



University of Maryland School of Public Health

(UMCP is located on the ancestral lands of the Piscataway People)

GBHL101: Our Planet, Our Health: Solving How Our World Makes Us Sick (or Healthy)

Semester:	Summer 2026
Section:	YW41
Classroom and Time:	Online: MTuWThF 9:00am - 12:00pm
Course webpage:	
Instructors:	Dr. Kate McPhaul, Arielle Wharton-Pinnock
Office Hours:	TBD (Email for appointment)
Email:	Dr. Kate McPhaul, kmcphaul@umd.edu
Email:	Ms. Arielle Wharton-Pinnock, awharto2@umd.edu

Course Description:

Why do some communities thrive while others bear a disproportionate burden of disease? How do the places we live, the air we breathe, and the work we do shape our health over a lifetime? This course invites you to become a health detective - uncovering the forces that determine whether communities flourish or face preventable illness.

Drawing on real-world events - from recent climate-driven disasters to the global spread of COVID-19, from heat safety crises to occupational hazards - students will explore the foundations of epidemiology, toxicology, exposure assessment, risk analysis, health policy, digital health, and global health systems. Central to the course is the One Health framework, which recognizes that human, animal, and environmental health are deeply interconnected.

Through accelerated case studies, interactive discussions, virtual field experiences, and collaborative activities, students will build the critical thinking, scientific communication, and problem-solving skills needed to evaluate and address grand health challenges.

Course Pre-requisites: None.

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Investigate the interconnections between environmental toxins, workplace conditions, and global health systems - and identify actionable solutions.
2. Apply the One Health framework to assess complex health challenges spanning human, animal, and environmental domains.

3. Identify global health disparities and evaluate innovative, equitable solutions across diverse communities.
4. Demonstrate essential professional skills including critical thinking, scientific communication, and collaborative problem-solving.

Texts and Readings: To be announced.

Technology: A computer with reliable internet access is required for all virtual field experiences and ELMS-Canvas participation.

Course Structure

This is an interactive course that employs case studies, virtual field experiences, and hands-on group activities to connect course materials to real-world applications. The course is structured around six core topics, each introducing foundational concepts in global environmental health through multiple perspectives and interactive learning modalities.

Each week includes a required group project component where students work collaboratively to apply course concepts to real-world health scenarios and develop evidence-based recommendations for addressing health challenges.

Major Assignments

Weekly Course Activities and Group Projects (40%)

Students will engage in virtual "visits" of sites, labs, and programs; use data and evidence to solve health challenges; and design community solutions with peers. Each week includes a required group project where students work collaboratively to apply course concepts to real-world health scenarios.

These assignments should:

- Demonstrate engagement with course materials and real-world applications
- Show evidence of collaboration and peer learning
- Apply concepts to develop actionable solutions
- Contribute to the collective learning environment

Case Study Analyses (30%)

You will complete two in-depth written analyses (2 pages each) examining specific global health scenarios:

1. **Environmental Health Case Study:** An environmental health issue a GEOH faculty/staff member is addressing
2. **Occupational Health Case Study:** An occupational health issue a GEOH faculty/staff member is addressing

Your analysis should:

- Describe the health challenge and affected population

- Analyze context and implementation challenges
- Evaluate using course frameworks and One Health lens
- Present evidence-based recommendations

Final Project (30%)

Working in teams of 3-4, you will conduct an in-depth analysis of a global health challenge and create a portfolio of evidence-based recommendations for addressing it.

Project Components:

1. **Topic Selection & Justification:** Brief 1 page proposal identifying your chosen health challenge.
2. **Research & Analysis Brief:** Brief 2-page assessment of evidence on environmental, occupational, and systemic factors; existing solutions and interventions
3. **Final Recommendations:** 10-slide presentation with evidence-based recommendations

Your assessment should address:

- The health challenge and population affected
- Environmental, occupational, and global systems factors
- Evidence of effectiveness from existing solutions and interventions
- Equity implications (who benefits, who is excluded, potential harms)
- Implementation considerations (infrastructure, cost, capacity, culture)
- Recommendations for equitable solutions

Criteria for Grading Final Project

Components	Points
Successfully complete project	10
Clearly address and present information in a well organized presentation	15
Credible Source/s used clearly and properly cited and referenced	5
Total	30

Grading Structures

Weekly course activities and group projects (virtual field experiences, interactive health investigation, community project design, etc.)	40 points
Real World Case Studies (2)	30 points
Final Project	30 points
Total	100 points

Grades

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. Late work will be accepted for course credit but please notify the instructor if it will be turned in late before the scheduled deadline. If you would like to review any of your grades (including the exams), or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss. I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. Percentages will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Final Grade Cutoffs									
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%	+	
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%	F	<60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%	-	

Tips for Success in This Course

1. Come prepared, listen actively, and contribute your unique perspectives. Embrace ambiguity and be willing to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously.
2. Plan ahead for group meetings and provide yourself extra time to handle any technology-related problems.
3. Log in to ELMS-Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts, and group updates. Be sure to enable announcements to be sent instantly or daily.
4. This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous. It will be hard to keep up if you fall behind on readings, assignments, or group project work.
5. If you need help with ELMS-Canvas or other technology, contact IT Support at (301) 405-1500 or itsupport@umd.edu. If you are struggling with a course concept or group dynamics, reach out to instructors and classmates for support.
6. We want to support your learning. Come talk with us about course concepts, get feedback on drafts, discuss topics in greater depth, or address any concerns.

