

**Social Influences in Public Health PHC6937 Section 8307**  
**University of Florida, College of Public Health and Health Professions**  
**Fall, 2007**  
**Tuesdays, 9:35-12:35**  
**HPNP G316**

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Website: WebCT, Course PHC6937, Section 8307

**Course Overview:** Social determinants of population health (including acute and chronic health/disease outcomes, as well as health behavior) are the focus of this course. In addition to discussion of current findings, this course will serve as an introduction to methodological approaches to the field of social epidemiology with specific attention to measurement issues. The social processes that will be discussed include: social inequalities by social class and race/ethnicity, neighborhood/area effects, racism and discrimination, social capital and cohesion, and social networks and support. Intervention and policy implications will also be discussed. The course is designed for students who have prior familiarity with the basic principles and methods of epidemiologic research. The course will be taught with some lecture material with a particular emphasis on class discussion.

**Course Objectives:**

Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Discuss and evaluate social determinants of health outcomes as published in the existing public health literature.
2. Describe the current debate surrounding the field of social epidemiology.
3. Express verbally and in writing how social processes may influence health outcomes, health behavior and health disparities.
4. Understand the complex measurement issues involved with studying social processes.
5. Explore the state of the science and discuss current methodological approaches to the study of social influences in public health such as multilevel study designs and community-based participatory research methods.
6. Engage in discourse regarding social interventions and policy initiatives geared toward improving public health.

**Course Materials:**

Oakes JM, Kaufman JS, editors. Methods in Social Epidemiology San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; 2006.

Additional required readings are listed in an Appendix (attached). Each week there will be a set of required readings that can be found on the course website. In general, there will be at least one empirical study to read in addition to manuscripts and/or chapters that discuss methodologic content. The readings will be posted at least 2 weeks in advance. Please read each assignment and be prepared to discuss in class.

**Prerequisites:** Principles of Epidemiology and Epidemiologic Methods I (or equivalent research methods coursework) or permission from instructor.

**Course requirements and basis for grading:**

1. Response Essays (5) @ 5% each = 25%
2. Measurement Critique and Power-Point Presentation: 20%
3. Final Paper and Presentation = 35% (25% paper, 10% presentation)
4. Class Attendance, Participation and in-class exercises: 20%

*Response Essays:*

There are X major topics in this course. You must choose 5 that are of interest to you and write a response essay to the required readings for the week. Essay due dates correspond to the dates we will be discussing topics in class (see table below). Essays are due at the BEGINNING of class. LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Essays are to be no longer than **TWO PAGES** double spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. Essays should NOT summarize the articles, but synthesize what you have read. These are intended to be *scientific responses*, not entirely opinion pieces. While you are not required to incorporate every reading in your essay, limiting your essay to only one required reading will likely result in a poor grade. You may incorporate additional references if you feel there is literature supporting your argument (but not required). Finally, you'll likely find it difficult to stay within 2 pages, therefore, I suggest that you carefully plan out your ideas/arguments to make sure you stay within the limit.

*Measurement paper/presentation:*

You will choose (or be assigned) a topic for which you will choose an article (EMPIRICAL STUDY) to critique (i.e. not a review, methodological, or editorial paper). A list/sign up sheet will be provided the first class session. Please prepare a 10 minute power point presentation beginning with a brief summary of the background, hypothesis and study design. Then address how the study measured the social construct, including the strengths and limitations of the method(s). Also be sure to tell us the major results of the paper. (Potential items to address in your discussion: Is this a common way to measure that particular social process or construct? Has consensus been reached in the field with respect to best measurement? Do you think a different measure may have been more appropriate? What didn't the measure capture? What was the study design? Was it appropriate or would you prefer to see a different design? Were the results likely to change if variable of interest was measured differently? What is the possible impact of measurement error?) Some measurement information with respect to your chosen topic will be provided in required readings, but you are encouraged to investigate additional sources (i.e. pubmed search). Try to choose a study from a well-recognized public health, epidemiology, or medicine journal (i.e. American Journal of Public Health, American Journal of Epidemiology, Journal of the American Medical Association, etc.). Some topics may lead you to lesser recognized journals and that is fine, too. Again, this assignment is meant to be exploratory in nature. If you are having a problem identifying an appropriate paper then let me know and I will assign one for you. The person(s) assigned for each week will present their findings to the class and then we will open the discussion to the entire class. **Please turn in your power-point presentation along with a copy of your chosen manuscript at the beginning of class the day you present.** Please put enough information on your slides so that one could make sense of the presentation independently from your oral presentation.

