Course Title: Social Epidemiology

Course Number: EPID 0673

Course Pre- and Co-requisite(s): Graduate standing in PHCO 0502 (Principles and Methods of Epidemiology) and PHCO 0504 (Introduction to Biostatistics), equivalents, or obtain written approval from the instructor

Course Location: 1RFP, Rm 1023

Course Date & Time: Mondays, 3:00pm to 5:00pm

Course Instructor: Jasmine Abdelnabi, MPH
Adjunct Instructor, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Rutgers School of Public Health

Office Hours: Email: Please contact me through Canvas or jasmine.a@rutgers.edu

Course Assistant: None

Course Website: The course Canvas site can be found after logging in to http://Canvas.rutgers.edu/. Please test your access to the site as soon as possible. Important course materials will be posted there including quizzes, readings, and blog. Make sure that Canvas sends you notifications to an e-mail address you check regularly. If you cannot access the site, let Jasmine know as soon as possible. There are training materials available to help you with Canvas and can be accessed from your Canvas homepage or you can reach out to help@canvas.rutgers.edu for assistance. If you can upload a photo of yourself to Canvas, it is extremely helpful for learning names!

Required Course Text: Readings will be assigned throughout the semester and will be provided on the course website

Additional/Supplemental Readings/Resources: NA.

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, 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; instructor-led and expert-led lectures, discussions and exercises; in class journal club; a final paper and a final presentation
Selected Concentration Competencies Addressed: Each Concentration identifies competencies for each degree offered. The competencies addressed in this course for the MPH for the Department of Epidemiology include:

1) Critique epidemiologic literature, assess its strengths and weaknesses, and determine if conclusion(s) are supported
2) Formulate a specific hypothesis and determine an appropriate study design and analysis plan
3) Appropriately analyze and interpret epidemiologic data, including large national and state level datasets
4) Communicate and present study findings to professional audiences

Please visit the Concentration webpages on the School of Public Health’s website at sph.rutgers.edu for additional competencies addressed by this course for other degrees and concentrations.

Course Objectives: By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

A. Define and delineate the field of social epidemiology
B. Identify and explain at least two (2) social epidemiologic theories useful for understanding population health
C. Describe measures, methods, and study designs used in social epidemiology
D. Critically assess strengths and limitations of social epidemiologic studies
E. Describe major threats to validity and precision within social epidemiologic studies
F. Integrate numerous social factors to explain relationships with an epidemiologic outcome
G. Identify and structure mechanisms of social factors and an epidemiologic outcome
H. Recognize and outline interventions with potential for eliminating relationship between social factor(s) and an epidemiologic outcome

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assessment(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>All Weeks</td>
<td>Journal Club, Online 30</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>6, 7, 8, 11</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2, 3, 7, 8, 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>All Weeks</td>
<td>Journal Club, Online 30, Presentations</td>
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General expectations:
- For 3 graduate school credit hours, NJ requires 2.5 hours of classroom contact time, at SPH we divide this into 2 hours in the classroom and 30 minutes doing other class activities called the “online 30”
- At SPH, we expect that you spend 2-3 hours studying/preparing for every 1 credit hour in class. For this class that means up to 9 hours per week.
Course Requirements and Grading:

Your grade is based on multiple assignments and evaluations as described below. All assignments should be uploaded to Canvas no later than the start of class (3 pm) on the day they are due; you will not be able to upload assignments after that time. Concepts and material from weekly assignments will be reviewed in class on the due date, therefore late assignments will not be accepted. For the longer written assignments you will lose 10% credit for each day late unless prior arrangements have been made with Jasmine.

10% Class contribution: Class participation is essential in this course and there are many ways you can actively contribute. You can ask or answer a question. You can be an active listener which includes taking notes, engaging with the speaker, responding to the instructor or a classmate’s contributions, or making a verbal connection between the instructors and/or classmates’ contributions. You are expected to actively participate in EVERY class to earn an overall total of 50 participation points.

20% Journal Club Questions: You will be expected to answer questions related to assigned readings, podcasts, and webinars. (Each week questions will be worth 10 pts. * 10 Journal Club weeks = 100 total points)

20% “Online 30”: To supplement our two hours of in-class time each week, there is an additional mandatory, out-of-class activity that should take you approximately 30 minutes to complete. The activity will vary from week to week but could include participating in a class discussion board, watching an assigned video or lecture, or evaluating a recent article. These activities will be posted on Canvas. (100 total points)

50% Literature review:
Over the course of the semester, each student will work individually on a critical literature review addressing an important topic of their choice in social epidemiology. The literature review has multiple parts with a total of 250 points.

