RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy
Health Disparities
Spring 2013
10:32:413 / Index #57888 (cross-listed with 34:32:513, 34:33:513)
Wednesdays, 9:50am-12:30pm, CSB 113

Professor: Dawne Mouzon, Ph.D.
CSB, Room 546
E-mail: dawne.mouzon@rutgers.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30-1:30 (*must use the Sign-Up tool on Sakai*)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The overarching goal of this class is to provide a broad overview of health disparities in the United States, with a focus on the "trifecta" of inequality - race/ethnicity, socioeconomic position (SEP), and gender. Because social justice is a primary thrust of public health, it is crucial to understand both which groups are at higher risk of developing acute and chronic conditions and which groups are more likely to have poor health outcomes. We will use a multi-pronged approach to explore the following five key ways in which race-based health inequities are created and sustained, with a key focus on structural factors in the environment.

Grading:
The final grade will be computed as follows:
- Four (4) response memos, 3-4 double-spaced pages each (20%)
  - You must write one (1) memo from Unit 1; one (1) memo from Unit 2; and two (2) memos from Unit 3.
- Final Exam (30%)
  - In lieu of a final exam, graduate students are required to write an 8-10 page paper on a topic of their choice.
- Mid-Term (30%)
  - In lieu of a final exam, graduate students are required to write an 8-10 page paper on a topic of their choice.
- Participation (10%)
- Attendance (10%)

REQUIRED TEXT
- Other required readings will be posted on Sakai as PDF documents.
- IMPORTANT: All readings are mandatory, and must be done before coming to class. The lectures are not meant to substitute for reading the material.

FILMS: Both “Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?” and “Race: The Power of an Illusion” can be streamed online from the Rutgers University Libraries website.
**GRADING POLICY**
There are **NO** extra credit opportunities for this class.

- Final Exam: 30%
- Midterm: 30%
- Response Memos: 20%
- Attendance: 10%
- Participation: 10%

**CRITERIA FOR FINAL GRADES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undergraduate students</th>
<th>Graduate students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% -100%</td>
<td>90% -100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>86%-89%</td>
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<td>60% -69%</td>
<td>69% or lower</td>
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**I WILL NOT NEGOTIATE ANY GRADES UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.**
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

EXAMS (60% total)
Sixty percent (60%) of your grade will be derived from a mid-term (30%) and a cumulative final examination (30%). Exams are based on the text, lecture notes, films, in-class discussions and assigned readings. Exams will consist primarily of short-answer questions – you will be given a choice of which questions to answer.

Exams start at the beginning of class and finish at the end of class. If you arrive after the first exam is turned in, you will not be permitted to take the exam. You will not get extra time if you arrive late to an exam.

Make up exams will be permitted only if you obtain a Dean’s note or provide the obituary for the funeral you need to attend. Personal holidays, vacations, broken alarm clocks, weddings, jobs, exams in other courses, or the Rutgers bus system are not acceptable reasons for missing or being late to an exam. Make-up exams will be given during a time convenient for me and will be harder than regular exams (either carrying a minimum 10% penalty or consisting of open-ended/short answer questions only).

RESPONSE MEMOS (4 memos, 20% total)
These memos should be roughly 3-4 pages, double-spaced. You must write one memo each for Unit 1 and Unit 2. You must write two (2) memos for Unit 3. Unit 1 spans January 23-February 6; Unit 2 spans February 13-March 6; Unit 3 spans March 27-May 1.

Due dates for response memos:
1. Unit 1 memos are due on Wednesday, February 13.
2. Unit 2 memos are due on Wednesday, March 13 (day of the midterm).
3. Unit 3 memos (two in total, your choice) are due on:
   a. Wednesday, April 3 for “Why Health Disparities Exist: Health Behavior.”
   b. Wednesday, April 10 for “Why Health Disparities Exist: Socioenvironmental Factors.”
   c. Wednesday, April 17 for “Why Health Disparities Exist: Racism and Discrimination.”
   d. Wednesday, April 24 for “Why Health Disparities Exist: Health Care.”
   e. Wednesday, May 1 for “Mental Health Disparities.”

The best memos are those that incorporate information from the assigned readings, films, lecture notes, and class discussions. Bringing in supplemental information from online sources or news programs/current events will also help to boost your grade.

You are permitted no more than two (2) direct quotes for each memo. For each sentence that you quote, you must provide two sentences of your own, explaining and expanding upon the idea. I will use TurnItIn© to assess whether there has been plagiarism. Use your own words and thoughts.
Memos must be typed and submitted BOTH via hard-copy at the beginning of class and on Sakai. This policy is intended to help you. In the event that I cannot find your hardcopy in my files and it is not uploaded on Sakai (under the Assignments tab), you will receive a zero (0%).

If you miss class on a day in which a memo is due, you will not lose points if you upload it to the Assignments tab on Sakai by the end of class and bring in a hardcopy (either to my mailbox or to class the following week). You must meet both of these guidelines in order not to be penalized.

