

The Teacher

AIDS and the Political Science Classroom

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No contemporary emergency has as devastating an effect on society as the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic. Figures in the United States alone give insight into the gravity of this crisis (*HIV/AIDS Surveillance*, October 1991). Approximately 200,000 people have contracted AIDS, with over 50,000 developing symptoms within the last 12 months. Sixty percent of those with AIDS prior to September 1989 are now dead. Perhaps as many as one percent of the American population—more than 2.5 million people—are infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes AIDS. It is an epidemic that does not discriminate on the bases of race, gender, class, geography, ideology, or political affiliation.

AIDS is a medical crisis, but it is unlike other diseases. The homosexual stigma attached to AIDS, as well as misunderstandings and misguided fears about modes of transmission, result in a multitude of social and economic ramifications. Equally devastating, however, are its political and bureaucratic dimensions. Government may not have invented the disease, but it seems to have contributed significantly to the intensity of the epidemic.¹ Today, as throughout the 1980s, politicians are reluctant to develop sound policies that address the needs of people with AIDS. Public administrators share politicians' concern about the consequences of directing resources toward a disease of which the victims are still overwhelmingly gay men and intravenous drug users. At all levels of government, institutional bias and self-interest tend to prevail over goals to develop effective and compassionate responses to the AIDS crisis.

It is perplexing to find political

scientists paying only scant attention to this crisis. This epidemic offers the opportunity to pose a variety of research questions about politics and power and to do so from the perspective of just about every subfield. But little research is coming from our discipline, as is indicated by the single panel on AIDS at the most recent annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.²

The limited amount of research is only matched by the time spent on AIDS in most political science classrooms. This is surprising because the political ramifications of AIDS are always in the news. It is even more surprising since, unlike other topics covered in political science courses, AIDS has an immediate and direct bearing on the lives of our students. Public announcements of young seropositive celebrities, like basketball star Earvin "Magic" Johnson, makes this point all too apparent. Approximately one-in-five people with AIDS are between 20 and 29 years old (*HIV/AIDS Surveillance*, October 1991), the primary ages of our undergraduate and graduate students. The number of young people contracting the disease is doubling every 14 months. Regardless of students' current or future HIV status, however, the probability is high that the many ramifications of AIDS will accompany them throughout their lives. In order to function effectively in the 21st century, they will have to know a great deal more about this subject than just its medical dimension.

For these reasons, it is paramount that the AIDS crisis be examined within the context of the political science curriculum. The following course outline is presented with this in mind.

Overview of Course

This course looks at AIDS as a political and bureaucratic phenomenon. It is designed as a "special topics" course at the junior/senior or master's levels.³ It also assumes that students have a basic understanding of the policy process, as well as public administration. In this course, the format gradually shifts from lecture-dominated segments to discussion-based sessions. A combination of books and journals are used, with "suggested readings" required for graduate-level students. While no text currently exists for this type of course, the following four books are used as core readings:

- Ronald Bayer, *Private Acts, Social Consequences: AIDS and the Politics of Public Health*. New York: The Free Press, 1989.
- Charles Perrow and Mauro F. Guillen, *The AIDS Disaster: The Failure of Organizations in New York and the Nation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1988.
- James D. Slack, *AIDS and the Public Work Force: Local Government Preparedness in Managing the Epidemic*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1991.

Much of the classroom discussion evolves around the Shilts book. This is a chronological account of the AIDS epidemic, from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. It is written in an easy journalistic style, which students enjoy, and it delves into the lives of a variety of political actors: people with AIDS, leaders of the gay community, politicians, bureaucrats, and scientists. Students should be fore-

warned that Shilts provides a graphic portrayal of gay life, as well as symptoms and illnesses related to AIDS. But Shilts also offers an excellent, provocative analysis of the role played by politics, bureaucracy, and interest groups in the AIDS crisis. He argues quite convincingly that "AIDS did not just happen to America—it was allowed to happen by an array of institutions, all of which failed to perform their appropriate tasks" (p. xxii).

The other books supplement Shilts. Bayer provides insight into the constitutional dilemma of government: having to guarantee individual rights while protecting the general public's health. Slack looks at the ability of government to respond to the AIDS crisis within its own workplace. Perrow and Guillen examine the delivery of services to people with AIDS by agencies in New York City.