The literature review paper should be double-spaced with 1-inch margins and 11 point font. References must be formatted according to the American Journal of Epidemiology

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic selection</td>
<td>2/7/2022</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search strategy &amp; results</td>
<td>3/7/2022</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>3/21/2022</td>
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<td>Draft for peer review</td>
<td>4/11/2022</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer review for classmate</td>
<td>4/18/2022</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>
Course Schedule: This is a general schedule and is subject to change/updates as needed throughout the semester. Please attend class and check the Canvas site weekly for updates.

This class adheres to the school-wide uniform grading scale:

Grading Policy:  
94 – 100  A  
90 – <94  A-  
87 – <90  B+  
84 – <87  B  
80 – <84  B-  
77 – <80  C+  
70 – <77  C  
<70  F

Course Schedule:

1/24/2022
Week 1: Introductions, Class logistics and What is Social Epidemiology

Assignments due prior to class

- None

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


Online 30 (complete prior to class)

- Putting the Social Back in Social Epidemiology with Dr. Whitney Robinson (podcast link and questions posted on Canvas)

Activities during class

- Introductions
- Class Logistics
- Introduce literature review assignment
- Lecture: What is social Epidemiology
1/31/2022
Week 2: Social Determinants of Health Part 1: SES & Racism

Assignments due prior to class

- Lit Review Assignment 1: Topic Selection
- Journal Club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:

- Reading: On Racism: A New Standard for Publishing on Racial Inequalities (Health Affairs Blog Post)

Online 30

- Prediction calculator exercise

Activities during class

- Discuss Lit Review Assignment
- Watch Webinar: APHA Webinar on Racism and Health together
- Journal Club
2/7/22
Week 3: Social Determinants of Health Part 2: Racism

Assignments due prior to class

- Journal club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:

- APHA: A Path to Reproductive Justice Webinar (link on Canvas)

Online 30

- Interact with birth outcome data

Activities during class

- Journal Club

2/14/2022
Week 4: Social Determinants of Health Part 3: Physical Environment, Climate, and Social Epi

Assignments due prior to class

- Journal club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


Online 30

Watch the online video on Dr. Mona and the Flint case and complete posted assignment

Activities during class

Journal Club

2/21/2022

Week 5: Social Determinants of Health Part 4: Neighborhood & Community

Assignments due prior to class

Journal club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


Online 30

Podcast interview with Dr. Kind

Activities during class

2/28/2022

Week 6: Social Determinants of Health Part 5: Poverty

Assignments due prior to class

Journal club questions

Lit Review Assignment 2: Search strategy and results

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


Online 30

- Watch the posted TedTalk and answer questions

Activities during class

- Journal club

3/7/2022

Week 7: Review of Social Epidemiology Methods

Assignments due prior to class

- Journal club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


Online 30

- Use SparkMap report to complex assessment of a county of your choosing. Select at least three SDOH and at least one health outcome. Upload findings of report on Canvas.

Activities during class

- Discuss SparkMap findings
- Lecture
**Journal Club**

**SPRING BREAK: Saturday, March 12 - Sunday, March 20**

**3/21/2022**

**Week 8: More on methods: Conceptual Frameworks & Causal Thinking**

**Assignments due prior to class**

- Lit review Assignment 3: Table 1

**Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:**


- Podcast: SERious EPI Bonus Episode 2.5. Making Causal Inference More Social and (Social Epidemiology More Causal) with Dr. Arah and Dr. Jackson (link on Canvas)

- Podcast: SERious EPI Episode 3. The Countercultural Counterfactual Episode with Dr. Westreich (link on Canvas)

**Online 30**

- Watch DAG video from the A Crash Course in Causality Course (link on Canvas)

- Create a DAG for a social epi research question that is related to your literature review topic. It must include an exposure, outcome, confounder. If you are able to identify a mediator or collider include these as well. You can create the DAG by hand and upload a picture or your DAG or create using ppt, word, Daggity, etc

**Activities during class**

- Lecture
- DAG activity
- Journal Club

**3/28/2022**
Week 9: COVID & Social Epidemiology

Assignments due prior to class

- Journal club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:

- None

Online 30

- Podcast: Racism, Opioids And COVID-19: A Deadly Trifecta (link on Canvas)

Activities during class

- Discussion with NYC DOHMH COVID-19 Vaccine Hub Staff

4/4/2022

Week 10: Policy & Social Epidemiology

Assignments due prior to class

- Journal club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


Online 30

- Housing Data Assignment

Activities during class

- Share housing data findings
- Lecture
- Journal club
4/11/2022
Week 11: Stress-Trauma-Mental Health

Assignments due prior to class

- Journal club questions

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


- 2020 Book on Anxiety Disorders (pg. 141-153)

