Course Overview
This seminar course will examine social determinants of population health. We will consider (i) renowned sociological theory in the context of public health, (ii) social determinants prevalent in public health literature, and (iii) the theoretical and practical application of social theory to public health research and intervention. The course is an approved course for the Health Disparities Certificate Program. By the end of the course, students can expect to:

- Articulate a social determinants perspective on health, including an understanding of key questions of structure and agency; context and composition.
- Describe and critique multiple social determinants of health currently described in public health literature.
- Be familiar with multiple sociological, theoretically-derived ideas and concepts, and describe some of the public health implications those perspectives.
- Apply a theoretical orientation to the understanding of at least one social determinant of health in reference to a specific health problem, and research question or intervention approach.
- Recognize some of the difficulties and challenges associated with operationalization of theoretical and social determinant constructs for measurement and intervention.

Expectation of Students

Conduct. Seminars are intended to be a “safe” place for discussion of course content. We support “risk taking” in the presentation and discussion of ideas. You are not expected to have a ready (i.e., prefabricated or immediate) answer to issues you may raise and we discourage tackling only those ideas you feel most comfortable with. You are, however, expected to work through a process in assignments and class discussions of questioning the basis and assumptions of any position you favour. Constructive criticism to others in the class is to be provided with respect and sensitivity to others’ feelings. Confidentiality is expected with respect to the opinions or identities brought up by others in the context of class discussion.

Readings. Please complete the readings before the seminar for which they have been assigned.

Attendance. We will not officially take attendance. Participation is, however, in part a function of attendance.

Assignments and Honor Code. All written assignments should be completed in a timely manner and in accordance with the UNC Honor Code. Document appropriately all information or ideas from sources other than you, per the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance (http://instrument.unc.edu). More information about correct use of citations, and additional tools for writing, are available through the website for the UNC Writing Center at http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/

Evaluation and Weighting of Assignments

Participation. 20%. Participation in discussion is essential. Quality is preferred over the quantity of contribution, and participation should facilitate group, as well as individual learning. Participation
grades will be assigned based on my assessment of your preparation and contributions, as well as attendance in class.

*Written Reports* 70%. Papers should be submitted via email to both Shelley and Liana by their deadline. Papers should be typewritten in Microsoft Word with double spacing and one inch margins all around. Please refrain from using small or difficult-to-read typefaces. Please provide your name, the date, a title, and a label (e.g., term paper). We will be available to discuss your topics and papers as necessary via individual, prescheduled appointments.

- **Short Reports** 40%. Two short (3-5 page) papers (each worth 20%), will help you apply the information learned in the course to a health issue of your choice. We are primarily interested in your ability to critically examine issues related to the course content, and to clearly articulate your ideas about such issues. Specific instructions for each assignment will be provided at appropriate times, but in general, for the first paper, you will be asked to examine the social determinants or sociologic issues that affect a chosen population health problem, and for the second paper, you will apply a sociologic framework or theory to one more social determinants of a specific health outcome. The short reports are designed as opportunities to receive feedback on ideas that will eventually be incorporated into the final paper. Short reports are due by midnight on **Sunday, September 16** and **Sunday, November 4**.

- **Term Paper** 30%. The term paper will require you to apply the course material to your own work or public health interests. Specifically: (i) identify a population health issue and the group affected by it; (ii) critically appraise the studies that link perceived social determinants of health with this health issue; (iii) assess the conceptual frameworks guiding the study of determinants of the health issue (in terms of theory, method, and their level of integration); (iv) identify a conceptual framework that helps identify or explicate social determinant(s) of the health problem (v) discuss briefly possible ways to measure or intervene on the determinant(s) using theory as your guide. Term papers should be at least 12 but no more than 15 pages before references. I will be looking for clarity, precision, and depth in your communication of ideas. Term papers must be submitted by 5 p.m. on **Wednesday, December 5**.

*Presentation of Term Paper Ideas* 10%. In two of the final weeks of class, time will be set aside for students to present their term paper ideas and receive feedback from their peers. Students will not be expected to have all of their ideas in a concrete form, but should adequately prepare their thoughts for presentation to the group.

**Deadlines**: For late assignments submitted without a valid explanation, a penalty of 10% of total possible points for that assignment will be subtracted per day from the evaluated score assigned.

**Grading**: H = 95–100; H- = 90–94; P+ = 85–89; P = 80–84; L = < 80.

**Course Materials**
The course will incorporate readings from published papers and books not specified as required texts. Required readings will be available through the course blackboard site (http://blackboard.unc.edu). In addition, copies of all optional readings will be kept in the third floor Rosenau hallway. Readings may be modified as the course progresses.

*Texts that may be of interest* (not required):

Schedule of Topics and Readings
Please note that class will not be held on October 18 and November 22, due to Fall Break and the Thanksgiving Recess respectively.

August 22  Session 1: Course Introduction


August 29  Session 2: Durkheim: Social Phenomena, Social Integration and Health (Part 1)

- *In addition, please review instructions for three course papers in Blackboard.*

Sept. 5  Session 3: The Social Gradient  Guest: Arjumand Siddiqi, ScD


Sept. 12  Session 4: Theoretical Perspectives on Social Position

Each student will be assigned one of the following:


Sept. 19  Session 5: Social Capital


Sept. 25  Session 6: Structure and Lifestyle: Social Influence on Behavior

All read:


Additionally, students will be assigned one of the following:


Oct. 3  Session 7: Place and Health


Oct. 10  Session 8: Globalization  Guest: Nina Yamanis, MPH

Oct. 24  Session 9: Race and Racism


Guest: Jay Pearson, PhD


Nov. 7  Session 11: Gender, Sex and Power

Nov. 14  
**Session 12: Intersectionality**  
*Student presentations*


Nov. 28  
**Session 13: Mechanisms of Embodiment and The Life Course Perspective**  
*Student presentations*


**Dec. 5**  
**Session 15: What Next? Ongoing issues in social epidemiology and frameworks for action**

*Final Paper Due, Course Evaluation*


Optional:  
