Public Policy 524: Social Determinants of Population Health Differences
Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University
Spring 2020 Thursdays 3:30-6:00 pm EST Online Synchronous

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Course Description

In this course, we systematically examine how public policy decision making and subsequent social interactions drive identity group differences in access to health enhancing resources or exposure to health compromising risks. We explore how these variable experiences become physically “embodied” and biologically “embedded” to determine identity contingent, group level inter-population health differences. The course emphasizes the fact that public policy impacts social well-being and health across a significantly broader range of institutions and mechanisms than those accounted for by individual behavior, socio-economic resources, insurance coverage or medical care provision. While this course focuses primarily on domestic policy sponsored determinants of health, we will also utilize international health comparison data as examples of systems alternative to those constructed and applied in the United States.

Introduction

This course teaches students to become more critical consumers of the various sources of information influencing ideas, decision-making processes and subsequent policies that differentially promote or compromise social well-being and health in the United States. The seminar provides an evidence-based multi-dimensional, multi-level analysis of public policy derived social determination of variable morbidity and mortality across diverse population groups. Over the semester term we will review, critically examine, synthesize and integrate historical, ideological, conceptual and theoretical arguments with empirical evidence to construct a comprehensive review of how a diverse range of factors influence health and wellness or disease and death. Resources and risks we will consider include socioeconomic, social support and cohesion, social bias (positive as well as negative) and cultural orientations. Identity categories we will consider include gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Social phenomena we will examine include Immigration, Transnationalism, national identity, structural inequality, the live course perspective, intersectionality and place/neighborhood. Biological processes we will examine include distress and the stress process, High Effort Coping, Weathering and accelerated aging.
We will pay particular attention to the most promising policy sponsored efforts to improve quality of life with the intention of promoting health for all segments of the U.S. population.

Course Objectives: Students in the course will learn

1. To review population-level differences in health and quality of life outcomes.

2. To examine how public policy decision making informs development of socially determined and structurally rooted influences on social well-being, life chances, lived experience and their influence on health.

3. To gain proficiency in constructing conceptual and theoretical arguments and related frameworks reflecting the lived social experiences of diverse segments of the United States and world population. Special emphasis is place on those segments of broader populations at greatest risk for adverse health and those segments of the population disproportionately influencing and determining these processes.

4. To develop an appreciation for the challenges and difficulties associated with developing and implementing public policy and other interventions to improve health and quality of life for a diverse, dynamic and rapidly evolving US and world population.

5. To develop familiarity with rudimentary social science research methods and application. We will focus on developing research questions and hypothesis testing.

6. To gain experience in preparing and presenting an evidence based public health promotion policy initiative.

Format and Philosophy

This is a seminar course designed to engage regular discussion and dialogue on core concepts. The course functions best when each student is committed to participating in class discussion, providing thoughtful feedback and completing assignments in a timely fashion. It is essential to our collective success in these endeavors that students complete readings and other assignments before the class session. Not doing this will result in lack of sufficient knowledge to make the aforementioned meaningful contributions to the class dynamic.

I aspire to facilitate a learning process by which each student becomes sufficiently educated and knowledgeable of the course materials to make well-informed decisions supporting their
opinions and positions. While we will consider and review various manifestations of pathology and the factors influencing them I am also personally committed to the process of simultaneously and systematically highlighting and reviewing the most effective efforts to enhance health and wellness across multiple dimensions and multiple outcomes for the diverse population groups we will be examining.

1. January 21st Introduction, Requirements, Expectations and The Social Determinants of Population Health Differences

*Required Readings*


*Supplementary Readings*


j. Select viewing of Unnatural Causes
2. January 28th Economies of Well-Being, The Evidence Based Perspective and Fundamental Cause

   Required Readings


   Supplementary Readings

   f. The Social Determinants of Health: Developing an Evidence Base for Political Action pp 10-40


3. February 4th Structural Inequality

   Written Assignment One Posted

   Required Readings


f. Marmot 2009 Status Syndrome

**Supplementary Readings**

g. McLeod JD (2013) Social Stratification and Inequality in *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health* pp 229-246


4. **February 11th Socio-Economic Indicators, Poverty and Health Gradients**

**Written Assignment One Submitted**

**Required Readings**

a. Bruna Galobardes, John Lynch, George Davey Smith; Measuring socioeconomic position in health research, *British Medical Bulletin*, Volume 81-82, Issue 1, 1 January 2007, Pages 21–37,


d. Black Report and Whitehall Study

e. Spencer-Wood SM & Matthews CN (2011) Impoverishment, Criminalization and the Culture of Poverty *Historical Archaeology* 45 (3) pp 1-10


**Supplementary Readings**


j. Velasquez-Manoff (2013) Status and Stress

k. In Climbing Income Ladder Location Matters

5. **February 18th Social Identity: Race, Ethnicity, National Origin and Health**

**Written Assignment Two Posted**

**Required Readings**

a. American Anthropological Association Statement on Race

b. American Sociological Association Statement on Race


g. Race - The Power of an Illusion Part 2: The Story We Tell: out of class viewing

h. Race - The Power of an Illusion Part 3: The House We Built: In class viewing
Supplementary Readings


