Course Title: Population Health and Public Policy

Course Number: HSAP 0673J

Course Location: Piscataway

Course Date & Time: Wednesday, 3:10-6:00 p.m.

Course Instructor: Irina B. Grafova, Ph.D, Assistant Professor, grafovib@sph.rutgers.edu, 732-235-5619, SPH Building, Room 321
Jeannette Rogowski, Ph.D., University Professor, rogowsje@sph.rutgers.edu, 732-235-9759, SPH Building, Room 332

Office Hours: Grafova (by appointment), Rogowski (Wed. 1-3 or by appointment)

Required Course Texts:


Additional/Supplemental Readings/Resources:
Supplemental readings are an essential part of the course and are included to provide “real world” and policy-relevant discussions of issues covered and developed in class and in the text readings. For doctoral students all supplemental readings are required. For MHP students readings are designated either as required or as recommended but not required. The recommended but not required readings for MPH students are marked by (**).

Course Description:
Apart from individual-specific medical care interventions, the social, economic, and residential circumstances of individuals, their political environments, and their health behaviors can have profound impacts on population health and wellbeing. Such factors manifest themselves in their contributions to longstanding health problems including, but not limited to, obesity and excessive body weight; smoking; excessive alcohol consumption; substance abuse; premature childbirths and poor birth outcomes; mental and physical health problems; and early mortality. These health problems can also contribute to the educational attainment, employment status, and economic success of
individuals, as well as to the stability of families. The purpose of this course is to survey selected population health problems and to explore the underlying circumstances, monetary and non-monetary incentives, and behaviors of individuals that contribute to such problems. In doing so, an important goal will be to identify underlying causal mechanisms that lead to health problems. Finally, a particular emphasis of the course will be to explore public policy initiatives to address the health problems under consideration and to evaluate their success and unintended consequences.

Selected Department Competencies Addressed:

Please visit the Department webpages on the School of Public Health’s website at http://sph.rutgers.edu/ 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:

- Describe how social, economic, and health system factors can affect population health and well-being.
- Critically evaluate research studies related to the socioeconomic determinants of population health and well-being.
- Evaluate alternative public policy interventions to improve population health.

Course Requirements and Grading:

- Course requirements consist of active class participation by students, and mid-term and final examinations. Final course grades will be assessed on the following basis:
  - Class participation: 15 percent of grade
  - Midterm examination: 40 percent of grade
  - Final examination: 45 percent of grade

Course Schedule: Include week by week listing of each class session:

I. Introduction

Week 1: September 4

*Concepts and Measurement Population Health*


The Role of Social and Economic Policies as Health Policies


II. Health Behaviors & Population Health

Week 2: September 11
Smoke and Public Policy


Week 3: September 18
Obesity: Trends, causes and consequences of obesity


Advertising and childhood obesity


The role of price: Food and beverage taxes and subsidies


Week 4: September 25
Obesity: The Role of Food Insecurity and Nutritional Assistance Programs


Week 5: October 2

*Alcohol Abuse and public policy*


Week 6: October 9

MID-TERM EXAM

III. Geography & Health:

Week 7: October 16

*Neighborhoods and Health: An Overview*

- Kawachi and Berkman, Chapter 1: Introduction; Chapter 2: Neighborhoods and Health: An Overview
- **Kawachi and Berkman, Chapter 8: Area-Based Deprivation Measures: A U.K. Perspective

Week 8: October 23

*Methodological Issues: Do Neighborhoods Cause Poor Health?*

- Kawachi and Berkman, Chapter 3: Conceptual and Methodological Issues Related to the Presence of Multiple Levels of Organization

Weeks 9 & 10: October 30 and November 6

*Neighborhoods and Obesity*

- Ludwig, Jens, Lisa Sanbonmatsu, Lisa Gennetian, Emma Adam, Greg J. Duncan, Lawrence F.

Week 11: November 13

Neighborhoods: Impact on the health of the elderly and children

• Kawachi and Berkman, Chapter 14: Neighborhoods, Aging and Functional Limitations
• Kawachi and Berkman, Chapter 10: Infant Health: Race, Risk and Residence
• Schoeni, Chapter 12: Are Some Neighborhoods Better for Child Health than Others?
• Neighborhoods and Public Policy:
  • Kawachi and Berman, Chapter 15: “Neighborhoods, Health, and Research, and their Relevance to Public Policy.”
• Schoeni, Chapter 11: Residential Environments and Obesity: What Can We Learn About Policy Interventions From Observational Studies.

Week 12: November 20

Geographic Variations in Health Care Systems


IV. Social Policy as Health Policy

Week 13: December 4

Education and Population Health.

• Schoeni et al., chapter 2: Education and Health: Evaluating Theories and Evidence.

Macroeconomic conditions and population health

• Schoeni et al textbook chapter 7: Macroeconomic Conditions, Health, and Government Policy.
• ** Ann Huff Stevens, Douglas L. Miller, Marianne Page, and Mateusz Filipski Why Do More People Die During Economic Expansions? Briefs, April 2012, Number 12-8, Center for Retirement Research at Boston College
Health Insurance and Health


V. Summing Up: What have we learned about the determinants of population health and the role of public policy?

Week 14: December 11

December 18:
FINAL EXAM

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.