EPI 2110 – Principles of Epidemiology
Fall 2017 (CRN 14316)

Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh

Primary Instructor:

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Purpose:

Epidemiology is a scientific discipline which seeks to identify and describe patterns of disease occurrence, identify determinants of disease, and evaluate disease prevention and health care treatment efforts. With its focus of study in human populations, epidemiology contributes important evidence-based information to public health research, policy, and practice. This core course is designed to introduce students to the fundamental definitions, terminology, concepts, methods, and critical thinking used in epidemiology. Particular attention will be given to the descriptive epidemiology activities that identify health patterns and their distributions in populations and analytical epidemiology activities that examine factors affecting health and health outcomes in populations. The material presented in this course will provide students with foundational knowledge to support future study and practice in public health activities.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will attain a level of knowledge and skills that will allow them to “apply epidemiology methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice;” an integral competency for practice in public health and community organizations as identified by the Council on Education in Public Health (https://ceph.org/assets/2016.Criteria.pdf).

The content of this course will permit students to apply epidemiology methods appropriately by developing specific knowledge and skills in epidemiology. More succinctly, students will be able to:
1. Apply and interpret the basic terminology, models, and definitions of epidemiology.
2. Calculate and interpret basic epidemiology measures.
3. Identify key sources of data for evaluating a health issue in an epidemiologic context.
4. Describe a health issue in terms of its importance and the person, place, and time patterns that characterize its occurrence in the community.
5. Identify the principles and strengths and limitations of public health programs focused on outbreak investigation, surveillance, and screening.
6. Describe the research process and key components involved in identifying determinants of disease, disability, injury, or health care interventions.
7. Interpret and draw appropriate inferences from epidemiologic studies investigating the determinants of disease, disability, injury, or health care interventions.
8. Recognize basic ethical principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of epidemiologic data.
9. Evaluate epidemiologic evidence to formulate reasoned strategies and decisions on health issues in the community.

**Course Structure:**

The structure of the course is built around multiple modes of instruction to enhance the opportunity for learning the concepts of epidemiology and their application.

- On Tuesday (5:40-7:00pm) and Thursday (5:30-6:50pm) evenings in L9 Clapp Hall, instruction will be in traditional lecture format with a presentation, discussion, and often practice surrounding a set of lecture slides and examples. Students are expected to review the lecture slides prior to class to be aware of the fundamental objectives and material. *Note:* Only selected slides will be reviewed in the lecture. This will leave time for presentation of discussion points that focus on key material. Audio-recordings of the lecture slides will be available for those who wish to review material in further detail. Students are encouraged to read appropriate sections of the book for review of complex topics.
- Practice questions will also be posted in Courseweb for each lecture to provide further examples relevant to the lecture material. Students are expected to review this material and the posted answers to identify their strengths and weaknesses on the related concepts.
- A group project is included in this course to provide students with opportunities to identify real world data related to the epidemiology concepts under discussion. The group project also allows students to work with other students to analyze and interpret epidemiology information.
- In addition, we will be using the time from 7:00 to 7:30pm in L9 Clapp Hall on Tuesdays and Thursdays as a recitation period for the discussion and review of key lecture concepts and problem sets. The recitation period is not required, but attendance is encouraged, particularly if you identify weaknesses in your understanding and application of the material.

**Course Requirements:**

The following requirements pertain to this course.

Completion of **8 homework assignments** will be required in the course to facilitate learning of the concepts presented in the course. The assignments will pertain to lecture-specific topics and will generally cover issues that require quantitative and critical thinking skills. Please consult the schedule at the end of this syllabus to identify the assignments and their due dates and times for receipt. You should return the homework assignments through Courseweb.
There is a group project participation requirement in this course. You will be assigned to a specific group, and asked to work together on 2-3 assignments throughout the term. Assignments will range from gathering and assessing population data, problem solving, and evaluating a scientific paper. Groups will vary in size from 5-6 students. The group to which you are assigned will be posted on the Courseweb site in week 3 of the course. Group project assignments will also be posted under the Group Project link on Courseweb. Grades for the group project requirement will be determined on the basis of the quality of returned contributions and by peer assessment.

Four exams will be given during the course to evaluate the level of mastery of the material presented. The first exam on September 19 will be given in L9 Clapp Hall from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. The second exam on October 19 will be given in L9 Clapp Hall from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. The third exam will be given on November 16 in L9 Clapp Hall from 5:30pm to 7:30pm. The final exam will be an in-class exam and will take place in L9 Clapp Hall on December 14. The final exam will begin at 5:30pm and run to 7:30pm. The final exam on December 15 will cover material from the entire semester. Students will be allowed to use notes and the textbook during the exams. Remember, also, to bring a working calculator to these exams. Laptops and cellphones will not be permitted for all exams. There are no make-up exams except under EXTREME circumstances (i.e. death in the family).

