Course Title: Social Epidemiology

Course Number: EPID 0673, Spring 2018

Course Location: School of Public Health Building, Room 334 (Piscataway) / Stanley S. Bergen Bldg., Room 741 (Newark), Lifesize

Course Date & Time: Real-time meetings Wednesdays, 6:00-8:00 pm, January 17th, 2018 – May 9th, 2018. Class assignments due Tuesdays, by 5:00pm, January 16th, 2017 – May 4th, 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

Course Assistant: Peggy Pazera-Cooke, mrpc@sph.rutgers.edu


Additional/Supplemental Readings/Resources

- Articles posted in Moodle.
- Videos streamed through Rutgers library system (internet connection and Rutgers log-in required):
  1. The raising of America: early childhood and the future of our nation
  2. Unnatural Causes: is inequality making us sick?

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
Course Format
The course will be conducted in a hybrid format with real-time meetings on Wednesdays and online activities due weekly (see “Course schedule” for details). Real-time (in-person or virtual access via LifeSize) meetings will consist of lectures and real-time activities and discussions. Real-time activities and discussions will be based on the week’s readings. Students are expected to actively participate in real-time activities and discussions; 8% of the final grade will be based on real-time participation and demonstration that students completed readings. Weekly online activities will consist of short quizzes or responses to assigned readings or videos accessible online through the Rutgers University Library.

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 may 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 from a personal device (sphcomputing@ca.rutgers.edu, 732-235-3231). OCT will instruct on usage of LifeSize through your computer or mobile device.

Etiquette 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 Concentration Competencies Addressed
Each Concentration identifies competencies for each degree offered. The competencies addressed in this course for the MPH in Epidemiology include:
- 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;
- 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
• Understand the role of social factors in shaping the population health
• Describe measures, methods, and study designs used in social epidemiology
• Critically assess strengths and limitations of methods used in the field
• Identify mechanisms – psychological, behavioral, biologic – that mediate relationships between social epidemiologic factors and health
• Understand how interventions, policy and behavioral, might influence population health

Course Evaluation

• The final grade for the class will be based on the following:
  1. 8%, Class participation
  2. 12%, Online activities
  3. 15%, Social Epidemiology in action (two)
  4. 15%, Short article critiques (two)
  5. 20%, Midterm
  6. 25%, Final written paper
  7. 5%, Presentation of final paper

• **Class participation (8%)**: Students will be evaluated on participation in activities and discussion during real-time meetings (Wednesdays). Comprehension of assigned readings will be necessary for meaningful participation.

• **Online activities (12%)**: Online activities, such as short quizzes and responses to readings or an assigned, online video, will be posted weekly. Students will be required to complete these activities on Moodle by **Tuesday at 5:00pm** each week. Comprehension of assigned readings or online videos will be necessary for successful completion of online activities.

• **Social Epidemiology in action (15%, 7.5% 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 potentially-impacted health outcome. 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.

• **Article critique (15%, 7.5% each):** Students will be required to write two (2), 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.

• **Midterm (20%):** A midterm will be given during the real-time meeting of week 8 (March 7th). All topics between week 1 and week 7 will potentially be on the exam. Exam questions will be multiple choice, True/False, matching, or short answer.

• **Final written paper (25%):** 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 25 total percentage points; proposal=5%, final written paper = 20%. 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. The final written paper must be **uploaded to Moodle 5:00pm Friday, May 4th**.

• **Presentation of final paper (5%):** Students will prepare a short (8 – 10 min) presentation of the final paper. All presentations will be delivered during the last two real-time class meetings (April 25th & May 2nd). As such, presentation length and transition between presentations is critical to allow enough time for everyone. Presentations should be ≤ 10 slides. **All presentations should be completed and uploaded to the Moodle dropbox by 5:00pm on Tuesday, April 24th** so that they can be downloaded to local computers and ready by the start of class time. Please deliver your presentation in Microsoft Powerpoint, or export as an Adobe ‘.pdf’ file extension to avoid compatibility issues.

• **Writing assignment requirements:** Besides page limits noted above, all written assignments should include specific details and formatting:
  1. Double-spaced, 1.0” margins, 12 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 \( \geq 20 \) references cited in text as well as at end of document
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 Friday of the week that they are due. Late submissions will be deducted 5% of the final grade per every past-due day. One assignment – specifically, the first late assignment – will be allowed late (\( \leq 4 \) days) without penalty.
## Course Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date (Day)</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
<th>Instructor Location</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Course introduction / History</td>
<td>1/16/18 (T)</td>
<td>Course introduction quiz (Moodle)</td>
<td>Piscataway</td>
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<td>1/17/18 (W)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Socioeconomic status / Socioeconomic inequality</td>
<td>1/23/18 (T)</td>
<td>Video response</td>
<td>Newark</td>
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<td>1/24/18 (W)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Race, ethnicity, discrimination</td>
<td>1/30/18 (T)</td>
<td>Video response</td>
<td>Piscataway</td>
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<td>1/31/18 (W)</td>
<td>Article critique #1</td>
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<td>Social Epidemiology theory</td>
<td>2/6/18 (T)</td>
<td>Reading response</td>
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<td>2/7/18 (W)</td>
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<td>Social Epidemiology methods (measurement, design, inference)</td>
<td>2/13/18 (T)</td>
<td>Reading quiz</td>
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<td>2/14/18 (W)</td>
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<td>Working conditions, employment, markets</td>
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<td>2/21/18 (W)</td>
<td>Social Epidemiology in action #1</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Social networks, social capital</td>
<td>2/27/18 (T)</td>
<td>Video response</td>
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<td>2/28/18 (W)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>3/6/18 (T)</td>
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<td>3/7/18 (W)</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>3/14/18 (W)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Physical environments and health</td>
<td>3/20/18 (T)</td>
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<td>3/21/18 (W)</td>
<td>Article critique #2</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Mechanisms between social factors → health I: Emotion</td>
<td>3/27/18 (T)</td>
<td>Video response</td>
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<td>3/28/18 (W)</td>
<td>Final assignment proposal</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Mechanisms between social factors → health II: Biologic factors</td>
<td>4/3/18 (T)</td>
<td>Video response</td>
<td>Piscataway</td>
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<td>4/4/18 (W)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Interventions &amp; translation I: Behavior change</td>
<td>4/10/18 (T)</td>
<td>Reading quiz</td>
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<td>4/11/18 (W)</td>
<td>Social Epidemiology in action #2</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Interventions &amp; translation II: Policy change</td>
<td>4/17/18 (T)</td>
<td>Reading response</td>
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<td>4/18/18 (W)</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Final presentations</td>
<td>4/24/18 (T)</td>
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<td>Piscataway</td>
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<td>4/25/18 (W)</td>
<td>Final presentations*</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Final presentations &amp; papers</td>
<td>5/1/18 (T)</td>
<td>Final presentations* &amp; paper*</td>
<td>Newark</td>
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<td>5/2/18 (W)</td>
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**FEBRUARY 26 = LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW WITH A GRADE OF ‘W’**

