

**University of Florida**  
**College of Public Health and Health Professions**  
**PHC 6901 Epidemiology Literature Review & Critique**  
**“Journal Club”: 1 credit, repeatable**

Spring 2009

***Instructor Information***

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**Description:** This is an elective course for epidemiology masters and PhD students. This course is intended to extend students’ understanding of the field of epidemiology, and their ability to explore and critique research methods. In weekly sessions, the instructor, guest faculty, and students, will prepare a peer-reviewed article for class discussion that demonstrates or involves innovative epidemiology content or methods. A secondary goal of this class is to prepare students to perform peer-review themselves (e.g., for journals, study sections) by examples of this work from faculty.

**Prerequisites:** Students must have completed at least their first year epidemiology courses (PHC 6001 and PHC 6000) or the equivalent, and at least one semester of biostatistics.

**Course Objectives:** students will be able to:

- Gain insight into literature review and critical analysis of published literature on research methods and measures.
- Learn to critically review peer-reviewed works, and analyze and summarize strengths and weaknesses.
- Gain an understanding of innovative ideas in epidemiology and areas of controversy.
- Broaden their understanding of epidemiology methods and content.
- Prepare for professional peer-review assignments.
- Learn to become better writers of epidemiological literature

**Text/Readings:**

**Required:** Students will select an article for review and prepare for in-class discussion. Additionally, several journal articles will be assigned in class. Course readings will be posted on the course website in advance of each week’s session. There is no required textbook for the course.

*Recommended Reading:*

- Abby, M., M. D. Massey, et al. (1994). Peer review is an effective screening process to evaluate medical manuscripts. *JAMA* 272(2): 105-7.
- Bailar JC, Mosteller F. Guidelines for statistical reporting in articles for medical journals. *Ann Intern Med* 1988;108:266-273.
- Burnham, J. C. (1990). The evolution of editorial peer review. *JAMA* 263(10): 1323-9.
- Cantekin EI, McGuire TW, Potter RL. Biomedical information, peer review, and conflict of interest as they influence public health. *JAMA* 1990;263:1427-1430.
- Cummings, P. and F. P. Rivara (2002). Responding to Reviewer's Comments on Submitted Articles. *Arch Peds Adolesc Med* 156: 105-107.
- Feurer, I. D., G. J. Becker, et al. (1994). Evaluating peer reviews. Pilot testing of a grading instrument. *JAMA* 272(2): 98-100.
- Gelbach SH. Interpreting the medical literature. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993
- Gilbert, J. R., E. S. Williams, et al. (1994). Is there gender bias in JAMA's peer review process? *JAMA* 272(2): 139-42.
- Goodman, S. N., J. Berlin, et al. (1994). Manuscript quality before and after peer review and editing at *Annals of Internal Medicine*. *Ann Intern Med* 121(1): 11-21.
- Gore, S. M., G. Jones, et al. (1992). The Lancet's statistical review process: areas for improvement by authors. *Lancet* 340(8811): 100-2.
- Justice, A. C., J. A. Berlin, et al. (1994). Do readers and peer reviewers agree on manuscript quality? *JAMA* 272(2): 117-9.
- Kassirer, J. P. and E. W. Campion (1994). Peer review. Crude and understudied, but indispensable. *JAMA* 272(2): 96-7.
- Lock, S. (1994). Does editorial peer review work? [editorial; comment]. *Ann Intern Med* 121(1): 60-1.
- McNutt, R. A., A. T. Evans, et al. (1990). The effects of blinding on the quality of peer review. A randomized trial. *JAMA* 263(10): 1371-6.
- Nylenna, M., P. Riis, et al. (1994). Multiple blinded reviews of the same two manuscripts. Effects of referee characteristics and publication language. *JAMA* 272(2): 149-51.
- Riegelman RK, Hirsch RP. Studying a study and testing a test. How to read the medical literature. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1989.
- Roberts, J. C., R. H. Fletcher, et al. (1994). Effects of peer review and editing on the readability of articles published in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. *JAMA* 272(2): 119-21.
- Yankauer A. Editor's report - on decisions and authorships. *Am J Public Health* 1987;77:271-273.

**Requirements:** Students are responsible for all course material, including reading all required materials prior to each class. Failure to complete ANY assignment (in-class presentation, final paper critique) will result in a failing grade.

**Grading:** The grading scale for this course consists of pass/fail.

**Grading Methods:** The assessment will include an individual written literature critique and accompanying oral presentation, and class participation. Sessions are scheduled once weekly throughout each semester, and in a semester in which a student is to receive a grade, he/she must be present at all weekly sessions. If a student misses a class for whatever reason, the student will be expected to complete an additional written critique of a paper as a make-up assignment.

