PUBHLTH 3010 and MUSIC 3010

Figaro Meets Florence Nightingale: the Marriage of Opera and Public Health

4 credits – Spring 2026

Lecture: Tuesday and Thursday 3:55-5:15, 246 Hopkins Hall

Labs: Wednesday 9:10 – 10:05 (N504) or 10:20-11:15 (N408) Timashev Building

Course Instructor

Amy Ferketich, PhD, Public Health/Epidemiology, The Ohio State University, December 2000
256 Cunz Hall, 614-292-7326
Ferketich.1@osu.edu

Katherine Rohrer, PhD, Interdisciplinary PhD (music, speech and language pathology, health and medical sciences), Ohio University, December 2018
N390 Timashev Building, 614-688-2142
Rohrer.66@osu.edu

Instructor's Office Hours

Wednesday from 3:00-4:00 on Zoom (link provided on Carmen) and other times by appointment.

Faculty Feedback & Response Time:

The following gives you an idea of our intended availability during the course:
- **Grading:** You can generally expect feedback within 7 days.
- **E-mail:** We will reply to e-mails (sent via Carmen) within 24 hours on school days.

Course Description

In this course, we will explore public health themes that are dramatized in opera as a popular artistic medium. Students will be introduced to the public health aspects of the issue and then presented with information about how the issue has been represented in multiple operas, ranging from the 1700's to current day. Together we will examine original source texts, librettos, and staging (lighting, set design, costume, direction, and, of course, music composition) as to the ways and means by which disease and death are dramatized in the "great art form" of opera. Content will be split equally between public health and music.

Prerequisites

None

Course Learning Objectives

Following completion of the course, students will be able to….
1. Summarize the historical and current issues related to the six public health themes explored in this course.
2. Describe how opera can effectively portray public health issues to an audience through lyrics, voice, acting, costume, and staging

3. Summarize how a composer can use text and basic musical elements to depict disease and death to an audience.

Competencies:
Public Health Competencies
Foundational BSPH Competencies:

   6. Communicate public health information, in both oral and written forms, through a variety of media and to diverse audiences.

Public Health Sociology Specialization Competencies:

1. Employ specific sociological theories, both classical and contemporary, to explain the unequal distribution of health among different subpopulations in the United States and throughout the world.
2. Illustrate how sociological perspectives of stratification - particularly along the lines of race, class, and gender - expand typical public health perceptions and approaches.
3. Identify social and public policies that differentially affect the unequal distribution of health in society as well as the social process that led to their creation and keep them in place.

A complete list of College of Public Health Competencies is located on the College of Public Health website: https://cph.osu.edu/students/competencies.

Music Competencies
Foundational Competencies:

1.   Identify foundational operas in which disease is a fundamental element within the plot.
2.   Communicate the methods and tools used musically and through stage techniques by which death and disease are emotionalized and dramatized.
3.   Identify musical trends in composition and subject which promote the inclusion and frame the dramatization of disease and death in opera.

GE Health and Wellbeing Theme
Goal 1: Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.

1.1 Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of health and wellbeing.
1.2 Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of health and wellbeing. This course encourages students to explore how the intersection of the fields of music and public both represents society's understanding of an issue. Throughout the semester, students will write reflections and respond to essay questions that will encourage them to deeply explore this intersection. Additionally, students will be asked to reflect on the music they listen to and how their favorite songs reflect what is happening in society, with a particular focus on health and wellbeing. The main project requires students to select a public health issue and create an opera that represents how the issue is understood by society during the period in which it is based.

Goal 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.

2.2 Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to health and wellbeing.
2.2 Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.
This cross-listed course will indeed allow students to learn about issues from two different perspectives. The public health perspective of the issue will focus on the science, the population burden, and the ways in which it is dealt with in communities. The opera/music perspective will focus on representation and how the knowledge of the issue at the time was communicated to the

population through opera. The lectures, quizzes, lab assignments, reflections, and opera project will all focus on the interdisciplinary perspective on public health and opera that this course is taking.

Goal 3: Students will explore and analyze health and wellbeing through attention to at least two dimensions of wellbeing. (Ex: physical, mental, emotional, career, environmental, spiritual, intellectual, creative, financial, etc.).

3.1 Explore and analyze health and wellbeing from theoretical, socio-economic, scientific, historical, cultural, technological, policy, and/or personal perspectives.

3.2 Identify, reflect on, and apply strategies for promoting health and wellbeing. Health and wellbeing are explored through historical and cultural perspectives in this class.
The lectures and lab assignments that are focused on the public health aspects of the issue will allow students to learn about the historical aspects of the issue. The cultural aspects will be explored primarily through the opera discussions in class, labs, and reflections on the opera that students will watch as part of each module. Through an in-depth analysis of the opera, students will learn how culture impacts society's understanding of, and response to, a public health issue. Health and wellbeing portrayed by the characters, particularly the ones affected by the issue being discussed (e.g., mental illness), will be highlighted during the lectures.

