

Starting an Activist Course at Your School

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Objectives

- To describe the characteristics of an activist course
- To describe student responsibilities in the course
- To describe the course lecture series
- To describe the student projects
- To identify students willing to establish activist courses at their schools

Course Characteristics

- Taught at University of Michigan, Fall 1997 – Spring 1998
- Class size: 17 undergraduates
- Groups of 2-3
- Data-based research projects
- Limited didactics
- Student input in each others' projects

Student Responsibilities

- Identify a domestic or international public health problem that is susceptible to activist research
- Write a 5-page protocol for the research project
- Submit the protocol to the IRB, if necessary
- Collect the data
- Analyze the data
- Report the data in writing and orally to the class

Follow-up Activities – 2nd Semester

- One-on-one meetings
- Group potlucks
- Increase sample size
- Add supplementary studies
- Refine statistical analysis
- Develop written reports suitable for publication

Student Projects

- International tobacco labeling
- Human-veterinary drug price comparison
- State generic drug substitution restrictions
- Sex education on the Internet
- Syringe availability in Detroit pharmacies
- Hepatitis B vaccination among gay men in Ann Arbor
- Medicaid patients' concerns about managed care

Elements Necessary to Start an Activist Course

- Eager student
- Faculty member willing and able to lead course
- Collaboration with Public Citizen
- Receptive administration
- Time in the school schedule