The exams will be comprised of a variety of question formats. Essay questions will query your ability to problem solve and apply the lecture material to relevant health scenarios. Short answer and multiple choice questions will assess your recognition of key lecture topics and your synthesis of these topics. In addition, some exams will contain a heavy dose of problems requiring mathematical calculations. The purpose of each of the exams will be to evaluate how well the student recognizes and expresses the concepts of epidemiology, why certain actions are done in epidemiology, and the appropriate application of epidemiologic approaches and methods. This means that, in many circumstances, you will be required to think and state how an epidemiologic principle applies to a given situation, or to identify which given example is the best representation of an epidemiologic principle. The exams are based on critical thinking and not on memorization.

Extra Credit:

An extra credit opportunity will be offered in the course. The opportunity requires that a student maintain a regular personal journal. This journal is meant to be a tool through which the student can further apply the lecture principles and objectives to public health issues and settings. Throughout the term, discussion questions will be posted after each lecture. Often, the questions will cover controversial issues in epidemiology to which there are not yet any clear answers. Students are encouraged (though not required) to maintain a journal on Courseweb using the posted personal journal to record their responses to the questions throughout the semester. Extra credit will be provided for students who maintain a journal, with one point given for weekly journal entries provided in the first one-half of the course (prior to October 19), and one point given for weekly journal entries provided in the second one-half of the course.

Note: Homework exercises will be scored (for grading purposes) on the basis of selected questions within each assignment. Exercises with correct interpretations on these questions will receive full credit for the assignment. Exercises that have incorrect interpretations will receive a small deduction in score. The purpose of the homework assignments is to help you identify areas of strength and weakness in the concepts presented. You will be expected to review posted answer sheets to verify your performance on all questions in the assignment. Help to address an identified weakness can be obtained at the recitation periods, and/or through questions directed to the teaching assistants. No credit will be given if an assignment is turned in late (unless prior arrangements have been made).
**Recommended Text:**

Purchase only, available online

Purchase online  
available as an electronic book (no purchase required) at the Health Sciences Library website  
http://www.hsls.pitt.edu/resources/books/ebooks?s=Epidemiology

**Grading Policy:**

Course requirements will be weighted in the following fashion to determine the final course grade.

- **Homework Exercises:** 10% (@1.25% each)
- **Group Project Participation:** 10%
- **Exams:** 80% (20% each)

Grades will be assigned using a letter grade as follows:

- **A:** 90% or higher
- **B:** 80% to < 90%
- **C:** 70% to < 80%
- **F:** < 70%

Students who withdraw from the course must verify that they have been removed from the class roster maintained by the University Registrar. Otherwise, students who remain on the roster and do not complete the designated work will be assigned a failing grade.

**Course Expectations:**

As a student in this course, you can expect the following:

Epidemiology is a discipline that utilizes a blend of quantitative and qualitative skills and abilities to address important health issues in the community. In epidemiology, heavy emphasis is placed upon describing the importance of health issues through quantitative measures where there are correct and incorrect methods to identifying answers. However, in epidemiology, a professional must also be able to interpret this quantitative information in the context of the community and accepted practices. This interpretation involves the use of critical thinking skills. It is often the case that there is not necessarily one correct answer or only one approach to the proper interpretation of a health problem. Often, a professional must choose among various options by identifying a solution that is the most appropriate for the problem posed given the information available to that person. **Acquiring the knowledge and skills to make reasoned judgments is one of the goals of this course.** For many students, this will be their first experience in making judgments where there is not one concrete answer. As a result, some students may become frustrated, especially if their interpretations are marked off on exams and lose points. Be patient and keep on trying. Making reasoned judgments takes time and practice.

This course includes students from all of the departments in the Graduate School of Public Health, and students from several schools outside of the GSPH. As a result, it contains students from many different cultures and backgrounds and with many different levels of understanding and expertise. You are encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to meet and work with others in the course.
As one of the course requirements, you will be placed into a small group with other class members to work on assigned questions together to facilitate this interaction.

The graduate nature of this class also means that there is the expectation that students will monitor their academic progress and seek help when necessary. Answers to practice exercises and homework assignments will be posted as part of the course material for each lecture. Students are expected to review this material and their own completed work to independently assess their level of understanding of the material. If questions still remain, students should seek input from the teaching assistants or instructors during office hours or the recitation periods. Feedback on the exams will be provided within one week after the completion of the exam.

**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 online at [http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/academic-requirements/academic-integrity-and-plagiarism](http://www.publichealth.pitt.edu/home/academics/academic-requirements/academic-integrity-and-plagiarism). 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, collaboration on exams, cheating on in-class 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 exam, failure of an exam, and failure of the course.