Readings:
All readings will be provided to students on Carmen. Students should be completed before class each week (see weekly schedule).

Carmen
There is a Carmen site for this course: https://carmen.osu.edu. All course materials are available via Carmen.

You will need to use BuckeyePass (buckeyepass.osu.edu) multi-factor authentication to access your courses in Carmen. To ensure that you are able to connect to Carmen at all times, it is recommended that you take the following steps:

- Register multiple devices in case something happens to your primary device. Visit the BuckeyePass - Adding a Device help article for step-by-step instructions (https://admin.resources.osu.edu/buckeyepass/adding-a-device)
- Request passcodes to keep as a backup authentication option. When you see the Duo login screen on your computer, click **Enter a Passcode** and then click the **Text me new codes** button that appears. This will text you ten passcodes good for 365 days that can each be used once.
- Download the Duo Mobile application (https://admin.resources.osu.edu/buckeyepass/installing-the-duo-mobile-application) to all of your registered devices for the ability to generate one-time codes in the event that you lose cell, data, or Wi-Fi service

If none of these options will meet the needs of your situation, you can contact the IT Service Desk at 614-688-4357(HELP) and IT support staff will work out a solution with you.

Class Format: How this course works
- **Mode of delivery:** This course is 100% in-person.
- **Credit hours and work expectations:** This is a 4**-credit-hour course**. According to Ohio State policy [(go.osu.edu/credithours)](go.osu.edu/credithours), students should expect around 4 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (e.g., lecture and lab) in addition to 8 hours of homework/active learning activities (e.g., watching operas, reading, writing the opera project).

Attendance and participation requirements: If you are unable to attend a lecture for a valid reason (illness, family emergency, etc.), email your instructors in advance. If an emergency comes up, you may email after class. It is critical that you are present to engage in the content. Students are allowed up to six absences (labs and lectures), which is two weeks of class. This includes excused and unexcused absences. Each subsequent absence will result in a 2% deduction from your final grade. An absence will be marked if you are not present for the entire class or lab.

Course Technology
Technology skills needed for this course
- Basic computer and web-browsing skills
- Navigating Carmen (go.osu.edu/canvasstudent)
- CarmenZoom virtual meetings (go.osu.edu/zoom-meetings)

Technology support
For help with your password, university email, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the Ohio State IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at and support for urgent issues is available 24/7.
- **Self-Service and Chat support:** http://it.osu.edu/help
- **Phone:** 614-688-4357(HELP)
- **Email:** servicedesk@osu.edu

Assignments/Assessments
Quizzes: 25%
Quizzes will occur following completion of each module. The quiz will be given to students in class, at the start of the next module. Students will have 30 minutes to complete the quiz. No notes, books, or other resources may be used. Questions will be a mix of short answer, essay, and multiple choice.

Laboratory Assignments: 25%
These are weekly, and most due at the end of lab and credit is only given if you present in lab that day.

Opera creation: 35%
Students will pick a public health issue and create an opera that features this issue. For the project, students will need to discuss the public health burden of the issue in current day and during the period the opera is set (e.g., 19th century, 20th century), write a synopsis of the opera, describe the characters in detail, and describe the set/costume/lighting for each act. Details are provided on Carmen.

Reflection Papers: 15%
After viewing each opera, students will be asked to select a scene from each act that depicts how the public health theme is represented in the opera (spread out over the acts). Students will need to indicate: 1) the public health issue and time at which it is represented in the act; 2) how the issue is being represented; and 3) how the depiction relates to what is discussed in class, with details that connect to class readings, lectures, discussions, etc. *Reflection papers should be a minimum 2 pages in length, double spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font with 1" margins on all sides.*

Grading
Grading Scale
A	94 to 100	Outstanding work that reflects mastery of the material and the ability to apply it
A-	90 to <94	Excellent work that reflects mastery of the material
B+	87 to <90	Good work that reflects mastery of most of the material

B	84 to <87	Good work that reflects mastery of some of the material
B-	80 to <84	Good work that reflects mastery of a few aspects of the material
C+	77 to <80	Mediocre work that reflects familiarity with, but not mastery of the material
C	74 to <77	Mediocre work that reflects familiarity with most of the material
C-	70 to <74	Mediocre work that reflects little familiarity with the material
D+	67 to <70	
D	61 to <67	
E	Below 61	

Class Policies

1. **Laptop computer Policy:** To further the climate of mutual respect and to promote meaningful discussion, **personal technology** is limited to note taking and other specific times that the instructors designate. All notes and resources will be provided online so that you are free to focus on the dialogue.
2. **No cell phones may be used in class for texting, calls, email, etc.**
3. **Late assignments** will be reduced by 1 point/day. After 1 week, assignments will not be accepted.
4. **Weather or other closings:** Should in-person classes be canceled, we will meet virtually via CarmenZoom during our regularly scheduled time. We will share any updates via Carmen announcements.