Other miscellaneous guidelines for memos:

- Submissions without names will be given a grade of 0.

- Submissions must have the pages paper clipped or stapled together. Do not fold the edges over in lieu of a paper clip or staple, as I will not accept these. Assignments that are not clipped or stapled appropriately will be given a grade of 0.

- Please use an informative filename. Otherwise, I will end up with 40 papers called “memo1.docx.” An ideal filename would be “unit3_memo2_racism_bcarson.docx,” which incorporates the memo and its corresponding unit, its topic, and the student’s name.

**PARTICIPATION (10%):** You are expected to read all of the assigned readings before the due date, and be prepared to discuss them during lecture. Any in-class exercises (e.g., brief response memos to a film) will be counted towards your participation.

You will be assigned to a group and you are expected to work cooperatively with the other members of your group. At the end of the course, I will ask each group to fill out evaluation forms for all group members; this input will also inform your individual participation grade.

We will watch various segments of two films throughout the course – “Race: The Power of an Illusion” (PBS) and “Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?” These films are a critical supplement to what we will learn from the book and in lecture. It is crucial that you watch these films on time and be prepared to discuss them in class. I will often ask you to write a short response paper during class, which will count towards participation.

**ATTENDANCE (10%):** Please make every effort to be on time, as late arrivals are disruptive to everyone. If you are consistently late (or leave consistently early), it will harm your grade. *It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at each class.* I am unable to keep track of individual students’ attendance at each class and therefore must rely on the attendance sheet. If you miss a lecture, you must get the lecture notes from a fellow classmate. It is not my policy to share my notes.
**SYLLABUS CHANGES**

Please note that I reserve the right to make any necessary changes to the syllabus, including but not limited to changing dates, topics, assignments, and readings. An effective instructor must continually adapt to the conditions of the class and in that spirit, I may choose to add or remove items as needed. I will announce these changes on Sakai and provide ample time when changes are needed.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's full policy on academic integrity. Visit http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu for more information.

Principles of academic integrity require that every Rutgers University student:
- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of unsanctioned materials or unsanctioned collaboration
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that:
- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments
- all student work is fairly evaluated and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.
- Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.
CLASS RULES
Cell phones and texting are disruptive to the class. Be sure to turn your cell phone tones off before class begins. It is also distracting and disrespectful to text or use a tablet or laptop for anything other than taking notes or seeking answers to questions posed in class. Be sure to restrict your use to these tasks only. Students answering email, texting, on social media, or doing work for other classes will be asked to close their device and leave the class.

COMMUNICATION
I expect students to regularly access their Eden e-mail and/or the course website at sakai.rutgers.edu. Important information will be disseminated to your Eden account (unless you change your e-mail address through the Rutgers system) and will be posted on the Sakai course website. I will provide outlines and/or Power Point slides as a courtesy to you, in order to help you master the material and follow along in class. The outlines/slides are NOT meant to be a replacement for attending class or engaging fully in class. If I sense that they are handicapping your attendance and/or effort, I will either put less detail on them outlines or stop using them altogether.

E-MAIL
E-mail is the best way to reach me. If you have questions about the class material, I am more than happy to help you. However, I do expect that you will first do your best to find the answer yourself in the class/book material. Regardless of the purpose, I am happy to correspond by e-mail within the following guidelines:

1. Please use an email account that lists your name as the sender. Include an informative subject with the course name (i.e., "Health Disparities question") and make sure your full name is included in the text of the e-mail.

2. I will only use your official Eden email address to send you email. It is your responsibility to check this account for important course updates/announcements. Saying, "I only check my G-mail account" is not an adequate excuse for missing my email. If you send me email from another account, I will respond to that account but will not send other email/class announcements to that address.

3. Please do not e-mail me with administrative questions that can be answered by looking at the syllabus. If it is a substantive question, please first look for the answer in the book and lecture notes. After that, I'm happy to help you.

4. Please do not email me less than 24 hours before exams or deadlines with last-minute substantive questions about class material. Make sure to plan ahead and request my help in a timely manner.

5. Allow 24-48 hours for a response from me. I check email frequently but am often bombarded with many emails that might back me up. Please do not expect to receive an immediate response from me, but do email 48 hours after the initial email if I have not yet responded.
1. Wednesday, January 23:

**Demographic Profile of the U.S.**

*Objective:* To provide students with an overview of population change during the 20th century and projections for the 21st century. These patterns suggest that the U.S. will become a “majority-minority” population by the middle of the 21st century. That is, racial/ethnic minorities will comprise a larger proportion of the U.S. population than white Americans. These changes will have important implications for U.S. society and culture, including health status and healthcare.

*Reading:*
   1. "The Demography of American Racial/Ethnic Minorities" (Ch. 3)

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**Distribution of Morbidity and Mortality among People of Color (POC) in the U.S.**

*Objective:* To provide an overview of the nature and magnitude of race/ethnic disparities in health status in the United States. Topics covered include: historical trends in life expectancy, the leading causes of death by race, ethnicity and age, changes in the leading causes of death over time, and the mortality cross over.

