Disparities in Health in America: Working Toward Social Justice

SOS 3313 (Social Sciences) CRN 11993 Undergraduate
University of Houston-Downtown

Undergraduate Syllabus

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Health Disparities Research
Center for Research on Minority Health
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Office Hours – By appointment only
Class Time – Tuesday, 5:30–8:30 p.m.

Course Description

Twenty years of research demonstrate that there are wide disparities in health throughout America. Health disparities are differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality, and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions that exist when specific population subgroups are compared. It is now known that the distribution of health is not at random, but that health is systematically distributed according to different levels of social advantage. This course will examine the social, societal, and genetic/epigenetic factors that are fundamental in creating disparities in health. In addition, the course will focus on the formulation of public policy objectives to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities.

Course Objectives

Candidates will be expected to:

a. Acquire introductory knowledge and experience related to the complex social, behavioral and medical determinants of populations’ health, which will enable them to understand the origins of health disparities within a population and to conceptualize programs and policies to reduce and eliminate those disparities.

b. Examine and gain an understanding of the latest findings of specific research that demonstrate that there are wide disparities in health among certain populations.

c. Demonstrate awareness of factors that currently contribute to wide disparities in health among certain populations.

d. Identify the role of (various) health professionals in eliminating disparities.

e. Investigate community and state-level resources that can be mobilized for planning, policy development, program interpretation and funding for reduction of health disparities.

f. Develop a global vision of inequalities in health and medical care.
Student Conduct
1. Each registered student must sign in at the beginning of each class.
2. Class time will start promptly at 5:30 p.m. Please be courteous to Visiting Professors, fellow students and faculty by being on time for class.
3. Cell phones, pagers, etc. must be turned off before coming to class.

Policy of Academic Honesty
All students are subject to the UHD Academic Honesty Policy (PS 03.A.19) and to all other university-wide policies and procedures as set forth in the UHD University Catalog and Student Handbook. Plagiarism and cheating will be treated as academic misconduct. Plagiarism consists of taking and/or using the ideas, work, and/or writings of another person as one’s own. For this class, this means you are expected to do your own work. Copying each other’s work or getting someone else to do your assignments for you is considered both plagiarism and cheating. Your grade will be based on your performance. This means: (1) all work you hand in to be graded for this class must be your own, and (2) no unauthorized materials or resources may be used as “aids” on exams. The penalty for an academic honesty violation on a significant course requirement such as a term paper/project or final examination shall be an “F” for the course.

Accommodations for Disability
UHD adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should register with Disability Services (713-226-5227 or 713-221-8430) and contact the instructor of record in a timely manner (within the first two weeks of class; or, if the disability is a new development, within two weeks of its origination) to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Course Evaluation
All students begin this course with “A” grade. In order to maintain this grade, the following expectations must be met.

- Class Participation 25%
- Mid-term Exam 25%
- Research Paper 25%
- Final Exam 25%

- Attendance Policy – Class attendance and participation throughout the semester is a requirement for successful completion of the course as dictated by University policy and the course instructors. Occasionally, attendance might be taken at the end of the class. Students are responsible for all information in the lectures and the discussions that follow. If you are absent for family emergencies or illness please send an email to your Faculty Advisor and Cynthia Clark at hdcourse@mdanderson.org. All students are responsible for retrieving any class materials via universities’ Blackboard.

- PowerPoint presentations, syllabus/lecture and course schedule will be available on the University of Houston-Downtown Blackboard Vista website.

- Mid-term Exams will be distributed on October 11, 2011. The midterm exam will be a take home exam in an essay format. The midterm exam should be returned in class on October 18, 2011 at 5:30 p.m.
• Undergraduate and MPH/MS Students will take the Mid-term Exam. If you make an “A” (90 or above) on your Midterm Exam, you will have the OPTION to take the Final Exam OR write a Research Paper.

• Research Paper – Students should select a research topic and have it approved by Dr. Lovell A. Jones, no later than October 4, 2011. Submit your research topic with a brief abstract of the subject to Dr. Jones via email and approved by him before you write your research paper. The topic should then be thoroughly researched (the information analyzed, and specific aims for further action identified).

However, please take into consideration the following requirements in selecting a research topic:
1) Provide an adequate background on the disparity.
2) How would you address the disparity with regard to reducing it?
3) If it worked, what would be the expected outcome?
4) If it did not work, what would you change to improve the approach?

A clear, concise research paper should follow the format shown below (8–10 pages, double-spaced, list of references [at least 10 cited], 12-pt. font). Only academic journal articles and professional literature are to be used and cited, i.e. no use of the popular press or Wikipedia.

The Research Paper is due to turn into Dr. Lovell Jones on or before November 29, 2011, at 5:30 p.m.

Research Paper Format: (APA Format)
1” margins: Left, right, top, bottom
Header: Name on every page
Footer: Number at the bottom of page (centered)
Spacing: Double Space
Title Page: Name, Title of Topic, Health Disparities Course, Date
Statement of Topic
Introduction
Research Design and Methods
Conclusions
References

• Final Exam –This will be a comprehensive, take-home exam distributed in class on November 29, 2011. All Undergraduate and MPH/MS students are Required to take the Final Exam unless you made an “A” on the Midterm Exam, and you will have the Option to take the Final Exam or write a Research Paper.

The Final Exam will be due on or before December 6, 2011 in class at 5:30 p.m. or can be sent via email to hdcourse@mdanderson.org. (NO EXCEPTIONS).

Grading Scale

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No extra credit is offered or will be accepted. No grades will be dropped. A grade of “I” for incomplete is given only when an emergency prevents a student from completing the work in the course.

Contact Information for Center for Research on Minority Health Faculty/Staff

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