Online 30

- Watch Dr. Nadine Burke Harris TedTalk and related questions

Activities during class

- Journal club
- Guest Lecturer NYC DOHMH REST responders

4/18/2022
Week 12: One-One Meetings with Jasmine

Assignments due prior to class

- Lit Review Assignment 4: Draft for Peer Review

Meeting Times

- Individual Meeting times will be emailed to you
4/25/2022

Week 13: Peer Review

Assignments due prior to class

- Peer Review of Partner's Paper

Assigned readings/podcasts/webinars to complete before class:


Online 30

- Nature Careers Podcast: How to bounce back from a bruising peer-review or paper rejection

Activities during class

- Discussion of Presentation & Final Paper
- Peer Review

5/2/2022

Week 14: Presentations

- Students will present their Lit Review Project During Class Time
Learning Management System: Canvas 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 Canvas and check it regularly. If you have difficulties accessing Canvas, please inform the instructor and Canvas Support (help@canvas.rutgers.edu). Canvas is accessible at canvas.rutgers.edu.

School of Public Health Honor Code: The School of Public Health Honor Code is found in the School Catalog (sph.rutgers.edu/academics/catalog.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 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.

Commitment to Safe Learning Environment: The Rutgers School of Public Health is committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students and for the School as a whole. Free expression in an academic community is essential to the mission of providing the highest caliber of education possible. The School encourages civil discourse, reasoned thought, sustained discussion, and constructive engagement. Provocative ideas respectfully presented are an expected result. An enlightened academic community, however, connects freedom with responsibility. The School encourages all students to disclose any situations where you may feel unsafe, discriminated against, or harassed. Harassment or discrimination of any kind will be not tolerated and violations may lead to disciplinary actions.

Reporting Discrimination or Harassment: If you experience any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. You may report such incidents to the RBHS Title IX Office or to the School of Public Health’s Office of Student Affairs. Rutgers University has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. If you experience any other form of discrimination or harassment, including racial, ethnic, religious, political, or academic, please report any such incidents to the School’s Office of Student Affairs. The School strongly encourages all students to report any incidents of discrimination or harassment to the School. Please be aware that all Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 10.3.12) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the School and potentially the University. For example, if you tell a faculty or staff member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty or staff member must share that information with the RBHS Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting
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-support.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.

Policy Concerning Use of Turnitin: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com (directly or via learning management system, i.e. Canvas) for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students who do not agree should contact the course instructor immediately.

Withdrawal/Refund Schedule: Students who stop attending their course(s) without submitting a completed 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/academic-calendar.html

Special Circumstances During COVID-19 (For Spring 2021)

The School of Public Health recognizes that students may experience challenges or be negatively impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental and emotional health toll from systemic racism, altered personal and professional obligations, and other crises existing at the moment in our local, national, and global communities. Students are encouraged to discuss these challenges and circumstances with their instructor, if they feel they may need additional support or temporary accommodations at the beginning or during this course. The course instructor may consider making reasonable temporary adjustments depending on the student’s situation. If additional support is needed, students may reach out to the Office of Student Affairs (studentaffairs@sph.rutgers.edu) or any of the appropriate referral resources listed on the Student Connect Canvas page.

Remote Learning Policies
As you know, we are engaged in this course under extraordinary circumstances. Not only are we now conducting the class remotely, but we are all working under the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The following are class policies for our class sessions with Zoom. Please read carefully; these policies apply to the Spring 2021 semester. All students are expected to adhere to the policies.

General: Log into Zoom using your Rutgers NetID and sign-in with your full first name and last name as listed on the class roster. (If you use a different name than what is listed on the class roster, please email the instructor in advance of the class or send a private Chat message.) Using your full name allows the instructor to know who is in attendance and to quickly sort students into their groups when needed.
Users who do not log into Zoom using their Rutgers NetID may have trouble accessing the Zoom classroom.

**Video:** Please turn on your video when possible. We recognize that this isn’t always easy but this will help to build our class community. Seeing the faces of your classmates more closely duplicates the typical in-person learning experience and may shift your mindset into more focus and attention. Seeing each other can also provide each of us with positive social interactions.

- If you’re unable to find an environment without a lot of visual distractions or prefer to not show your living space as a background, feel free to use a virtual background (several virtual background images created by the School of Public Health are available in the [Student Connect Canvas page](#)).
- To save bandwidth, there may be times during class when the instructor asks students to turn off videos.
- Add a photo to your Zoom profile. (Then in times when videos are off, we’ll see photos of everyone rather than an empty box.)
- If you have limited internet bandwidth or other issues impacting your video use, please inform the instructor.

**Audio:** Mute your microphone when you are not talking. This helps eliminate background noise.

- Use a headset, if possible. If you own headphones with a microphone, please use them. This improves audio quality.
- Be in a quiet place, if possible. Turn off any music, videos, etc. in the background.

**Chat:** Stay on topic and be respectful. Use the chat window for questions and comments that are relevant to class.

**NOTE:** Class meetings on Zoom will be recorded and made available for students in the course on Canvas only.