*Final Paper and Presentation:*

Choose a health outcome of your choice and research how social context (you can pick one or more of the course topics or another social construct of your choice) influences it. Your topic can be a chronic disease, infectious disease, health behavior, or a policy-level outcome. Mid-semester you will be

asked to turn in a brief paragraph or outline of your chosen topic. Write a 10-12 page literature review paper which includes major findings, an in-depth discussion of study design and measurement issues, concluding with policy implications and future research directions. Please be sure to cite appropriately and include a reference page, *as well as a table of studies included in your literature review*. You will be asked to present your paper in the last week of class (plan for approximately 15 minutes). Additional instructions will be provided to you later in the semester.

*Class Attendance, Participation and in-class exercises:*

As this class relies heavily on class discussion, attendance and participation are essential. Attendance will be recorded each week. 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. Each unexcused absence will result in the lowering of your attendance/participation grade (one grade level per absence). Participation will be evaluated based on meaningful and informed contribution to the discussion and in-class exercises. **Attendance is MANDATORY for the student presentations of final papers (i.e. this is a requirement for the course).**

*Grading Scale:*

The grading scale for this course consists of the standard scale below:

90%-100% = A  
85%-89.9% = B+  
80%-84.9% = B  
75%-79.9% = C+  
70%-74.9% = C  
65%-69.9% = D+  
60%-64.9% = D  
Below 60% = E

## **Topical Outline**

An outline of the course topics and the weeks they will be discussed is provided below. A list of required readings is attached and can be found on the course website. The list of required readings may change based on class discussion and current literature, so please check the website often. The required readings for each week will be finalized no later than two weeks prior to the assigned date for that topic.

<b><i>WEEK/DATE</i></b>	<b><i>TOPIC</i></b>
Week 1 Aug 28	Course overview, introduction and history of social epidemiology
Week 2 Sept 4	Theory Begin socioeconomic status (income, education, occupation)
Week 3 Sept 11 *SES response essays due	Socioeconomic status continued (wealth, poverty, income inequality)
Week 4 Sept 18	Socioeconomic status continued (homelessness, underinsured, policy implications)
Week 5 Sept 25 *Race/ethnicity response essays due	Race/ethnicity (history of field, race/ethnic disparities and measurement)
Week 6 Oct 2	Race/ethnicity (Biological or social construct?)
Week 7 Oct 9 *Discrimination/Segregation response essays due	Discrimination and Racial Residential Segregation
Week 8 Oct 16 * Gender response essays due **Topic for final paper due	Gender (Discrimination and Disparities)
Week 9 Oct 23 * Neighborhood response essays due	Neighborhood/ Community Effects
Week 10 Oct 30 * Work environment response essays due	Work environment
Week 11 Nov 6 *Social support/ networks/ capital/ cohesion response essays due	Social support Social networks Social capital Social cohesion
Week 12 Nov 13	CLASS CANCELED APHA
Week 13 Nov 20 *Obesity response essays due	Special Topic: Social determinants of obesity
Week 14 Nov 27	Wrap-up: Social epidemiology, No Way?
Week 15 Dec 4	Student Presentations

**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. **Please be sure to cite your references appropriately.**

**Class Attendance:** See course requirements above.

**Policy on Make-Up Work:** Assignments are due on the date specified. Late assignments will not be accepted. 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. If you know you will be out of town when a particular assignment is due, please make sure to email me your assignment by the beginning class (9:35 AM). In the event an assignment is due on a date class does not meet, assignments are due to me by close of business (5:00 p.m.). Email is always an acceptable way to turn in assignments to me, so do not hesitate to use this method.

**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.

**Counseling and Student Health:** Students may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and to seek confidential assistance at the University of Florida Counseling Center, 352-392-1575, or Student Mental health Services, 352-392-1171. Visit their web sites for more information: <http://www.counsel.ufl.edu/> or <http://www.health.ufl.edu/shcc/smhs/index.htm#urgent>

The Student health Care Center at Shands is a satellite clinic of the main Student Health Care Center located on Fletcher Drive on campus. Student Health at Shands offers a variety of clinical services, including primary care, women's health care, immunizations, mental health care, and pharmacy services. The clinic is located on the second floor of the Dental Tower in the Health Science Center. For more information, contact the clinic at 392-0627 or check out the web site at [www.helath.ufl.edu/shcc](http://www.helath.ufl.edu/shcc)

Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from:  
Alachua County Crisis Center: 352-264-6789.

*BUT- Do not wait until you reach a crisis to come in and talk with us. We have helped many students through stressful situations impacting their academic performance. You are not alone so do not be afraid to ask for assistance.*

**Classroom etiquette:** Please make every effort to be on time (part of your attendance grade) and please turn cell phones and pagers to SILENT mode. There is likely to be some controversial discussion and sensitive subjects discussed in this class. Please be respectful of other students' opinions even if you do not agree with them. While I expect there may be some heated discussion with regard to particular topics (which I encourage!) please make every effort to make others feel comfortable sharing their opinions, as well. **Please, NO LAPTOP use during class, unless I specifically ask you to bring them in for an in-class assignment.**