Graduate School of Public Health
Department of Behavioral and Community Health Sciences
BCHS 2509: Social and Behavioral Sciences in Public Health
Summer 2017: 2177
3 credits; Monday pm – 2 – 4:50; A719 Crabtree

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Office Hours: 1-2, Monday and by appointment

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Introduction

This course provides an overview of the social and behavioral sciences in public health, with specific emphasis on the social ecological model. The course content is organized around competencies issued by the Council on Education in Public Health. It includes selected social and behavioral theories and models used by public health professionals to plan, implement, and evaluate programs and policies for the improvement of community health.

Course Rationale

New challenges from chronic and communicable diseases, environmental threats, and man-made and natural disasters continue to face public health. Dramatic demographic shifts are occurring in the United States as well as around the world. In this time of dynamic change it is essential that decision-makers gain a better understanding of how to prevent, delay, or reduce the overall impact of chronic conditions on the health of the public.

Education in the traditional core areas of epidemiology, biostatistics, environmental health, public health biology and infectious diseases, and the social and behavioral sciences is essential for public health professionals. However, given the current state of the world and considering the future, the social and behavioral sciences, including the associated focus on social determinants of health, structural inequities, community-based participatory practice, and cultural sensitivity, are becoming increasingly important to those working in the field of public health.
In recent years there has been a growing recognition that the social and behavioral sciences play a critical role in public health practice and in public health academics and training. Disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, sociology, and health education have emerged as important and essential subspecialties in both public health practice and research educational and training programs.

Public health professionals play a major leadership role in a range of systems. To be most effective they must look beyond biological risk factors to the complex nature of the influence of social, behavioral and environmental factors on the public’s health and welfare. As highlighted in the 2002 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, “Who will keep the public healthy?” public health professionals in leadership roles “…need to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the ecological model” in order to develop research and programs and policies that address multiple determinants of health.

Students in this class will learn how to use social and behavioral sciences theory and information to 1) examine public health problems from multiple points of view; 2) identify structural and systemic inequities; 3) conduct assessments to develop and plan health programs and policies; 4) implement and evaluate programs; 5) conduct community-based applied research; and 6) identify and engage appropriate stakeholders.

### Course Objectives

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Identify factors at levels of the social ecological framework that impact health;
2. Describe behavioral and psychological factors that affect health behavior;
3. Discuss social and structural biases and inequities that influence population health;
4. Identify social, political and economic conditions related to health;
5. Select appropriate methods for collecting, analyzing and applying qualitative data to health issues;
6. Use a strengths-based approach to assess community assets and needs;
7. Identify relevant cultural values and beliefs that impact a community’s health;
8. Design SMART objectives to plan and evaluate health promotion programs; and
Discuss appropriate strategies for identifying and engaging stakeholders.

Teaching Philosophy

My job is not to tell you the truth. There are many truths, depending on our experiences, attitudes, background and the context. My job is to create a safe environment in which you can explore topics that intrigue you and that may challenge you, with the goal of inspiring you to think beyond where you have thought before and to entertain perspectives with which you may not be familiar. I don’t care that you think what I think, just that you think. I know some stuff, you know some stuff; I believe that you learn as much from each other as you learn from me, and that I learn as much from you as you learn from me. Learning comes from many places, so let’s explore those places together.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity:

All students are expected to adhere to the school’s standards of academic honesty. Any work submitted by a student for evaluation must represent his/her own intellectual contribution and efforts. The GSPH policy on
academic integrity, which is based on the University policy, is available at [http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/interior.php?pageID=126](http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/interior.php?pageID=126). The policy includes obligations for faculty and students, procedures for adjudicating violations, and other critical information. Please take the time to read this policy.

Students committing acts of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, cheating on exams, misrepresentation of data, and facilitating dishonesty by others, will receive sanctions appropriate to the violation(s) committed. Sanctions include, but are not limited to, reduction of a grade for an assignment or a course, failure of a course, and dismissal from the Graduate School of Public Health (Pitt Public Health).

All student violations of academic integrity must be documented by the appropriate faculty member; this documentation will be kept in a confidential student file maintained by the Pitt Public Health Office of Student Affairs. If a sanction for a violation is agreed upon by the student and instructor, the record of this agreement will be expunged from the student file upon the student’s graduation. If the case is referred to the Pitt Public Health Academic Integrity Hearing Board, a record will remain in the student’s permanent file.

**Disabilities:**

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/interior.php?pageID=126) no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call 648-7890 (Voice or TDD) to schedule an appointment. The Office is located in 216 William Pitt Union.

**Cell Phones:**

Please be courteous to the instructor and your fellow classmates and refrain from cell phone use during class. If you are expecting an emergency call, please ensure that your phone is set to vibrate and leave the classroom if you receive a call that you must answer.

**Laptops:**

Because this class relies heavily on class discussion and active participation, no laptops will be allowed in class.
Recording:

Students may audiorecord class only with the permission of the instructor.

Email:

I have a strict email policy. When initiating an email conversation with the instructor, you should always begin with “Dear/Hello/Hi/ Good Afternoon” and conclude by signing your full name. Do not rely on your email address to indicate who you are.

The subject line of the email should indicate what the email is about (e.g. Question about the Exam). Informal language (e.g. hey can you tell me my grade, thx, btw.) is unacceptable and emails containing it will not be answered. People make judgments about you based on how you communicate and as such it is important to write emails in a professional manner.