Course critique = 60% (40% written, 20% oral presentation)  
Class attendance and participation = 40%

Course critique: Each student will select a new (calendar year) article in an epidemiology, public health, or medical journal, and present the methods and issues orally to the group in one session. Based on this discussion, the written critique will be due by the end of the semester. The instructor must approve the article the student chooses.

Class participation assessment will include attendance and participation in class discussions.

**Academic Integrity:** Each student is bound by the academic honesty guidelines of the University and the student conduct code printed in the Student Guide and on the University website. The Honor Code states: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." Cheating or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and inexcusable behavior.

*Statement Related to Accommodations for Students with Disabilities*

Students with Disabilities - ***Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office, which will provide documentation to the student. The student should then provide this documentation to me.***

#### **Phone Numbers and Contact Sites for University Counseling Services and Mental Health Services**

University Counseling Services  
<http://www.counsel.ufl.edu/services.asp>  
P301 Peabody Hall – 392-1575

Student Mental Health Services in the Student Health Care Center  
<http://www.health.ufl.edu/shcc>  
Room 245, Infirmary Bldg.- 392-1171

*Final Note*

Course syllabi will be posted on a student accessible website that will be submitted to the departmental office to document compliance with this policy.

## **Policy on Style for Citation and Plagiarism:**

The two key purposes of citation are to 1) give appropriate credit to the authors of information, research findings, and/or ideas (and avoid plagiarism) and 2) facilitate access by your readers to the sources you use in your research.

**Quotations:** When directly quoting an outside source, the borrowed text, regardless of the amount, must be surrounded by quotation marks or block quoted. Quoted text over two lines in length should be single-spaced and indented beyond the normal margins. Every quote must include a source—the author, title, volume, page numbers, etc.—whether an internal reference, footnote, or endnote is used in conjunction with a bibliography page. For this class, please use citations as in the AJPH format, meaning an “endnote” and not footnotes.

**Paraphrasing or Citing an Idea:** When summarizing an outside source in your own words or citing another person’s ideas, quotation marks are not necessary, but the source must be included. This includes, but is not confined to, personal communications from other students, faculty members, experts in the field, summarized ideas from published or unpublished resource, and primary methods derived from published or unpublished sources. Use the general concept of “when in doubt – cite.”

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the academic honesty policy of the College. If a student plagiarizes others’ material or ideas, he or she may receive an “E” in the course. The faculty member may also recommend further sanctions to the Dean, per College disciplinary action policy. Generally speaking, the three keys of acceptable citation practice are: 1) thoroughness, 2) accuracy, and 3) consistency. In other words, be sure to fully cite all sources used (thoroughness), be accurate in the citation information provided, and be consistent in the citation style you adopt. All references should include the following elements: 1) last names along with first and middle initials; 2) full title of reference; 3) name of journal or book; 4) publication city, publisher, volume, and date; and 5) page numbers referenced. When citing information from the Internet, include the WWW address at the end, with the “access date” (i.e., when you obtained the information), just as you would list the document number and date for all public documents. When citing ideas or words from an individual that are not published, you can write “personal communication” along with the person’s name and date of communication. Typical formats for citing references and books can be found in the American Journal of Public Health.

**Class Attendance:** Class attendance is mandatory for students. Excused absences follow the criteria of the UFL Graduate Catalogue (e.g., illness, serious family emergency, military obligations, religious holidays), and should be communicated to the instructor prior to the missed class day when possible. UFL rules require attendance during the first two course sessions. Missing three scheduled sessions will result in a failure. Regardless of attendance, students are responsible for all material presented in class and meeting scheduled due dates for class assignments. Finally, students should read the assigned readings prior to the class meetings, and be prepared to discuss the material.

**Policy on Make-Up Work:** Students are allowed to make up work ONLY as the result of illness or other unanticipated circumstances warranting a medical excuse and resulting in the student missing a homework or project deadline, consistent with College policy. Documentation from a health care provider is required. Work missed for any other reason will receive a grade of zero.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students requiring accommodations must first register with the Dean of Students' Office. The Dean of Students' Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the faculty member when requesting accommodation. The College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to assist students in their coursework.

**Course Outline:** Students will first read a set of articles describing methods in critiquing the medical literature. The readings as well as class discussion sessions and lectures will prepare the students for critiquing the journal articles. The critique will consist of a written section that will be submitted by the end of the semester. The students will also be required to present the critique orally in class. Each student will be assigned a date for the presentation at the beginning of the course.

**Required Reading:** Students will be required to read a set of journal articles on evaluating the medical literature. These will be assigned by the instructor at least one week before each class.