6. February 25th Place and Social Context: Nativity, Immigration, Trans-nationalism and Health

Written Assignment Two Submitted

Required Readings


**Supplementary Readings**


7. **March 4th Social Bias and Health: Supremacy and Privilege, Oppression and Discrimination**

**Required Readings**


c. Diangelo (2011) White Fragility


Supplementary Readings


l. Hogenboom M (2017) Educationism: The Hidden Bias We Often Ignore BBC Future


8. **March 11th The Life Course Perspective**

Invited Guest Speaker Dr. Katrina Walsemann University of Maryland

*Required Readings*


9. March 18th Social Experience, Distress, Disconfirmation, Physical Embodiment and Biological Embedding

Required Readings


b. Davis LE (2014) Have We Gone Too Far With Resiliency? Social Work Research (10)


g. Arline Geronimus Podcast

h. Sherman James Video

Supplementary Readings


10. March 25th Social Support, Integration, Cohesion, Confirmation and Health Effects
Assignment Three Posted

**Required Readings**


**Supplementary Readings**


e. Kennedy-Hendricks 2015 Inter-Generational Social Networks

11. April 1st *The Theory of Inter-sectionality and Health Differences*

Assignment Three Submitted

**Required**

b. Coaston J (2019) The Intersectionality Wars *The Highlight by Vox*

c. Mullings (2008) *Sojourner Syndrome*


*Supplementary*

f. Anthias (2012) Hierarchies of social location, class and intersectionality: Towards a translocational frame


12. April 8th *Socio-Cultural Influences on Health and Well-Being*

*Required Readings*


*Supplementary Readings*


13. **April 15th Best Practices, Semester Summary, and Review**

   a. Powell JA (2016) The Importance of Targeted Universalism


14. **April 22nd Final Group Presentations or group work day if chose to present during final exam period of Thursday April 29th 7:00-10:00 pm.**

**Course Responsibilities**

**My role and responsibilities:** I endeavor to establish, maintain and promote a classroom environment that assures all students’ positive educational experience. This includes providing quality instruction, timely grading and monitoring our shared educational space such that each and every student feels comfortable expressing his or her opinions, positions and supporting evidence. Such expressions will be heard and discussed with respect and consideration for the individual presenting it. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, socio-economic position, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, and national origin. Belittling other students or diminishing the value of their contributions will not be tolerated. If such behavior occurs it will be addressed in a timely fashion on an individual basis. I will honor all requests to address students by pronouns or names that they report being most comfortable with. If you have any additional special needs related to vision, hearing etc… please make them known and arrangements will be made to accommodate you.

**Your role and responsibilities:** You are required to attend all class sessions. In the event of a known absence please inform the instructor as early as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements to account for the absence. In the event of an unforeseen absence please inform the instructor at your earliest convenience. Each student is expected and required to participate in and make meaningful contributions to class discussions. All assignments are required to be submitted in a timely fashion. Late assignments not submitted on time will be deducted 10% if submitted within 24 hours of the due date and an additional 10% each subsequent 24 hour period that it is not submitted up to 3 days after the due date at which time the submission will not be
accepted. Emergency situations are to be discussed with the professor prior to the assignment due date.

Each student is expected and required to participate in and make meaningful contributions to class discussions. All expressions will be heard, considered and discussed with respect and dignity. Belittling other students, diminishing the value of their contributions, disrespecting the professor or otherwise willfully disrupting the classroom environment will not be tolerated. These behaviors, if they occur, will be addressed outside of class on an individual basis in a timely and appropriately respectful manner. Please note, as explained in the grading section below, such behaviors may negatively impact your final course grade.

**Academic Integrity:** Intellectual and academic honesty are at the heart of the academic life of any university. It is the responsibility of all members of our academic community to abide by Duke's strict expectations regarding proper citation of sources. It is also critically important to resist strenuously the temptation to cheat. Acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and cheating, are considered very serious offenses. Students found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty are generally suspended. The academic and nonacademic offenses recognized at Duke and the range of sanctions imposed for them are explained in the *Duke Community Standard in Practice*, distributed to each incoming student. Please read the handbook carefully and make sure you understand its content.

Additional information on Duke’s academic integrity policy can be found at the following website [http://trinity.duke.edu/advising/academic-requirements?p=academic-integrity](http://trinity.duke.edu/advising/academic-requirements?p=academic-integrity)

**Assignments and Grading**

**Written Assignments:** Each student is responsible for completing three short written assignments over the course of the semester. Each assignment will be a 2-3 page single spaced response paper on a topic to be discussed and determined during class sessions.

**Research Project:** After the first short written assignment has been submitted, around the 4th week of class, we will begin discussing topics and group formation for the final research project. After topics are selected and projects approved by the professor each group will briefly introduce their selected topic to the class. At the end of the semester each group will submit a written assignment and give an approximately 45 minute presentation on their research project.

**Grading:** Each of the three short written assignments accounts for 15% of the final grade. The final project accounts for 45% of the final grade. Student participation and classroom interaction accounts for 10% of the final grade. This will be assessed at the professor’s discretion based upon attendance, group meetings, individual meetings, quality of contribution to discussions and respect for the class dynamic and each of your classmates.