

The Secret Life of Breasts: Lactation & Society – Lessons learned when offering an inaugural course in the midst of COVID-19.

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Background

Not only does breastfeeding influence child and maternal health outcomes, it also provides economic and environmental benefits, positively impacting every level of the social ecological model (SEM). Increasing breastfeeding knowledge among college students, regardless of discipline, has the potential to improve lactation support in the community, across the work force and even at the policy level. Despite breastfeeding having tremendous health, economic and environmental benefits, college level courses focused on human lactation appear to be quite rare.

Purpose & Aim

The purpose of introducing this course was to promote an understanding of the broad impact lactation knowledge and support has on individuals, families, communities and the population as a whole. *The Secret Life of Breasts: Lactation & Society* was designed to encourage students to explore their role in supporting breastfeeding, regardless of career path or discipline, in alignment with the Action Steps identified in the *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding*.

This 3-credit virtual course included weekly asynchronous and synchronous sessions. Asynchronous sessions included readings, external videos, and/or prerecorded lectures, which were completed prior to each weekly synchronous session. Assigned content was discussed during the synchronous sessions. The constellation of individual assignments, provided further application of course concepts to individual student interests.

Upon course completion, students were able to describe how breastfeeding benefits public health and identify strategies to support breastfeeding outcomes at each level of the SEM. Results of formal and informal student feedback, as well as lessons learned and planned course revisions, will be presented.