*SEE ACTUAL DUE DATE(S) WITHIN ASSIGNMENTS DESCRIPTIONS ABOVE & ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY BELOW*

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**Learning Management System:** Moodle will be used extensively throughout the semester for course syllabus, assignments, announcements, communication and/or other course-related activities. It is the student’s responsibility to familiarize themselves with Moodle and check it regularly. If you have difficulties accessing Moodle, please inform the instructor and Moodle Support (moodlehlp@ca.rutgers.edu). Moodle is accessible at moodle.rutgers.edu.
Readings and Assignment Summary


* = Optional reading (not suitable for article critique)
† = Article suitable for critique

WEEK 1: HISTORY OF SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY

Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Introductory quiz

WEEK 2: SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS & INEQUALITY

Readings:
2. BKG, Chapter 4, “Income Inequality”, pp. 126-147.

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Video response (Tuesday)

WEEK 3: RACE, ETHNICITY, DISCRIMINATION

Readings:
1. BKG, Chapter 3, “Discrimination and Health Inequities”, pp. 63-114
ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Video response (Tuesday); 2) Article critique #1 (Friday)

WEEK 4: SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY THEORY
Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Reading response (Tuesday)

WEEK 5: SOCIAL EPIDEMIOLOGY METHODS (MEASUREMENT, DESIGN, INFERENCE)
Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Reading quiz (Tuesday)

WEEK 6: WORKING CONDITIONS, EMPLOYMENT, AND MARKETS
Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Video response (Tuesday); 2) Social epidemiology in Action #1 (Friday)
WEEK 7: SOCIAL NETWORKS / SOCIAL CAPITAL

Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Video response (Tuesday)

WEEK 8: MIDTERM (MATERIAL FROM WEEK’S 1-7)

No readings:

NO ASSIGNMENT DUE:

WEEK 9: SPRING RECESS

WEEK 10: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS AND HEALTH

Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Video response (Tuesday); 2) Article critique #2 (Friday)
WEEK 11: MECHANISMS BETWEEN SOCIAL FACTORS → HEALTH I: EMOTION & HEALTH BEHAVIORS

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

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Video response (Tuesday); 2) Final assignment proposal (Friday)

WEEK 12: MECHANISMS BETWEEN SOCIAL FACTORS → HEALTH II: BIOLOGIC FACTORS

Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Video response (Tuesday)

WEEK 13: INTERVENTIONS & TRANSLATION I: BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Reading quiz (Tuesday); 2) Social Epidemiology in action #2 (Friday)
WEEK 14: INTERVENTIONS & TRANSLATION I: POLICY

Readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: Reading response (Tuesday)

WEEK 15: FINAL PRESENTATION

No readings

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) Final presentations uploaded to Moodle 5:00 pm, Tuesday April 24
2) ½ of presentations during real-time class – Wednesday, April 25

WEEK 16: FINAL PRESENTATION & FINAL PAPER

No readings:

ASSIGNMENT DUE: 1) ½ of presentations during real-time class – Wednesday, May 2
2) Final paper uploaded to Moodle 5:00 pm, Friday, May 4

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.

Students with Disabilities: Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University’s educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student must Apply for Services by first completing a Registration Form with
the Rutgers Office of Disability Services (ODS) at https://ods.rutgers.edu/. The student will also be required to participate in an ODS intake interview and provide documentation. If reasonable accommodations are granted, ODS will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations which should be shared with your instructors as early in your courses as possible.

**Graduate Student Computer Policy:** Students are required to possess a personal laptop, no older than approximately two years, that must meet minimum requirements which may be found online at: sph.rutgers.edu/student_life/computer_requirements.html

**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.

**Withdrawal/Refund Schedule:** Students who stop attending their course(s) without processing an Add/Drop Course form will receive a failing grade. Furthermore, students dropping to zero credits for the semester are considered withdrawn and must submit a completed Leave of Absence form from the School of Public Health’s Office of Student Affairs. The School of Public Health refunds tuition only. Administrative and technology fees are non-refundable. You may find the Withdrawal/Refund Schedule on the School of Public Health website at: sph.rutgers.edu/academics/registration/school_calendars.html

**Student Wellness Services**

**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.