Course Title: Introduction to Health Systems and Policy
Course Number: PHCO 0501
Course Prerequisite(s): None
Course Location: Piscataway 3A&3B
Course Date & Time: Wednesday 6:00pm – 8:00pm
If necessary, Zoom option is possible:
Join URL: https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/94968494365?pwd=SXJzbU05VWQ5L2FOK1o4UE1sWnlISQT09
Course Instructor: Slawa Rokicki, PhD, Rutgers School of Public Health sr1467@sph.rutgers.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment
Course Assistant: None
Course Website: canvas.rutgers.edu
Required Course Text: None

Course Description: This course is a requirement for all public health students. As such, the course focuses on issues of health care organization and policy that are relevant to all public health practitioners. Students are introduced to the history, organization, financing and regulations of health services in the United States. Emphasis is placed on the principles of access, cost and quality of care in the changing economic environment; the social determinants of health; disparities in health and health services both nationally and globally; the public health system and the health and health care issues of vulnerable populations; and the systems of care available to these groups. In assessing the role of the health care system, we will consider both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and the role of evidence in decision making.

Competencies Addressed: The competencies addressed in this course include:

A. Explain the social, political, and economic determinants of health and how they contribute to population health and health inequities.
B. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.
C. Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.
D. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence.
E. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health.
F. Explain the role of qualitative methods and sciences in describing and assessing a population’s health.
Course Objectives: Provide a bulleted list of the objectives of the course (do not present as a paragraph). Begin this section with the following statement: By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the history and structure of the U.S. health care system
2. Identify key health policy issues and the initiatives designed to address them
3. Evaluate the consequences of alternative policies

Course Requirements and Grading:

- Students will have the opportunity to earn 100 points. The course grades will be based on class participation, four quizzes, a health policy debate, a policy brief, and a final exam. Understanding and critical engagement with course materials will be assessed through the following activities:

  1. Discussion board 11 pts
  2. Quizzes (4) 20 pts.
  4. Data Brief 14 pts.
  5. Policy Brief 20 pts.
  Total: 100 pts.

- Discussion board (11 pts)
  Discussion boards provide a virtual space for exchanging ideas and engaging course content. Students will participate in weekly discussion boards either through video recordings or written responses to the provided prompts. The discussion board question is posted on Wednesday. Students will be required to post their initial response to the prompt by the following Sunday at midnight. Students must also respond to the comment of at least one colleague by midnight on the following Tuesday. See the Course Schedule below for exact due dates for each week of the semester. Discussion board contributions should be no longer than 300 words. Think carefully about how you structure your discussion post so as to facilitate a clear and concise contribution to the collective dialogue.

  The discussion board may include difficult, and even sensitive, material brought up in the lecture, videos, or in readings. Written communication sometimes lacks the nuances that accompany face-to-face interactions, so when contributing to discussion boards please take ample precautions and avoid potentially inflammatory remarks. The discussion boards are a place where all members of our community must feel comfortable asking questions and expressing viewpoints. They are the place where we come together as a class. So, please treat them with respect.

- Quizzes (20 pts)
Four quizzes over the course of the semester, each one is worth 5 points. The quiz will assess key concepts learned up to that point and will draw upon material covered in the lectures, required readings, or online 30 materials (e.g., online videos, documentaries, podcasts, etc.). The quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions, T/F statements, and short response essay questions.

- **Data Brief (14 pts)**
  Students will design a data brief to inform diverse audiences about a specific health care problem of their choosing. The aim of the data brief is to use data to illustrate a health care problem. Students may use the online resources described in class to identify graphs and relevant statistics. The data brief will provide:
  1. information about the scope of the problem,
  2. the communities or populations affected,
  3. and the social, economic, and/or political factors contributing to the health care problem.

  The data brief will be created through PowerPoint, Word, the web-based infographic application called piktochart or other software. The data brief will be 1 page long with an additional page of references.

- **Policy Brief (20 pts)**
  Students will write a policy brief on a topic of their choosing. The topic must be approved by the instructor. (1) present a problem or issue in the health care system, (2) identify social, economic, or health system factors contributing to the problem, (3) propose at least two policy alternatives, (4) analyze advantages and disadvantages of potential solutions, (5) propose a recommendation(s) justified by policy analysis presented. The policy brief will be 2-3 pages long, with an additional optional page for figures/tables, and an additional mandatory page of references. *References and figures/tables pages are not included in the page count.*

- **Health Policy Debate (15 pts)**
  Students are expected to participate in an oral debate. In the middle of the semester debate teams will be created. Each team will be given a specific issue that will be framed as a question. For example: Is obesity the government’s business? Teams will be divided into

  **Example:**

  Should Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) be legal in the U.S.?
  - Definition: “Voluntary termination of one's own life by administration of a lethal substance with the direct or indirect assistance of a physician”
  - Currently legal in many countries around the world as well as in US in four states: Oregon, Washington, Vermont, and California
  - Research shows 75% of patients using PAS have terminal cancer; ~15% have neurodegenerative diseases (e.g., ALS)
  - Data on PAS is limited; in Oregon, approximately .22% per 10,000 deaths were the result of PAS

  **Arguments for YES:**
  - Patients' Rights
  - Reduced Financial Cost
  - Emotional Burden on Families

  **Arguments for NO:**
  - Prejudice in healthcare system
  - Slippery slope effect
  - Available alternatives
those who will argue YES--Obesity is the government’s business and those who will argue
NO--Obesity is not the government’s business. Each debate team is expected to conduct
research in preparation for the oral debates. The debates will be held in Week 15 and Week
16. See slide above for an example.

