**Course Title:** Social Epidemiology  
**Course Number:** EPID 0673, Summer 2017  
**Course Location:** School of Public Health Building, Room 334 (Piscataway) / Stanley S. Bergen Bldg., Room 741 (Newark), Lifesize  
**Course Date & Time:** Real-time meetings Tuesdays, 2:00-5:00 pm, May 16th, 2017 – July 11th, 2017. Class assignments due Thursdays, by 5:00pm, May 18th, 2017 – July 13th, 2017  
**Course Instructor:** Jesse J. Plascak, PhD  
Instructor, Department of Epidemiology, SPH Room 209  
Office phone: 732-235-4664  
Email: jesse.plascak@Rutgers.edu  
**Office Hours:** By appointment only (Instructor available 2:00-5:00pm on Thursdays)  
**Course Assistant:** None. Contact Dr. Plascak  
**Additional/Supplemental Readings/Resources:**  
- Articles posted in Moodle.  
- Videos streamed through Rutgers library system (internet connection required):  
  The following books are recommended for students interested in further readings on the topic:  
**Course Description:**  
Social Epidemiology will familiarize students with the theories/concepts, empirical evidence, methods and interventions concerning social factors and health. With a focus on United States society, the course examines how social factors such as race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, discrimination, social capital, and characteristics of various social contexts contribute to the distribution of population health. The course helps students recognize that health and disease are shaped by multiple factors operating at multiple levels of influence, and that social conditions shape an individual’s exposure to disease risk and awareness of and access to health promoting resources. Students will critically evaluate theoretical, substantive and methodological issues, and identify strengths and limitations of this discipline through class readings and videos; real-time lectures, discussions and exercises; article reviews; a final paper and; a final presentation.
Course Format:
The course will be conducted in a hybrid format with real-time meetings on Tuesdays and assignments due on Thursdays (see “Course schedule” for details). Real-time (in-person or virtual access via LifeSize) meetings will consist of lectures, video clips, and real-time activities and discussions. Real-time activities and discussions will be based on the week’s readings or in-class videos. Students are expected to actively participate in in-class activities; 10% of the class final grade will be based on class participation and demonstration that students completed assignments.

Note: This 3-semester credit course is being offered over 9 weeks instead of 14 weeks. Assuming 3 weekly hours of typical effort per 1 credit hour over 14 weeks, plan to devote approximately 126 total hours of effort to this course within the 9 week duration (14 hours per week).

Virtual Access via LifeSize:
Use of LifeSize in this course is intended to connect Newark and New Brunswick campuses and the students primarily taking classes on those campuses. As such, students are strongly encouraged to physically attend either the School of Public Health Building, Room 334 (Piscataway) or the Stanley S. Bergen Bldg., Room 741 (Newark) during real-time classes.

Access to real-time classes via LifeSize on your personal computer or mobile device should only occur with prior approval from the instructor and under exceptional circumstances. Please contact SPH Office of Computing and Technology (OCT) at least 24 hours prior to the class that you plan to virtually attend (sphcomputing@ca.rutgers.edu, 732-235-3231). OCT will instruct on usage of LifeSize through your computer or mobile device.

Etiquettes for Remote Connection during Classes and Seminars: Mute your device to avoid static and disturbance to the presenting side of the Video Conference. If you experience any quality or connection issues during the conference session, do NOT disturb the room by requesting for assistance. Instead, leave the room by hanging up the icon () and contact the IT support provided at the top of this page and they will provide assistance. Note, your personal device is strictly prohibited by any IT rep to work on unless it's property of the School of Public Health. You cannot approve for us to perform anything during the lecture in order to connect to this session.

Social Epidemiology Prerequisites:
Graduate standing in PHCO 0502 (Principles and Methods of Epidemiology) and PHCO 0504 (Introduction to Biostatistics), equivalents, or obtain written approval from the instructor.

Selected Department Competencies Addressed:
- Critique epidemiologic literature, assess its strengths and weaknesses and determine if conclusion(s) are supported;
- Formulate hypotheses and determine an appropriate study design and analysis plan;
- Appropriately analyze and interpret epidemiologic data, including large national and state level datasets; and
- Communicate and present study findings to professional audiences.

Please visit the Department webpages on the School of Public Health’s website at sph.rutgers.edu/about/accreditation_resourcefile.html for additional competencies addressed by this course for other degrees and departments.
Course Objectives: By the completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Define the field of social epidemiology
- Describe measures, methods, and study designs used in Social Epidemiology
- Critically assess strengths and limitations of methods used in the field
- Understand the role of social factors in shaping the public’s health

Course Evaluation:
- The final grade for the class will be based on the following:
  1. 10%, Class participation
  2. 20%, Social Epidemiology In Action (two)
  3. 30%, Short critiques (four)
  4. 30%, Final written paper
  5. 10%, Presentation of final paper

- Class participation (10%): Students will be evaluated on participation in activities and discussion during real-time instruction (Tuesdays). Completion of assigned readings will be necessary for meaningful participation.