Course Outline and Topics

An overview of topics and assignments is presented in the below table. All assignments must be submitted by due dates. Late submissions will have a grade penalty unless extension is approved by the instructor before submission deadline.

Terps Young Scholar (TYS) Session	Topic	Key Activities
Week 1	The Hidden World of Health	Introductions, Foundations of GEOH & One Health framework overview, historical perspectives (Clinical, Community based, Practice), Interdisciplinary approach
Week 1	When Our Environment Fights Back	Environmental Health: Exposure & Risk, Toxicology basics, exposure assessment, case study, weekly group project due Friday July 17th
Week 2	Protecting Workers from Harm	Occupational Health: Workplace Hazards, Occupational epidemiology, safety regulations, worker health, protection strategies, case study, weekly group project due Wednesday July 22nd Environmental Health Case Study due Wednesday July 22nd
Week 2	Why our Locale Determines our Well-Being	Global Health: Health Justice & Innovation, Global health disparities, Climate Change, Environmental Justice, Digital health, weekly group project due Friday July 24th Occupational Health Case Study due Friday July 24th
Week 3	Connecting the Dots: Money, Power, Policy, & Integration	Cross-cutting issues, health policy & finance frameworks, stakeholder analysis, weekly group project due Wednesday July 29th
Week 3	Not all Heroes Wear Capes: Becoming a Health Detective	Solutions & emerging challenges Final project portfolios due Friday July 31st

Course Guidelines

Communication with Instructor: The instructor will communicate with students regarding class cancellation, room change, or other timely announcements via ELMS course announcements ELMS email. Instructors will do our best to respond to emails within 24 hours.

Communication with Peers:

All students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner and preserve a respectful and safe virtual classroom environment. In this course, NO hate speech, harassment, and derogatory language will be tolerated.

Campus Policies and Resources: It is our shared responsibility to know and abide by the University of Maryland's policies that relate to all courses, which include topics like:

- Academic integrity
- Student and instructor conduct
- Accessibility and accommodations
- Attendance and excused absences
- Grades and appeals
- Copyright and intellectual property

Please visit www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html for the Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies and follow up with me if you have questions.

Academic Integrity







For this course, some of your assignments will be collected via Turnitin on our course ELMS page. I have chosen to use this tool because it can help you improve your scholarly writing and help me verify the integrity of student work. For information about Turnitin, how it works, and the feedback reports you may have access to, visit [Turnitin Originality Checker for Students](#).

The University's Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principles of academic honesty and integrity are upheld. In accordance with this code, the University of Maryland does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Please ensure that you fully understand this code and its implications because all acts of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this code. All students are expected to adhere to this Code. It is your responsibility to read it and know what it says, so you can start your professional life on the right path. **As future professionals, your commitment to high ethical standards and honesty begins with your time at the University of Maryland.**

It is important to note that course assistance websites, such as CourseHero, or AI-generated content are not permitted sources unless the instructor explicitly gives permission for the assignment. Material taken or copied from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might be inaccurate or biased and most importantly, relying on restricted sources will hamper your learning process, particularly the critical thinking steps necessary for college-level assignments.

Additionally, students may naturally choose to use online forums for course-wide discussions (e.g., Group lists or chats) to discuss concepts in the course. However, collaboration on graded assignments is strictly prohibited unless otherwise stated. Examples of prohibited collaboration include: asking classmates for answers on quizzes or exams, asking for access codes to clicker polls, etc. Please visit the [Office of Undergraduate Studies' full list of campus-wide policies](#) and reach out if you have questions.

Finally, on each exam or assignment you must write out and sign the following pledge: **"I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this exam/assignment."** If you ever feel pressured to comply with someone else's academic integrity violation, please reach out to me straight away. Also, **if you are ever unclear** about acceptable levels of collaboration, **please ask!** To help you avoid unintentional violations, **the following table** lists levels of collaboration that are acceptable for each graded exercise. Each assignment will contain more specific information regarding acceptable levels of collaboration.

	 OPEN NOTES	 USE BOOK	 LEARN ONLINE	 GATHER CONTENT With AI	 ASK FRIENDS	 WORK IN GROUPS
Homework Assignments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quizzes	✓	✓	✓	---	---	---
Team Projects (WHA Simulation and Book Club)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Final Paper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	---

Grades

All assessment scores will be posted on the course ELMS page. Late work will be accepted for course credit but please notify the instructor if it will be turned in late before the scheduled deadline. If you would like to review any of your grades, or have questions about how something was scored, please email me to schedule a time for us to meet and discuss. I am happy to discuss any of your grades with you, and if I have made a mistake I will immediately correct it. Any formal grade disputes must be submitted in writing and within one week of receiving the grade.