- **Midterm Exam (20 pts)**
The midterm exam will be multiple choice and short answer essay questions covering the
material of the first 6 weeks of the course. Students will have two hours to complete it. It is
open-book.

- **Assignment Standards**
  - **Lateness.** Assignments turned in after the official collection period are considered
  late. Unless the instructor and student come to an arrangement before class, there is
  a full letter grade penalty for written work turned in for each 24 hours after the due
  date. If you need to turn in something after the date due, please discuss it with the
  instructor *prior to the due date* to avoid point penalty.
  - **Citations and References.** Preferred citation style for references in written
    assignments will be American Psychological Association (APA). Please use this APA
    citation style for electronic references.
  - **Margins and Page Limits Requirements.** Refer to each assignment instructions for
    margins and page limit requirements. Instructions for assignments will be available
    on Canvas.

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<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Course Objectives(s)</th>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Assessment(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Explain the social, political and economic determinants of health and how they contribute to population health and health inequities.</td>
<td>Identify social, political, and economic determinants of health and their contributions to population health.</td>
<td>Week 3, 8</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Quiz, Midterm</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Compare the organization, structure and function of health care, public health and regulatory systems across national and international settings.</td>
<td>Identify three national healthcare regulatory and financing models (including the United States) and evaluate the health care access, quality and cost associated with each.</td>
<td>Weeks 1-3</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Quiz, Midterm</td>
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<td>3. Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence</td>
<td>Understand the history, policy-making process, and structure of the U.S. health care system</td>
<td>Week 3, 14</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Quiz, Midterm</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assignment Description</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community and societal levels.</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Quiz, Midterm</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities’ health</td>
<td>Week 5, 6, 8, 10</td>
<td>Data Brief, Policy Brief, Midterm</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Select quantitative and qualitative data collection methods appropriate for a given public health context</td>
<td>Week 2, 5, 12</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Quiz, Midterm</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Explain the role of qualitative methods and sciences in describing and assessing a population’s health</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Quiz</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Evaluate policies for their impact on public health and health equity</td>
<td>Week 4, 6, 10, 11, 13</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Policy Brief</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Advocate for political, social or economic policies and programs that will improve health in diverse populations</td>
<td>Week 4, 6, 8, 10, 11</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Debate</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue</td>
<td>Week 6, 8, 10, 11</td>
<td>Discussion Board, Quiz</td>
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**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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Online 30</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jan 18</td>
<td>Conceptualizing Health Systems</td>
<td>Online30:</td>
<td>• School of Public Health Honor Code Quiz</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Read class syllabus and familiarize yourself with Canvas</td>
<td>• Discussion board due: Initial Post: 1/22 Reply: 1/24</td>
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<td>Required readings:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• National Research Council, &amp; Committee on Population. (2013). US health in international perspective: Shorter lives, poorer health. (Summary only)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Jan 25</td>
<td>Comparative Perspectives on the U.S. Health Care System</td>
<td>Online30:</td>
<td>• Quiz 1 due: 1/29</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Online30:</td>
<td>Optional readings</td>
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| Feb 1 | History of U.S. health reform and employer-sponsored insurance | **Online30:**  
- Read and study graphs of the Vox article on “9 things Americans need to learn from the rest of the world’s health care systems”:  
**Required readings:**  
**Optional readings:**  
https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama-health-forum/fullarticle/2776613 |  
| Discussion board due:  
Initial Post: 2/5  
Reply: 2/7 |
| Feb 8 | Health Care Spending in the U.S. | **Online30:**  
- Listen to the Health Affairs podcast *A Health Podyssey*, “Is fee-for-service the smoking gun for U.S. health care spending” by Alan Weil and Dr Michael Gusmano:  
**Required readings:**  
**Optional readings:**  
| Quiz 2 due: 2/12  
Discussion board due:  
Initial Post: 2/12  
Reply: 2/14 |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Required readings</th>
<th>Optional readings</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Feb 15| Social Determinants of Health & Health Equity | **Online30:**  
- Listen to 1619 Podcast, Episode 4 on Health care:  
  **Required readings:**  
    [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3863696/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3863696/)  
  **Optional readings:**  
**Discussion board due:**  
*Initial Post: 2/19*  
*Reply: 2/21* |
| Feb 22| The Affordable Care Act           | **Online30:**  
- Data brief due: 2/19  
**Discussion board due:**  
*Initial Post: 2/19*  
*Reply: 2/21* |
Listen to: Health Affairs This Week, “American Rescue Plan addresses the Affordable Care Act’s unfinished business”: [https://www.healthaffairs.org/do/10.1377/hp20210311.522970/full/](https://www.healthaffairs.org/do/10.1377/hp20210311.522970/full/)

### Required readings:
- Sommers, Benjamin D. "Health insurance coverage: what comes after the ACA? an examination of the major gaps in health insurance coverage and access to care that remain ten years after the Affordable Care Act." *Health Affairs* 39.3 (2020): 502-508.