Course Outline

Part I. Overview of AIDS

This section reviews the scientific and epidemiological facts, as well as misperceptions, about AIDS. It is important to spend adequate time on this section and not to assume that students have an adequate knowledge-base about AIDS. Without a thorough understanding about the medical dimensions of the disease, students will be unable to grasp fully the politics of the epidemic. The instructor need not be an expert in epidemiology in order to successfully present information in this section. The substance of lectures/discussions, after all, is basic information that everyone should possess. Members of AIDS-assistance groups are usually eager to talk with instructors and students on these issues. The Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the foremost informational and counseling organization on AIDS in the United States, can assist in locating speakers in every community.⁴

Subtopics:

cost of treatment
demographics of AIDS
epidemiology of AIDS
HIV antibody tests
modes of transmission
safer-sex practices

side-effects of treatment
social history of AIDS/HIV
social stigma of AIDS
symptoms and diseases

Required Readings:

Shilts, Part I, "Behold, A Pale Horse"; Part II, "Before/1980"; Part III, "Paving the Road/1981."
Slack, ch. 1, "Overview of the AIDS Crisis."
Bayer, ch. 1, "Private Acts, Social Consequences."
Perrow and Guillen, ch. 1, "Introduction"; and ch. 4, "The Unique Features of AIDS."

Suggested Readings:

Brandt, Allan M. 1988. *No Magic Bullet: A Social History of Venereal Disease in the United States Since 1880*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Cohen, P. T., Merle A. Sande, and Paul A. Volberding, eds. 1990. *The AIDS Knowledge Base*. Waltham, MA: The Medical Publishing Group.
Fineberg, Harvey V. 1988. "The Social Dimensions of AIDS," *Scientific American* 258 (October): 128-34.
Henahan, John F. 1989. "AIDS Economic, Political Aspects Become as Global as Medical Problems," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 259 (June 17): 3377-78.
Relman, Arnold S. 1989. "AIDS in the Americas," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 320 (May 12): 1005-15.

Section II. Key Actors in the AIDS Crisis

This section familiarizes the student with key groups and organizations that are instrumental in the politics and administration of AIDS. The review focuses on the histories and dynamics of these organizations. This information is important to have in order to grasp the involvement of each group in the epidemic, as discussed in the final two sections.

Subtopics:

AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT-UP)
American Foundation for AIDS Research
Centers for Disease Control
Center for Infectious Disease, AIDS Activities Office
Congressional Committees on Health and Welfare
Food and Drug Administration
Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC)
Harvey Milk Gay Democratic Club

National Cancer Institute
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease
National Institutes of Health
The Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS) Foundation
The Shanti Project

Required Readings:

Shilts, Part IV, "The Gathering Darkness/1982"; Part V, "Battle Lines/January-June 1983."
Perrow and Guillen, ch. 5, "The Crisis in New York"; ch. 6, "Minorities and AIDS in New York City"; ch. 7, "AIDS and Organizations: The New Entries"; ch. 8, "AIDS and Existing Organizations."
Slack, ch. 2, "AIDS and the Public Service."

Suggested Readings:

O'Connor, John Cardinal and Mayor Edward I. Koch. 1989. *His Eminence and Hizzoner: A Candid Exchange*. New York: Morrow.
Panem, Sandra. 1988. *The AIDS Bureaucracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Issues of the gay newspapers *New York Native* and *Advocate*.

Part III. The Political Dimension

Students now have a grasp on the medical/scientific side of the problem and are familiar with key groups and individuals. They are ready to explore the political and bureaucratic dimensions of AIDS. Three questions transcend lecture material and classroom discussion throughout this section. First, what ethical considerations come into play with the AIDS epidemic? Second, what are the constitutional issues and constraints that come to bear on this crisis? Third, what is the nature and dynamics of the policy process in the age of AIDS?

Subtopics:

1. Political Issues:
 - AIDS education
 - handicapped individual
 - isolation/quarantine
 - political culture
 - privacy/confidentiality
 - public safety
 - reasonable accommodation
 - testing and screening
2. Legislation:
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973

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- Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991
Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974
State administrative code sections
State civil rights commissions
Municipal ordinances
3. Court Cases and Regulatory Decisions:
- Alexander v. Choate* 469 U.S. 287 (1985).
Chalk v. U.S. District Court, Central District of California 840 F. 2d. 701 (9th Circ. 1988).
Clarence B. Cain v. Joel Hyatt, Individually and t/a Hyatt Legal Services, et al. U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1990.
Cleburne v. Cleburne Living Center 473 U.S. 432 (1985).
Department of Fair Employment and Housing v. Rationon Company Case No. FEP 83-84 LI 031 Op, L-33998, 87-04, Feb. 5, 1987.
Doe v. Charlotte Memorial Hospital, HHS Office of Civil Rights, Complaint No. 04-84-3096, August 5, 1986.
Glover v. Eastern Nebraska Community Office of Retardation, 686 F. Supp. 243 (D. Neb. 1988).
Grove City College v. Bell 465 U.S. 555 (1984).
Health Insurance Association of America v. Corcoran, No. 56959 (NY App. Div. Feb. 15, 1990).
Johnson v. West Virginia University Hospitals, No. 89-C-109 (Monongalia County, W. Va. Cir. Ct. December 13, 1989).
Leckelt v. Board of Commissions of Hospital District No. 1, et al. 714 F. Supp. 1377 (E.D. La. 1989).
School Board of Nassau County, Fla. v. Arline 480 U.S. 273 (1987).
Shuttleworth v. Broward County U.S.D.C.S. Fla. No. 85-6673-CIV, Dec. 5, 1986.
Southeastern Community College v. Davis 442 U.S. 397 (1979).
Thomas v. Atascadero Unified School District, 662 F. Supp. 376 (C.D. Cal. 1987).