All student violations of academic integrity will also be documented and forwarded to the GSPH Office of Student Affairs. If a sanction for a violation is agreed upon by the student and instructor, then the document of violation will be expunged from the student file upon the student’s graduation. If the sanction proposed by the instructor is not agreed upon by the student, then the violation will be referred to the GSPH Academic Integrity Hearing Board, where a final decision on the violation will be rendered. However, the document of the academic violation and the final decision of the Hearing Board will remain in the student’s permanent record.

**Disability Resources and Services:**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both Dr. Senger and Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, Phone: (412) 648-7890, [drscrceep@pitt.edu](mailto:drscrceep@pitt.edu), (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. A comprehensive description of the services of that office can be obtained at [www.drs.pitt.edu](http://www.drs.pitt.edu).

Students that require accommodations in the event of a building evacuation should e-mail the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) at [safety@ehs.pitt.edu](mailto:safety@ehs.pitt.edu) to request the development of an individualized evacuation plan. When finalized, you should also inform Dr. Songer of the proposed plan for an evacuation.
Office Hours:

Instructor:
Dr. Songer: Fridays, 3:00 – 4:30 pm, Starbucks, Forbes Ave. & Atwood St.

Teaching Assistants:
- Ms. Yu-Hsuan (Amy) Lai: Mondays, 2-3pm, Parran Hall Student Commons Lounge
- Ms. Mitchell-Miland: Tuesdays, 4-5 pm, Parran Hall Student Commons Lounge
- Mr. Slowik: Wednesdays, 2-3pm, Parran Hall Student Commons Lounge
- Dr. Mahajan: Thursdays, 4-5pm, Parran Hall Student Lounge

Course Website:
All course materials can be accessed through the Courseweb application used at the University of Pittsburgh (http://courseweb.pitt.edu). All enrolled students who have an active University Computer Account have online access to this application through their Pitt assigned username. The basic structure of the Course Documents link is built around lecture modules. Click on the Course Documents link to gain access the lectures, class handouts, assigned readings, practice exercises, and homework assignments. Course materials related to the Group Project will be located in a separate link on Courseweb. Grades for the course will be maintained in the Courseweb Grade book. Finally, all announcements related to the course will be posted using the Courseweb announcement system. You will be expected to monitor Courseweb regularly for these announcements. If changes occur in the course, they will be broadcast through this mechanism and during the lectures.

Audio recordings:
Audio recordings of the lectures are provided in Courseweb under the respective lecture folders to assist students on course material that may be confusing or covered quickly. Note, the audio files pertain to lectures recorded in the fall of 2012. While the material in the recordings is roughly similar to that presented this year, it will differ in some instances, as new material has been added. Be aware that you will be assessed on material as it is presented in the current year lectures.

Given that recordings are already provided for each lecture, and to ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student’s own private use.

Top Hat Audience Response System:
The course will utilize an audience response system software package from www.tophat.com. The purpose of the use of this system will be to supplement your learning of course material through participation and discussion. The use of the Top Hat software is recommended, but not required. It will cost $26 to use this software for the term. If you choose to forego the use of Top Hat, similar materials for most circumstances (largely practice questions) will be provided in Courseweb under the lecture folders to enable you to follow.
### Lecture, Exam, and Assignment Schedule:

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Class Session/Topic and Assignments/Exams</th>
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| Aug 29     | **Introduction & Historical Overview of Epidemiology**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 1  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 1                                                                 |
| Aug 31     | **Epidemiologic Approach to Disease I: Describing Patterns of Disease**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 2 (pgs 19-20, 29-32)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 2 (Introduction, Exploring Occurrence of Disease), Chapter 16 (Time Trends in Disease, Migrant Studies) |
| Sept 5     | **Epidemiologic Approach to Disease II; Assessing Disease in Populations**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapters 2, 6 (pgs 20-22, 109-110)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 2 (Clinical and Subclinical Disease)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 6 (Introduction)                                                                 |
| Sept 7     | **The Infectious Disease Process; The Dynamics of Disease Transmission**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 2 (pgs 19-20, 22, 26-27)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 2 (Modes of Transmission, Incubation Period, Carrier Status)                           |
|            | Homework Assignment given out (due September 12 at 11:59pm)                                              |
| Sept 12    | **The Prevention of Infectious Disease and Outbreak Investigation**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 2 (pgs 22-25, 27-28, 32-35)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 2 (Endemic, Epidemic and Pandemic, Herd Immunity, Disease Outbreaks, Outbreak Investigation) |
| Sept 14    | **Epidemiology in Practice; Outbreak Investigation**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 2 (pgs 28-29, 32-35)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 2 (Attack Rate, Outbreak Investigation)  
|            | Homework Assignment given out (due September 18 at 11:59pm)                                               |
| Sept 19    | Exam 1                                                                                                  |
| Sept 21    | **Epidemiologic Transition/Epidemiology in Global Contexts**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 4 (pgs 79-81)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 4 (Projecting the Future Burden of Disease)  
| Sept 26    | **Chronic Disease Epidemiology and Disease Causation**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapters 14, 19 (pgs 234-36, 333-335)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 14 (Types of Causal Relationships)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 19 (Epidemiology and Prevention) |
| Sept 28    | **Identifying Disease in the Community; Surveillance**  
Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapters 3, 4 (pgs 54-55, 70-73)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 3 (Surveillance, Active and Passive surv.)  
Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 4 (Problems with Mortality Data) |
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Homework Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Measures of Disease Frequency; Incidence, Prevalence</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 3&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 3</td>
<td>due October 10 at 11:59pm</td>
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<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>Measures of Disease Frequency; Mortality</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapters 4, 6 (pgs 59-73, 109-13)&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 4 (Measures of Mortality)&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 6 (Case Fatality, Person Years)</td>
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<td>Oct 10</td>
<td>Fall Break (no class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>Measures of Disease Frequency; Standardization/Age Adjustment</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 4 (pgs 73-79)&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 4 (Comparing Mortality in Different Pop.)</td>
<td>due October 17 at 11:59pm</td>
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<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>Measures of Health Outcomes; Clinical Measures of Prognosis</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapters 6, 17 (pgs 112-124, 293-299)&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 6 (Survival, Life Tables, Kaplan-Meier)&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 17 (Studies of Outcome, Efficacy, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Measures of Outcome, Outcomes Research)</td>
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<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
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<td>Oct 26</td>
<td>Analytical Epidemiology; Cross-Sectional/Case-Control Designs</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 10 (pgs 195-98, 177-95)&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 10 (Case-Control, Cross-Sectional Studies)</td>
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<td>Oct 31</td>
<td>Analytical Epidemiology; Case-Crossover/Cohort Designs</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 9&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 9, Chapter 10 (Case-Crossover Design)</td>
<td>due back November 7 at 11:59pm</td>
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<td>Nov 2</td>
<td>Analytical Epidemiology; Randomized Clinical Trials</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 7&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 7, Chapter 8 (Ethical Considerations)</td>
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<td>Nov 7</td>
<td>Measures of Disease Association; Relative risk, Odds ratio</td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 11&lt;br&gt;Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 11</td>
<td>due November 9 at 11:59pm</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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<td>Nov 9</td>
<td><strong>Error in Epidemiologic Studies I; Chance, Bias</strong></td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapters 8, 10, 15 (pgs 147-52, 187-88, 247-251)</td>
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<td>Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 8 (Sample Size, Generalizability of Results), Chapter 10</td>
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<td>(Information Bias), Chapter 15 (Bias)</td>
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<td>Homework Assignment given out (due back November 14 at 11:59pm)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 14</td>
<td><strong>Error in Epidemiologic Studies II; Confounding, effect modification</strong></td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapters 14, 15 (pgs 230-34, 251-261)</td>
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<td>Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 14 (Types of Associations), Chapter 15 (Confounding, Interaction)</td>
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<td>Nov 16</td>
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<td>Exam 3</td>
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<td>Research Study. <em>Nursing: Research and Reviews</em> 3:67-75, 2013</td>
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<td>Group Assignment given out (due back December 5 at 11:59pm)</td>
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<td>Nov 23</td>
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<td><strong>Thanksgiving Holiday (no class)</strong></td>
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<td>Nov 28</td>
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<td><strong>Practice on Interpreting Epidemiologic Results</strong></td>
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<td>Nov 30</td>
<td><strong>Inference from Epidemiologic Studies</strong></td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 12, Chapter 14 (pgs 236-45)</td>
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<td><strong>Measures of Effect; Assessing Public Health Impact</strong></td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 8 (Expressing the Results of RCTs), Chapter 12, Chapter</td>
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<td>14(Evidence for a Causal Relationship)</td>
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<td>Dec 5</td>
<td><strong>Genetic Epidemiology</strong></td>
<td>Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 16</td>
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<td>Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 16</td>
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<td>Dec 7</td>
<td><strong>Epidemiology in Practice; Population Screening and its Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 5, 18</td>
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<td>Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 5, 18</td>
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<td>Homework Assignment given out (due back December 12 at 11:59pm)</td>
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<td>Dec 12</td>
<td><strong>Ethics in Epidemiology</strong></td>
<td>Reading: Textbook (Gordis, 4th Ed.): Chapter 20</td>
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<td>Textbook (Gordis, 5th Ed.): Chapter 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 14</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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