



380.623 Adolescent Health & Development

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Controversies in Adolescent Health: Four Panels

Introduction

This term, the adolescent health and development course will focus on four specific issues: juvenile violence, chronic illness and disabilities, substance abuse and ABC approach to adolescent pregnancy/HIV/STD prevention (abstinence, fidelity, condoms/contraception).

1. The Juvenile Justice session: will focus on issues that include: should an adolescent minor be held equally responsible as an adult for an equal crime? What is the balance between adolescent rights and those of their parents? If adolescents are less mature than adults to make decisions (and thus less culpable) then what does this mean for other areas?

2. Adolescents with Disabilities: In this panel, we will focus on issues related to sexual health for young people with disabilities and we will explore issues including: Who should be the sex educator for adolescents and young adults with disabilities? What should be the content of such education and how should it differ, if at all from those who do not have disabling conditions? What are the boundaries of such instruction? And specifically, should it include the teaching of techniques for self-stimulation? The provision of sexual surrogates etc.

3. Substance abuse: This panel will address issues such as the gateway effect (“Does marijuana lead to other substance use”)? Is using marijuana a part of sensations seeking which is part of normal adolescent development?

4. The ABC approach: This session will bring together two of the nation’s leading experts on the ABC approach, one who has studied it in the context of the Uganda strategy for HIV reduction and the other who has studied the Ugandan experience as well as sex education of adolescents in the United States. They come to substantially different conclusions. This session will explore what is known about abstinence and the delaying of first sex. It will address questions such as: do condoms have a disinhibiting effect on adolescent sexual behaviors and if so, should access to condoms be limited? If abstinence is national policy, then how do we deal with the 15-25% of young people who report their first sexual encounters as being forced or coerced?

Student Opportunities:

For each of the four panel sessions, there will be readings that will form the basis for the conversation. Based on those readings, each student is expected to generate between three and five carefully reasoned questions.

The panels are organized and led by students in the course; and you will have the opportunity to participate in one of three ways: 1) Organizing the questions that will form the basis for the panel discussion; 2) Co-facilitate a panel; 3) Serving as a member of a panel.

- 1) *Organizing the questions*: if you are a member of one of the teams organizing the questions (e.g. for the juvenile violence panel) you will be expected to: a) receive approximately 30 questions; b) review and synthesize them into four or five compelling questions and c) meet with other members of the group for approximately one hour to come up with five to seven questions that will be the main organizing questions for the panel discussion.
- 2) *Co-facilitators*: if you are a co-facilitator for one of the sessions, you will be expected to: a) participate in the synthesis session where the panel questions are finalized; b) meet with the panel members and course faculty one hour before the panel is held to finalize the program; c) facilitate the panel discussion.
- 3) *Serve as a panel member*: We will look to augment each of the panels with students who have particular experience and expertise in the topic under discussion. Based on the conversation we had the first day of class, it is clear that there are individuals with experience in a wide range of the issues under discussion. If you have worked in one or another of the issues that will be the focus of a panel, we would like to invite your participation to serve on the panel. You will be expected to meet with the other panelists and the faculty in advance of the session and participate in the panel discussion.