### Optional readings:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mar 1</td>
<td>MIDTERM</td>
<td>Multiple choice and short answer covering material from Weeks 1-6</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mar 8</td>
<td>“Public Health and an Age-Friendly Ecosystem”</td>
<td>Guest lecture by Dr. Emily Greenfield</td>
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<td>[ZOOM class]</td>
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**Initial Post:** 2/26  
**Reply:** 2/28  

**Midterm – in class (zoom)**

**Online30:**  

**Discussion board due:**  
**Initial Post:** 3/12  
**Reply:** 3/14
### Required readings:

### Optional readings:

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9 Mar 15</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK NO CLASS</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Mar 22</td>
<td>Medicare and Medicaid</td>
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### Online30:

### Required readings:

- Quiz 3 due: 3/26
- Discussion board due: Initial Post: 3/26 Reply:3/28
### Optional readings:


### Required readings:


### Online 30:


****NOTE****: Start video at 1:10:22 and end at 1:28:45.

### Optional readings:


### Policy brief due: 4/2

### Discussion board due:
- Initial Post: 4/2
- Reply: 4/4

### Mar 29

**A health systems approach to addressing US maternal mortality**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Required readings</th>
<th>Optional readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>12 Apr</td>
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<td>Research methods for public health and health policy</td>
<td><strong>Online30:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Discussion board due:</strong> Initial Post: 4/11 (due to holiday) Reply: 4/11</td>
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<td>Watch Dr. John Creswell’s “What is Mixed Methods Research?” video:</td>
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<td>Medical Association.</td>
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<td>• Sofaer, S. (1999). Qualitative methods: what are they and why use them?. Health</td>
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<td>services research, 34(5 Pt 2)</td>
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<td><strong>Optional readings:</strong></td>
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<td>• Palinkas, L. A. (2014). Qualitative and mixed methods in mental health services</td>
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<td>• Keys, H. M., Kaiser, B. N., Foster, J. W., Burgos Minaya, R. Y., &amp; Kohrt, B. A.</td>
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<td>(2015). Perceived discrimination, humiliation, and mental health: a mixed-</td>
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<td>13 Apr</td>
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<td>Evidence-based policy, Guest lecture by Dr. Mark McGovern</td>
<td><strong>Online30:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quiz 4 due: 4/16</strong></td>
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<td>Listen to Planet Money Podcast: Episode 677 “The Experiment Experiment”</td>
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<td><a href="https://www.npr.org/transcripts/463237871">https://www.npr.org/transcripts/463237871</a></td>
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<td><strong>Discussion board due:</strong> Initial Post: 4/16 Reply: 4/18</td>
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<td>• Kaplan RM, Irvin VL (2015) Likelihood of null effects of large NHLBI clinical</td>
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<td>trials has increased over time. PloS one 10(8): e0132382.</td>
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<td>• Baicker, K. (2018). Driving Better Health Policy: &quot;It's the Evidence, Stupid&quot;</td>
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<td>Uwe Reinhardt Memorial Lecture. <em>Health services research</em>, 53(6), 4055-4063.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Schoenfeld, J. D. &amp; Ioannidis, J. P. Is everything we eat associated with cancer?</td>
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<td>A systematic cookbook review. American</td>
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<td>15 Apr 26</td>
<td>Debates</td>
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<td>16 May 3</td>
<td>Debates</td>
<td>No readings</td>
<td>• Debate group 2 presenting</td>
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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.

Student Well-Being: The School of Public Health recognizes that students may experience stressors or challenges that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. If the source of your stressors or challenges is academic, 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. For personal concerns or if additional support is needed, students may reach out to the Office of Student Affairs or any of the appropriate referral resources listed on the SPH Student Connect Canvas page.

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 responsibility, you can find a list of resources in Appendix A to University Policy 10.3.12. For more information about your options at Rutgers, please visit Rutgers Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance.

Overview of School Policies: Academic and non-academic policies and procedures, such as Auditing a Course, Retaking Courses, Grade Grievance and others that cover registration, courses and grading, academic standing and progress, student rights and responsibilities, graduation and more may be found under Policies on the School of Public Health website. Below are select specific policies; however, students are responsible for keeping informed about academic and non-academic policies and procedures beyond those noted on this syllabus.

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