

Dispatches from Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia – Lessons for Canada

**Guiding questions**
- What are the key health issues in each of these national case studies? How have political processes shaped population health in all three countries? What are some of the similarities and differences between these countries?
- What explains mainstream media representations of current issues in Latin America? What are the untold stories in these representations?
- How do these national case studies illustrate the interplay between politics and health?
Required readings.

- *Latin America -- Dominant narrative*
  - Mainstream media on Latin America

- *Latin America -- Counter narrative*
  - Reading selection on Latin American social medicine and politics
  - Reading selections on health and social policy in Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia
  - Independent media on Latin America

Activities

- Discussion of weekly readings
- Guest lecture: Dan Kovalik, human rights lawyer and political activist.

Further readings and viewings

*Latin American social and political history*


*Documentaries/Interviews on Latin American social and political history*

- Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up: An interview with Saul Landau (You Tube)
- Maestra: A History of Cuba’s Literacy Campaign, Norma Guillard, Cuban academic/filmmaker, poet (You Tube)
- South of the Border, Oliver Stone, US filmmaker (You Tube)
- The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: A history of the 2002 Venezuela Coup (You Tube)
- War on Democracy, documentary, John Pilger, UK/Australian filmmaker (You Tube)
- The Take: Workers-run Factories in Argentina, Naomi Klein, Canadian filmmaker (You Tube)

*Media studies*


**Week 12**

Health, politics, and democracy:

Conceptions of democracy and the politics of health.

Guiding questions

- What is the dominant (i.e., establishment) meaning of “democracy”? How does this meaning contrast with the counter establishment meaning?
- How can the concepts “end of history”, “low intensity democracy”, and “participatory democracy” help you characterize democracy in Canada? What about democracy in Canada would you like to change and how could it be done?
- Why analyze / discuss the concept of democracy in a seminar on health and politics?

Required readings
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<tr>
<th>Counter establishment</th>
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<td>• August, A. (2013). &quot;&quot;Cuban Democracy&quot; versus “American Democracy”.&quot; Global Research April 29</td>
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<td>• Final draft due December 8 (Turnitin and hard copy – please refer to “lateness policy”)</td>
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<td>• Luther King, M. (1963), Letter from Birmingham jail.</td>
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