This course aims to enable students to understand and then develop solutions to the public health problems of addictions in the US and globally. The two problems to address this year are: 1) the opioid crisis and 2) harmful health behaviors and habits, e.g. use of tobacco, overeating, and alcohol abuse. The first part of the course builds the knowledge-base about these problems. The second part has active participation by the students in debates, panels, etc. and in developing and scaling solutions.

This course will focus on establishing the causes of and then solutions to these behaviors and problems. Specifically, the course will cover: 1) facts and findings from the literature on these problems; 2) analytic methods used in the literature to establish causality and evidence on effectiveness of alternative solutions; 3) rational and behavioral economic models of behaviors; 4) methods to evaluate social impact; and 5) information on how to scale through government policies, social entrepreneurship, startups, and collaborations with foundations or businesses.

Solutions will be based on analyses of the problems, evidence on the effectiveness of related or parallel solutions, and efforts to innovate and perhaps even to ‘disrupt’. Students must analyze the problem and propose solutions. The solutions could, but do not have to be pursued; that is, the proposals can be on paper only, but none-the-less there must be a plan for scaling the project or policy to have important social impacts, at least in theory. Weekly assignments and a final paper/project are required.

Prerequisite: Microeconomics.

[Also HPA 590b]