



MMPH6180/CMED 6221 Public health ethics and law

Coordinator: Dr Zohar Lederman/ Prof Eric Ip

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to public health ethics and law. With the understanding that ethics and law are two different domains of praxis and governance, and that ideally ethics should ground law, the first part of the course will focus on the ethics of public health. Through particular case studies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, this course will discuss emerging as well as recurrent themes in public health ethics discourse, including the tensions between private interest and the common good, and between the right to health and other human rights; as well as the practice of distributive justice and solidarity in the protection and promotion of population health. Specific topics will include the ethics of isolation/quarantine and the social determinants of health. The second part of the course, informed by ethical perspectives from the first part, will focus on Hong Kong public health law in comparative perspective. Topics include the conceptual and historical foundations of public health law; the legal infrastructure of the public health system and the constitutional duties of actors within this system; the legal control of communicable diseases and non-communicable diseases; the law of public health emergencies; the legal regulation of food and drug safety; and occupational and environmental health law.

Prerequisite: None

Term 2 (Tuesday)

Contact person: Dr Hansika Hanthanapitiya

Date	Time	Lecture Topic	Lecturer	Venue
13 Jan 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	1. Course Introduction and Introduction to Public Health Ethics	Dr Zohar Lederman/ Prof Eric Ip	TBC
20 Jan 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	2. Is There a Human Right to Health?	Dr Zohar Lederman	TBC
27 Jan 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	3. Introduction to Public Health Law	Prof Eric Ip	TBC
03 Feb 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	4. Ethics of Mitigation—Quarantine and Isolation	Dr Zohar Lederman	TBC
10 Feb 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	5. Ethics of Prevention and Distributive Justice—Vaccine Distribution: Who Should Get the Vaccine When Not Everyone Can?	Dr Zohar Lederman	TBC
03 Mar 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	6. Armed Conflict and Public Health	Dr Zohar Lederman	TBC
10 Mar 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	7. The Constitutional Foundations of Public Health	Prof Eric Ip	TBC
17 Mar 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	8. Law, Communicable Diseases, and Public Health Emergencies	Prof Eric Ip	TBC
24 Mar 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	9. Law, Non-Communicable Diseases, and Environmental Health	Prof Eric Ip	TBC
31 Mar 2026	6:30 – 9:30 pm	10. Public Health Challenge Simulation	Dr Zohar Lederman/ Prof Eric Ip	TBC

Course Assessment: In-course assessment: 50%
Final exam: 50%

Contact person: Dr Hansika Hanthanapitiya; email: hansikah@hku.hk.