Copyright Statement

This syllabus and all course materials (e.g., homework assignments, solution keys, course materials) are under copyright by the instructor and cannot be posted elsewhere without written permission.

Generative AI Policy

To achieve the learning goals in this class, students need to be creative thinkers and writers. The use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools such as Copilot or ChatGPT, writers aids like Grammarly, or translation platforms such as Google Translate, is, for the most part, not permitted in this course. Any use of GenAI tools for work in this class may therefore be considered a violation of Ohio State's Academic Integrity policy and Code of Student Conduct because the work is not your own. If we suspect that you have used GenAI on an assignment for this course, we will ask you to explain your process for completing the assignment in question. The unauthorized use of GenAI tools will result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

NOTE: Some of the lab assignments will involve using and reflecting on AI. If the instructors allow you to use AI for any lab assignment, it will be clearly stated on the assignment and discussed during the lab.

Office of Student Life: Disability Services

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to

request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Mental Health Services
As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Religious Beliefs or Practices Accommodations
Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office. (Policy: Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances)

Academic Misconduct
It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct"

includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-48.7 (B)). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct.

Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

Grievances and Solving Problems

A student who encounters a problem related to his/her educational program has a variety of avenues available to seek resolution. According to University Policies, if you have a problem with this class, you should seek to resolve the grievance concerning a grade or academic practice by speaking first with the instructor or professor. Then, if necessary, you may take your case to the department chairperson. Specific procedures are outlined in Faculty Rule 3335-8-23, the CPH Graduate Student Handbook, and the CPH Undergraduate Student Handbook. Grievances against graduate, research, and teaching assistants should be submitted first to the supervising instructor, then to the chairperson of the assistant's department.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office:

Online reporting form at http://civilrights.osu.edu/,
Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
Or Email civilrights@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Civil Rights Compliance Office to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.

- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

Course Outline

Module	Date	Readings & Topics
Introduction to Opera and Public Health	**1/13, 1/15 (Opera)** **1/20, 1/22 (PH)** **1/14, 1/21 (lab)**	**Intro to the course, intro to opera, intro to public health** **Topics:** introduction to public health, introduction of opera, viewing of Act I of *Hansel & Gretel* **Lab 1:** Reflect on Act I of *Hansel & Gretel* and tart decibel report. **Lab 2:** Pick three public health ideas and explore potential stories **Readings:** Shneider et al.: Chapter 1 "Public Health: Science, Politics, and Prevention" Articles: Atlanta Opera: Opera 101, Beginner's Guide to Opera
1: Diseases of the respiratory system	**1/27, 1/29 (lecture)** **1/28 (lab)**	**Global Burden of Respiratory Diseases** **Topics:** Tuberculosis, pneumonia, asthma, COPD **Lab 3:** How to search the literature and scientific writing **Readings:** WHO, *The Global Impact of Respiratory Disease*. Read pages 10-24. Barberis et al. The history of tuberculosis: from the first historical records to the isolation of Koch's bacillus. *J Prev Med Med Hyg*, 2017; 58: E9-E12
	2/3, 2/5 (lecture) **2/4 (lab)** **2/9 Reflection due**	**Respiratory Diseases in Opera** **Topics:** View and discuss – **La Traviata** (and clips from *La Boheme, Golden age of opera in Italy*) **Lab 4:** Go outside and film, come back and analyze and write **Readings:** Romanticizing Tuberculosis (p1-5_ and p22-26) **Recommended:** Libretto for *La Traviata*
	2/10	**Master class**
2. Social determinants of health	**2/12, 2/17 (lecture)** **2/11 (lab)**	**Quiz (2/12)** **Social and Other Determinants of Health** **Topics:** Poverty, housing, access to care, community cohesion **Lab 5:** Construct a story (once upon a time…) and organize the action of the opera in Act 1 – USE AI **Readings:** Smalley et al. Health Equity: Overview, History, and Key Concepts. Chapter 1 in *Healthy Equity: A Solutions-Focused Approach*. Hahn. What is a social determinant of health? Back to basics. *Journal of Public Health Research*, 2021; 10:2324.