You can expect that the instructor will make a good-faith effort to respond to your email within 48 hours. Please note: I take at least one weekend day off from email.

Grading:

Grades will be assigned on the basis of participation/attendance (10%), weekly papers (40%), quiz (10%), a multiple choice exam (15%) and a group poster presentation/peer rating (15%/10%).

Participation will be gauged in part by your contributions to class discussion and your use of office hours.

Weekly papers are due by 2 pm on the day noted in the course outline; late assignments will be assessed a 5% deduction for every late day. Assignments should be submitted through CourseWeb (if you have issues submitting work through this mechanism, please contact Ms. Haston).

Each student will choose a public health issue, related behavior for a culture/country of interest to use throughout the semester for weekly assignments. For example, you might choose HIV/AIDS (health issue) education to increase condom use (behavior) in Ghana or an oral health (health issue) intervention in rural PA to change children’s tooth brushing activity (behavior). Weekly
assignments ask you to apply the social ecological framework to this issue, identify behavioral/psychological factors contributing to this issue, discuss structural determinants related to the issue, and so forth. Exemplary papers are available on CourseWeb.

**Assignment Expectations:** Written assignments must include your name and are limited to one page except where noted, minimum of 1.5-spaced 1-inch margins; may be bulleted lists if appropriate. Minimum 11-point font must be used. Points will be taken off if these requirements are not met. Please check for proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and number agreement between nouns/verbs.

All references should be cited correctly. Citations for all references used should follow an accepted format, e.g., APA: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05. Failure to use correct citations is a breach of academic integrity and you can be reported for this infraction. Please note: MLA style is not acceptable.

**Quizzes** will be administered in class on the days noted in the course outline.

The **multiple choice exam** will take place in class; it is comprehensive but will not test on readings. It will take advantage of OMET’s ability to grade large numbers of scantrons almost instantaneously. 😊😊 Please bring your People Soft number and #2 pencil to class that day.

You will be assigned to a group for the **poster presentation**, which will cover a topic of the group’s choice but not addressed by anyone in the group in the weekly assignments. Guidelines are provided on CourseWeb. Foam boards and easels will be provided. Bring your own push pins. Ten points of the 25 points will come from peer ratings, completed by all group members and indicating the extent to which each member met her/his responsibilities and made contributions to the final product.

**Attendance:**
Attendance in class is an absolute necessity for this course. Though power point presentations will be used, they are for talking points only. A great deal of the learning in this course will be through class discussion, which occurs spontaneously and cannot possibly be scripted. If you have to miss a class, please inform the TA prior to the absence (if possible); up to two excused absences will not be counted against you. You are responsible for getting notes from another student for any class you miss.

**Grading Scale:** The instructor reserves the right to assign + and – grades.
90% + = A
80-89% = B
70-79% = C
Below 70% = F

Let’s begin!

CourseWeb:

The course uses CourseWeb for class assignments and enrichment materials. NO TEXT BOOK IS REQUIRED. CourseWeb is a web-based application. Use the web browser Internet Explorer to access your course information online.

All course readings, sample papers and final poster presentation examples are available.

- Go to the web address: http://courseweb.pitt.edu
- “Log in” with your user name, type your password, then click “Log in.”
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<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Readings Due</th>
<th>Assignment Due/Activity</th>
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<td><em>Anthropologists have been using this approach forever – it’s called holism</em></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>May 22</td>
<td>Behavioral and psychological factors affecting population health</td>
<td>Personal inventory activity</td>
<td>Paper #1: Social ecological framework- 1 page (10 pts) Identify and explain at least two specific factors on at least three levels of the social ecological framework relevant for your topic</td>
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<td>May 29</td>
<td>NO CLASS</td>
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<td>ENJOY!</td>
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<td>MEMORIAL DAY</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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<td>Activity Description</td>
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<td>Paper #3: Social, political and economic determinants of health - 1 page (10 pts)</td>
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| 6    | June 19    | Collecting data: Social and behavioral research methods – there are only two kinds  
*Method is a strategy, not an end in itself* | Alex L, Wiklund AF, Lundman B, Christianson M & Hammarstrom A. (2012) Beyond a dichotomous view of the concepts of ‘sex’ and ‘gender’: focus group discussions among gender researchers at a medical faculty. PLOS ONE accessed on-line 12/16/14.  
| 8    | July 3     | Assessing population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health   
CHANGE: https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dch/programs/healthycommunitiesprogram/tools/change.htm |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                |
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>July 10</td>
<td>Planning and evaluating public health programs</td>
<td>Baker AD, Gilley J, James J &amp; Kimani M. “High Five to Healthy Living”: A Health Intervention Program for Youth at an Inner City Community Center. <em>J Community Health</em>, accessed on-line 12/21/11</td>
<td>Paper #5: Assessment and cultural values – 1 page (10 pts)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>July 24</td>
<td>In-class exam</td>
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<td>Paper #7: Stakeholders and coalition building – 1 page (10 pts)</td>
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<td>Study, folks, study! GOOD LUCK!</td>
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<td>12 July 31</td>
<td>Poster Presentations</td>
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<td>FOOD DAY! A Dr. Terry tradition continues!</td>
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<td>Please have a hard copy of your poster to hand in (you can use your display copy); please complete the peer rating and email or hand to the instructor. <strong>Remember to rate yourself.</strong></td>
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<td>Let’s learn from each other, and share food!</td>
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