- Social Epidemiology In Action (20%, 10% each): Students will be required to submit two (2), short summaries (2-page) of Social Epidemiology In Action. “Social Epidemiology in Action” is the title I am giving to the observable occurrence of social epidemiologic processes operating within and around our daily life. Students should begin to recognize social epidemiologic factors and processes as they progress through the course material. The source of recognized social epidemiologic factors or processes should not originate from required course material, but rather daily lived experiences. By “daily life” I am referring to events observed frequently (daily to monthly) and at a local – regional spatial scale (i.e., individually experienced/observed event, characteristics of a local neighborhood, local/regional current event). Such daily lived events could include, for example, food shopping; work / school / worship commute; local cultural / leisure / entertainment event attendance; Star-Ledger / Daily Targum / News 12 NJ article / clip; etc. “Social Epidemiology in Action” summaries should consist of: 1) a general description of the observable occurrence (e.g., while commuting, shopping, attending cultural event, etc.); 2) the observed or potentially-impacted health topic(s); 3) a description of a theoretical framework that could be used to understand the social epidemiologic process; and 4) a potential, evidence-based intervention that could be applied to ameliorate the observed or potential health impact. Details deemed personally sensitive, fully at the discretion of students, should be omitted from summaries (e.g., exact location, time, purpose, etc.). If summarizing a local/regional media source, the general description of the observable occurrence should reference the exact media source. See “Writing assignment requirements” below, for additional details. Social Epidemiology In Action assignments can be submitted at any time throughout the course, but the first must be submitted by 6/22/2017.

- Article critique (30%, 7.5% each): Students will be required to write four (4), short critiques (2-page) from the assigned, peer-reviewed articles (not book chapter). Each critique should consist of: 1) article summary, and 2) critical assessment (strengths, limitations, and future directions). The strengths and limitations section should include at least one (1) strength or limitation beyond those already listed by the author(s) of the peer-reviewed article. See “Writing assignment requirements” below, for additional details.
• Final written paper (30%): Students will work independently to review the social epidemiology of a health condition or topic of their choosing (10 – 12 pages). Final written papers should consist of: 1) a summary of the social epidemiologic literature on the topic, which includes a critical assessment; and 2) summary of potential, evidence-based interventions aimed at improving the health topic. Prior to working on the full 10 – 12 page-length paper, students will submit a short (0.5 – 1 page) proposal of their topic for instructor approval. Approval will ensure that enough information on a suggested topic is available to adequately complete the assignment. Accordingly, the proposal should: 1) identify the health topic, 2) include a summary or listing of social epidemiologic factors found to be associated with the health topic (with references), and 3) identify at least one (1) potential, evidence-based intervention. The proposal will be worth 5 of the 30 total percentage points; proposal=5%, final written paper = 25%. See “Writing assignment requirements” below, for additional details. Students will be assigned topics by the instructor if the proposed topic (not proposal) lacks sufficient evidence necessary to fulfill the requirements.

• Presentation of final paper (10%): Students will prepare a short (8 – 10 min) presentation of the final paper. All presentations will be delivered during the last real-time class meeting. As such, presentation length and transition between presentations is critical to allowing enough time for everyone. Presentations should be ≤ 10 slides. Completed presentations should be uploaded to the Moodle dropbox by 5:00pm on Monday, July 10th so that they are organized and ready by the start of class time. Please deliver your presentation in Microsoft Powerpoint, or export as an Adobe ‘.pdf’ file extension.

• Writing assignment requirements: Besides page limits noted above, all written assignments should include specific details and formatting:
  1. Double-spaced, 1.0" margins, 11 pt. Arial font
  2. Standard page size (8.5" x 11")
  3. (Final paper only) Bibliography of any style (APA, NIH grant proposal, etc.) with ≥ 20 references
  4. (Final paper only) Page limits are exclusive of bibliography but inclusive of tables and figures.
  5. Drafts of any writing assignment will not be reviewed by the instructor – only final versions

All writing assignments must be completed uploaded to Moodle at 5:00pm on the due date. Late submissions will be deducted 5% of the final grade per every past-due day.
# Course Schedule:

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date (Day)</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5/16/17 (T)</td>
<td>Course introduction / Theory and history</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>5/18/17 (Tr)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5/23/17 (T)</td>
<td>Socioeconomic status / Race, ethnicity, discrimination</td>
<td>Article critique #1</td>
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<td>5/25/17 (Tr)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5/30/17 (T)</td>
<td>Working conditions, employment, and markets / Social networks, social capital</td>
<td>Article critique #2</td>
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<td>6/1/17 (Tr)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6/6/17 (T)</td>
<td>Physical environments and health</td>
<td>Article critique #3</td>
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<td>6/8/17 (Tr)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6/13/17 (T)</td>
<td>Biologic mechanisms (psychosocial, health behavior, molecular)</td>
<td>Article critique #4</td>
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<td>6/15/17 (Tr)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6/20/17 (T)</td>
<td>Interventions &amp; translation</td>
<td>Social Epidemiology in action #1*</td>
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<td>6/22/17 (Tr)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6/27/17 (T)</td>
<td>Social Epidemiology methods</td>
<td>Final assignment proposal</td>
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<td>6/29/17 (Tr)</td>
<td>(measurement, design, inference)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7/4/17 (T)</td>
<td>Holiday, no class</td>
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<td>7/6/17 (Tr)</td>
<td>Catch-up (TBD - online lecture)</td>
<td>Social Epidemiology in action #2*</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>7/11/17 (T)</td>
<td>Final assignments</td>
<td>Final presentations*</td>
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<td>7/13/17 (Tr)</td>
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<td>Final paper</td>
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*SEE ACTUAL DUE DATE(S) WITHIN TEXT DESCRIPTIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS ABOVE

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## Readings and Assignment Summary


* = Article suitable for article critique assignment

### WEEK 1: THEORY & HISTORY OF SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

**Readings:**


**ASSIGNMENT DUE:** None
WEEK 2: SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS & INEQUALITY / DISCRIMINATION, RACE, ETHNICITY,

Readings:
Socioeconomic status & socioeconomic inequality
2. BKG, Chapter 4, “Income Inequality”, pp. 126-147.

Discrimination, race, ethnicity
5. BKG, Chapter 3, “Discrimination and Health Inequities”, pp. 63-114

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Article critique #1

WEEK 3: WORKING CONDITIONS, EMPLOYMENT, AND MARKETS / SOCIAL NETWORKS, SOCIAL CAPITAL

Readings:
Working conditions, employment, and markets (Choose 1 “*” article for weekly reading)

Social networks and social capital (Choose 1 “*” article for weekly reading)

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Article critique #2

WEEK 4: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS AND HEALTH

Readings (Choose 2 ** articles for weekly reading):


ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Article critique #3

WEEK 5: “GETTING UNDER THE SKIN” (BEHAVIORAL, PSYCHOSOCIAL, AND MOLECULAR MECHANISMS)

Readings (Choose 2 ** articles for weekly reading):

1. BKG, Chapter 9, “Affective States and Health”, pp.320-351.


**ASSIGNMENT DUE:** 1) Article critique #4

**WEEK 6: INTERVENTIONS & TRANSLATION**

**Readings:**


**ASSIGNMENT DUE:** 1) Social Epidemiology in action #1

**WEEK 7: SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY METHODS (MEASUREMENT, DESIGN, INFERENCE)**

**Readings:**


**ASSIGNMENT DUE:** 1) Final assignment proposal

**WEEK 8: CATCH-UP / WORK ON FINAL ASSIGNMENTS**
ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Social Epidemiology in action #2
                        2) Work on final assignments

WEEK 9: FINAL PRESENTATION & FINAL PAPER

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Final presentations uploaded to Instructor by 5:00 pm, Monday July 10th.
                        2) Presentations during real-time class – Tuesday, July 11, 2:00 – 5:00 pm

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Please follow the procedures outlined at https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form. Full policies and procedures are at https://ods.rutgers.edu/

School of Public Health Honor Code: The School of Public Health Honor Code is found in the student bulletin (sph.rutgers.edu/academics/catalog/index.html ). Each student bears a fundamental responsibility for maintaining academic integrity and intellectual honesty in his or her graduate work. For example, all students are expected to observe the generally accepted principles of scholarly work, to submit their own rather than another's work, to refrain from falsifying data, and to refrain from receiving and/or giving aid on examinations or other assigned work requiring independent effort. In submitting written material, the writer takes full responsibility for the work as a whole and implies that, except as properly noted by use of quotation marks, footnotes, etc., both the ideas and the works used are his or her own. In addition to maintaining personal academic integrity, each student is expected to contribute to the academic integrity of the school community by not facilitating inappropriate use of her/his own work by others and by reporting acts of academic dishonesty by others to an appropriate school authority. It should be clearly understood that plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can lead to sanctions up to and including separation from the Rutgers School of Public Health.

Policy Concerning Use of Recording Devices and Other Electronic Communications Systems: When personally owned communication/recording devices are used by students to
record lectures and/or classroom lessons, such use must be authorized by the faculty member or instructor who must give either oral or written permission prior to the start of the semester and identify restrictions, if any, on the use of mobile communications or recording devices.

Student Wellness Services
The Rutgers University Student Assembly urges that this information be included at the end of every syllabus. Edit or delete as you wish:

Just In Case Web App  http://codu.co/cee05e
Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)
(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/  www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/ 
CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students’ efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)
(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /  www.vpva.rutgers.edu/
The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services
(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 /  https://ods.rutgers.edu/ 
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:  https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:  https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form. 

Scarlet Listeners
(732) 247-5555 /  http://www.scarletlisteners.com/ 
Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.