Module	Date	Readings & Topics
	2/19, 2/24, 2/26 (lecture) **2/18, 2/25 (lab)** **3/2 Reflection and background on PH issue due**	**Social Determinants of Health in Opera** **Topics:** Space in timbre and on stage, the "American" sound, from stage to screen, operas focused on urban issues vs rural: clips from *Street scene* and *The Tender Land, Manon Lescaut – Puccini* **Lab 6:** Reflect on AI assignment, finalize the Act 1 synopsis **Lab 7:** Finalize the Acts 2-3 synopsis **Reading**: Lords, librettos and liberation The Marriage of Figaro – A story of class Vive la revolution in The Marriage of Figaro **Recommended:** Libretto for *The Marriage of Figaro*
3. Mental Health and Addiction	**3/3, 3/5 (lecture)** **3/4 (lab)**	**Mental Health in Opera** **Quiz (3/3)** **Topics:** Operas focused on mental illness and dementia, *The Hours* (opera) **Lab 8:** Character and descriptions – USE AI **Readings**: On Art and Madness *The Hours* was an opera all along Impact of Opera on Resilience and Thriving in Serious Mental Illness Communicating Complex Emotions
	3/10, 3/12 (lecture) **3/11 (lab)** **3/13 Reflection due**	**Mental Health and Addiction as Public Health Crises** **Topics:** Burden of mental illness in the US and globally, substance use and addiction **Lab 9:** Reflect on AI assignment and finalize characters and costumes **Reading:** Woolf SH. The Youth Mental Health Crisis in the United States: Epidemiology, Contributors, and Potential Solutions. Pediatrics. 2025 Nov 1;156(5):e2025070849
4. Race and Racism in Public Health and Opera	**3/24, 3/26 (lecture)** **3/25 (lab)** **3/30 Draft synopsis due**	**Racism as a Public Health Crisis** **Quiz (3/24)** **Topics:** How racism impacts health, how various forms of racism influence health systems, interventions to reduce racism **Lab 10:** Set design, lighting and color – USE AI **Reading:** Montalmant KE, Ettinger AK. The Racial Disparities in Maternal Mortality and Impact of Structural Racism and Implicit Racial Bias on Pregnant Black Women: A Review of the Literature. J Racial Ethn Health Disparities. 2024 Dec;11(6):3658-3677.
	3/31, 4/2 (lecture) **4/1 (lab)** **4/6 Reflection, character, costume description due**	**Racism in Opera** **Topics:** Stereotypes, historical racism in topic and performance opportunity, Marian Anderson **Lab 11:** Reflect on AI assignment and finalize set, lighting and color **Reading** How an Asian American Opera Singer Found Her Voice Amid a Reckoning with Race **Recommended:** Libretto for *Porgy and Bess*

Module	Date	Readings & Topics
5: Women's Issues	4/7, 4/9, 4/14 (lecture) 4/10 NO LAB - Go to live opera 4/13 Reflection and set design due	**Women's Health as a Public Health Issue** **Quiz (4/7)** **Topics:** Health issues affecting women, domestic violence **Lab 12:** NO LAB **Readings:** Women's health in the US vs. other countries: Stockman JK, et al. Intimate Partner Violence and Its Health Impact on Disporportionately Affected Populations, Including Minorities and Impoverished Groups. *J of Women's Health*, 2015; 24(1): 62-79.
	4/10 – 4/12	Watch OSU Live Opera (on campus)
	4/16, 4/21 4/23 (lecture) 4/15, 4/22 (lab) 4/20 Full draft for peer review	**Women's Health in Opera** **Topics:** Operas focused on domestic violence and sex: clips from *Street Scene, The Medium, Pagliacci, Susanna, Rape of Lucretia, Lady Macbeth of Mtenzsk and Cavalleria* **Lab 13:** Putting it all together **Lab 14:** Peer review of opera **Readings:** Excerpts from *Carmen* by Prosper Merimee
	4/24	Peer review due
	4/27	Final version of opera project due
	5/4	Final quiz at 6:00 PM

Alignment of Competencies with Assessments

Competencies	Quizzes	Assignments	Reflections	Final Project
Foundational BSPH				
Communicate public health information, in both oral and written forms, through a variety of media and to diverse audiences.		X	X	X
Public Health Sociology Specialization				
Employ specific sociological theories, both classical and contemporary, to explain the unequal distribution of health among different subpopulations in the United States and throughout the world.	X	X	X	X
Illustrate how sociological perspectives of stratification - particularly along the lines of race, class, and gender - expand typical public health perceptions and approaches.	X	X		
Identify social and public policies that differentially affect the unequal distribution of health in society as well as the social process that led to their creation and keep them in place.	X			X
Music				
Discuss various for identification, communication and characterization related to common public health issues as communicated by singers and in musical composition specific to opera. This may include the identification of performance limitations for both opera as an art form but also for the individual singers needed to complete the task of performing in an opera.	X	X	X	X
Communicate musical and theatrical elements that assist performers and opera productions in their portrayal of public health issues.	X		X	X
Identify elements specific to the operatic art form that can hinder portrayals of public health issues specifically related to the demands (musical, physical and theatrical) that are essential to opera performance/production.	X	X	X	X