Required Readings:

- Shilts, Part VI, "Rituals/July-December 1983"; Part VII, "Lights & Tunnels/1984"; and Part VIII, "The Butcher's Bill/1985."
Bayer, ch. 2, "Sex and the Bathhouse: The Politics of Privacy"; ch. 3, "Blood, Privacy, and Stigma: The Politics of Safety"; ch. 4, "Testing, Reporting, and Notifying: The Politics of Identification"; ch. 5, "Compul-

sory Screening: The Politics of Exclusion"; ch. 6, "Isolating the Infected: The Politics of Control"; ch. 7, "Prevention Through Education: The Politics of Education."
Slack, ch. 3, "AIDS and the Law."

Suggested Readings:

- Cikens, Warren I., ed. 1989. *Toward a National Policy on Drug and AIDS Testing*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
Dalton, Harlon L. and Scott Burris, eds. 1987. *AIDS and the Law: A Guide for the Public*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 109-25.
Gostin, Larry O. 1989. "Public Health Strategies for Confronting AIDS: Legislative and Regulatory Policy in the United States," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 261 (March 17): 1621-30.
Jones, Walter J. and James A. Johnson. 1989. "AIDS in the Workplace: Legal and Policy Consideration for Personnel Managers," *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 9 (Summer): 3-14.
Quist, Norman, ed. 1989. *AIDS Legal, Legislative, and Policy Issues*. Frederick, MD: University Publishing Group.

Part IV. The Bureaucratic Dimension

This section focuses on policy implementation and organizational responsiveness. The three themes raised in Part III are now tailored to investigate the role of bureaucracy: (1) bureaucratic and professional ethics, (2) constitutional and legal imperatives on the bureaucracy, and (3) the nature and dynamics of bureaucratic politics. Instructors may want to incorporate case studies here, perhaps as required student projects. Guest speakers from local agencies are also useful.

Subtopics:

attitudes of implementors
environmental factors
government preparedness
inter-agency politics
intergovernmental relations
organizational goals
course summary and conclusions

Required Readings:

- Shilts, Part IX, "Epilogue/After."
Bayer, ch. 8, "AIDS and the Politics of Public Health."
Perrow and Guillen, ch. 2, "The Organizational Failure"; ch. 3, "Bureaucratic, Economic, and Ideological Explanations"; ch. 9, "AIDS Unending."

Slack, ch. 4, "Attitudes Toward AIDS in the Workplace"; ch. 5, "AIDS Politics and Procedures: The Extent and Causes of Their Adoption"; ch. 6, "AIDS and the Public Service Revisited."

Suggested Readings:

- Kirp, David L. 1989. "The AIDS Perplex," *The Public Interest* 96 (Summer).
Osborn, June E. 1988. "AIDS: Politics and Science," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 318 (February 18).
Pierce, Christine and Donald Vandever, eds. 1988. *AIDS: Ethics and Public Policy*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Notes

1. This argument is underscored throughout the books assigned in this course.
2. The panel, "AIDS and Power," was sponsored by the Gay and Lesbian Political Science Caucus. Three papers were presented: Cathy Cohen, "Power, Resistance, and Marginalization: Two Communities Respond to AIDS"; Jeffrey Edwards, "Conceptions of Power within the AIDS Movement"; and Marc A. Triebwasser, "Teaching About AIDS with Interactive Video."
3. Instructors may opt to incorporate portions of this syllabus into existing courses, such as American government, municipal politics, interest groups, public policy, public administration, intergovernmental relations, or policy implementation.
4. GMHC can be reached at (212) 807-6655.

Reference

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control, Center for Infectious Diseases, Division of HIV/AIDS, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance*, October 1991.

About the Author

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James D. Slack is professor and director of the Master of Public Administration Program in the Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University. His teaching and research interests are in the area of public sector human resource management and policy. Currently he is focusing on workplace ramifications of the AIDS crisis.