Final letter grades are assigned based on the percentage of total assessment points earned. Percentages will be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Course Policies

UMD is committed to creating equitable and inclusive learning environments and relies on you to support:

Names/Pronouns and Self-Identification

The University of Maryland recognizes the importance of a diverse student body, and we are committed to fostering inclusive and equitable classroom environments. The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit the [LGBTQ+ Equity Center](#) to learn more. Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. We will do our best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and we ask that you do the same for your peers.

Safe Learning

Everyone has the right to learn safely in this course. With a diversity of perspectives and experience, we will often find ourselves in disagreement with one another. It is important that we work together to foster and preserve a classroom environment in which we can learn from each other. **Behaviors that prevent safe learning, including harassment, microaggression, and racially and culturally triggering language, will not be tolerated.** Be mindful of how you speak to relieve the burden on others to point it out. Please come forward if you feel threatened, dismissed, or silenced, and/or if your engagement in the course feels hindered in any way.

Participation

	Satisfactory (5-10 pts)	Needs Improvement (3-5 pts)	Unsatisfactory (0-1 pts)
Listening	Actively & respectfully (i.e. - nodding head) listen to peers and instructor	Sometimes displays lack of interest in peer and instructor contributions to the class	Lack of interest or disrespect for others
Preparation	Arrives to class (virtually or in-person) fully prepared with all assignments completed, notes on reading, observations, and questions	Sometimes arrives unprepared or underprepared for class	Very little evidence of having prepared or thought about the assigned materials
Quality of Contribution	Contributions are relevant and reflects an understanding of assigned course materials and tasks, comments from fellow students/ classmates	Contribution is sometimes irrelevant, lacks preparation, or lacks attention to contributions from other peers and/or instructor	Contributions express very little understanding of the materials or contributions of their peers or instructor
Impact on Class	Contribution helps to move the conversation/ discussion/class forward	Contributions sometimes either advance or do little to move the class forward	Contributions do not advance or do harm the class from doing so.

Course Evaluation

Please submit a course evaluation through Student Feedback on Course Experiences in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to Course Experiences is confidential. Campus will notify you when Student Feedback on Course Experiences is open for you to complete your evaluations at the end of the semester. Please go directly to the [Student Feedback on Course Experiences](#) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing through Testudo the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

Notice of Mandatory Reporting

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking: As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible University Employee,” and I must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to UMD’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy on Sexual Harassment and Other Sexual Misconduct.

If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of UMD’s confidential resources, such as [CARE to Stop Violence](#) (located on the Ground Floor of the Health Center) at 301-741-3442 or the [Counseling Center](#) (located at the Shoemaker Building) at 301-314-7651.

You may also seek assistance or supportive measures from UMD’s Title IX Coordinator, Angela Nastase, by calling 301-405-1142, or emailing titleIXcoordinator@umd.edu.

To view further information on the above, please visit the [Office of Civil Rights and Sexual Misconduct's](#) website at ocrsm.umd.edu.

Resources & Accommodations

Accessibility and Disability Services

The University of Maryland is committed to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive educational, working, and living environment for people of all abilities. The University of Maryland is also committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of the University, or be subjected to discrimination. The [Accessibility & Disability Service \(ADS\)](#) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to provide equal access to services, programs and activities. ADS cannot assist retroactively, so it is generally best to request accommodations several weeks before the semester begins or as soon as a disability becomes known. Any student who needs accommodations should contact me as soon as possible so that I have sufficient time to make arrangements.

For assistance in obtaining an accommodation, contact Accessibility and Disability Service at 301-314-7682, or email them at adsfrontdesk@umd.edu.

Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies on campus can happen at any time. To prepare, visit prepare.umd.edu or use the emergency symbol in the UMD App to review information. Resources for persons with disabilities are available on the [emergency preparedness page of the ADA Coordinator's website](#).

Student Resources and Services

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit [UMD's Student Academic Support Services website](#) to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you.

In particular, everyone can use some help sharpening their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting [UMD's Writing Center](#) and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center.

You should also know there are a wide range of resources to support you with whatever you might need ([UMD's Student Resources and Services website](#) may help). If you feel it would be helpful to have someone to talk to, visit [UMD's Counseling Center](#) or [one of the many other mental health resources on campus](#).

Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit [UMD's Division of Student Affairs website](#) for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Veteran Resources

UMD provides some additional supports to our student veterans. You can access those resources at the office of [Veteran Student life](#) and the [Counseling Center](#). Veterans and active duty military personnel with special circumstances (e.g., upcoming deployments, drill requirements, disabilities) are welcome and encouraged to communicate these, in advance if possible, to the instructor.

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Basic Needs Security

If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live, please visit [UMD's Division of Student Affairs website](#) for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Copyright Notice

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