180.623.81 – Infectious Disease Threats to Global Health Security

Assignments and Grading

The purpose of these assignments is to prepare you as a public health practitioner to:

- Promote effective writing in brief format - as is most often needed by policymakers and public officials
- Practice distilling complex topics and focusing on the most salient points in a way that is understandable by someone with little- to no-background on the topic
- Produce products that public health officials would need to produce in a real public health emergency
- Practice decision making and risk communication skills that you learn in class

Overview of weight and grading:

- Case study identification - 10% of course grade, pass/fail
- Decision-making case analysis- 25% of course grade, graded
- Communication memo- 25% of course grade, graded
- Case Study After-Action Report- 30% of course grade, graded
- Class participation (attendance to class and participation in discussions either in real time or through the CoursePlus site) – 10%

Assignment 1: Description of Public Health Emergency Case Study

For this assignment you will pick a public health emergency to be used as a case study throughout the course.

This assignment will consist of a short paragraph description of the public health emergency case study you will use for subsequent assignments. The case study can be a current issue or a past emergency. It is best to pick an emergency for which you can find publicly available information so that you can analyze the decision making and risk communication in that emergency. Feel free to run the topic by us if you are unsure.

Please include at least 1 in-text citation and reference to substantiate your chosen topic. References can be in any format as long as they are consistent.

This assignment will be graded on a pass/fail basis and is designed to ensure that you will be able to effectively complete later assignments using the topic you have chosen. Assignment 1 will make up 10% of your course grade, and it will be due to the dropbox at 11:59PM EST on April 2nd.
Assignment 2: Decision Making Case Analysis

This assignment will consist of a 2-page analysis (single spaced) on decision making in your chosen public health emergency, to include the following elements:

- Identifying who the main decision maker was (eg, president, governor, mayor, of health official)
- Analyzing the process by which they made their decisions (did they rely on a group process, for example?)
- Identifying the important decisions that were made during that emergency by leaders
- Understanding the factors and influences that led up to those decisions (eg, biases and heuristics, political pressures, available information, risk assessment, etc)

Please include in-text citations and references to substantiate your analysis (eg, news reports illustrating decisions, processes, or factors influencing decisions). References can be in any format as long as they are consistent, and are not included in the 2-page limit.

This assignment will make up 25% of your course grade, and it will be due to the dropbox at 11:59PM EST on April 16th.

Assignment 3: Communication Memo

This assignment will be focused on developing a 2-page (single spaced) memo to a policy maker about how they should communicate to the public during your chosen public health emergency. The memo should be targeted toward policy makers preparing to discuss the emergency with the public. The memo should outline key topics that are important for the public and include a set of 4-6 key messages (talking points) that the policy maker will want to convey when they hold a public press conference.

This assignment will make up 25% of your course grade, and it will be due to the dropbox at 11:59PM EST on April 30th.

Assignment 4: Case Study After Action Report

This assignment will be structured in the form of a 2 page (single-spaced) after-action report, written after the response to your chosen public health emergency has concluded. The after-action report should be a maximum of 2 pages. It will need to summarize:

- The positive and negative consequences of decision making from your case study;
- The successes and failures of risk communication during your chosen public health emergency; and
- Recommendations for improved practice in decision making and risk communication for leaders in the next emergency
Please include in-text citations and references to substantiate your analysis (e.g., news reports illustrating decisions, processes, or factors influencing decisions). References can be in any format as long as they are consistent, and are not included in the 2-page limit.

This assignment will make up 30% of your course grade, and it will be due to the dropbox at 11:59PM EST on May 14th.