*Reading:*
   1. "The Epidemiological Profile of Racial/Ethnic Minority Populations" (Ch. 4)
2. Wednesday, January 30:
Conceptual and Historical Issues in the Study of
Race, Ethnicity, and Health

Objectives: To outline conceptual problems with the “race” concept and expose students to the difficulty with composing a racial classification system that accurately and meaningfully describes human variation. To explore the ways in which history affects contemporary patterns in health.

Reading:
1. "Historical Aspects of Race and Ethnicity" (Ch. 1)
2. "Conceptual Issues in the Study of Race, Ethnicity, and Health" (Ch. 2)

3. Wednesday, February 6
The Role of Socioeconomic Status
In Health Disparities

Objective: To expose students to the evidence regarding the role of socioeconomic status in producing health disparities. Many people think that race differences in health status are merely socioeconomic status differences, since African Americans and Hispanics generally are lower than Asians and whites in socioeconomic status and also have worst health status. This session presents data that shows that race/ethnic differences in health status exist at all income levels and that socioeconomic status does not fully account for race differences in health status.

Reading/Tasks Due:
1. Read “Socioeconomic Status and Racial/Ethnic Differences in Health” (Ch. 8)
2. Watch and be prepared to discuss Episode 1 of “Race: The Power of an Illusion – The Differences Between Us” today.

In-Class Viewing:
1. Part 1 of “Unnatural Causes - In Sickness and Wealth” (56 minutes).
4. Wednesday, February 13

Health Disparities #1:
Black Americans

Reading:
1. “African American Health Issues” (Ch. 10)
3. 

In-Class Viewing:
1. Watch Part 2 of “Unnatural Causes - In Sickness and Wealth”

Homework: Unit 1 Memo Due

5. Wednesday, February 20

Health Disparities #2:
Hispanics/Latinos

Reading:
1. “Hispanic/Latino Health Issues” (Ch. 13)

In-Class Viewing:
1. “Unnatural Causes - Becoming American” (29 minutes)
6. Wednesday, February 27

Health Disparities #3:
American Indian/Alaska Natives

Reading/Tasks Due:
1. “American Indian and Alaska Native Health Issues” (Ch. 11)
2. Watch and be prepared to discuss “Race: The Power of an Illusion – The House We Live In” (56 mins)

In-Class Viewing:
1. “Unnatural Causes - Bad Sugar” (29 minutes)

7. Wednesday, March 6

Health Disparities #4:
Asian/Pacific Islanders

Reading:
1. “Asian and Pacific Islander Health Issues” (Ch. 12)

In-Class Viewing:
1. “Unnatural Causes – Collateral Damage” (29 minutes)

8. Wednesday, March 13

Mid-Term

Homework: Unit 2 memos are due.
10. Wednesday, March 27

Why Health Disparities Exist:
Health Behavior

Objective: To provide an overview of disparities in health behavior. The health behaviors addressed in this session include, tobacco use, alcohol consumption, and illegal drug use. I also include obesity in this session since it is related to diet and inactivity. This session discusses patterns and prevalence rates, racial/ethnic differences in prevalence rates and theories and hypotheses that explain these differences.

Reading:
1. “Behavior and Health” (Ch. 9)

11. Wednesday, April 3

Why Health Disparities Exist:
Socioenvironmental Factors

Purpose: To expose students to the theory of excess risk exposure as an explanation for health status disparities. The U.S is a highly racially segregated society. Segregation can lead to radically different levels of exposure to health risks.

Reading:

In-class viewing:
1. “Place Matters” (Unnatural Causes #5, 29 minutes)

Unit 2 Memo Due: Health Behaviors
12. Wednesday, April 10

Why Health Disparities Exist:
Racism and Discrimination

Purpose: To expose students to the contribution of racism and discrimination to health status disparities.

Reading:

In-class viewing:
1. “When the Bough Breaks” (29 min)

Unit 2 Memo Due: Socioenvironmental Factors

13. Wednesday, April 17

Why Health Disparities Exist:
The Role of Health Care

Objective: To define the difference between health status disparities and healthcare disparities and to familiarize students to the research findings related to the role of patient preferences in producing race differences in healthcare.

Reading:
1. “Health Care Services Among Racial/Ethnic Groups” (Ch. 6)

Unit 2 Memo Due: Racism and Discrimination
14. Wednesday, April 24
Mental Health Disparities

Objective: To provide an overview of (reverse) disparities in mental health. This session includes discussion of stigma, utilization of mental health services, availability of mental health services, racial/ethnicity differences in diagnosis and treatment modality, culture-bound syndromes and idioms of distress.

Reading:
1. “Mental Health” (Ch. 5)

Unit 2 Memo Due: Health Care

15. Wednesday, May 1
TBA

Unit 2 Memo Due: Mental Health Disparities

FINAL EXAM: TBA