This module is designed to facilitate student understanding of the ways in which social structures might impact opportunities, lived experiences and choices related to health. Course readings and discussions will cover: 1) mechanisms of social stratification; 2) influence of stratification on distribution of resources, exposure to stressors, and expectations for beliefs and behavior; and 3) aspects of the social environment currently under exploration in public health and health behavior research and practice, including physical and social spaces, socioeconomic distributions, and experiences of discrimination.

**Participation and Preparation (35% of module grade)**

The primary function of class time is to discuss the readings, and their application to the HBHE field, in depth. In advance of class, the instructor will provide a set of comprehension and discussion questions related to the readings that students can use as guides during the preparation for discussion, but students should take an active role in the classroom discussion. Participation grades will be based on three criteria: 1) preparation, 2) quality of comments, and 3) respectful and productive engagement with other students.

**Discussion Leading (15% of module grade)**

Although the instructor will provide a brief introduction to the material at the start of the class, provide clarifications about course material, and ensure that key points are covered in the discussion, the primary discussion will be facilitated by students. Each week 2-3 students will create a class plan that guides discussion and interpretation of the readings. Each class should include a variety of discussion techniques (e.g. large group discussion, small group discussion, application activity, individual reflection). Students should plan a timetable for discussion that incorporates 5-10 minutes for instructor introduction of the material, a 15 minute break toward the middle of class time and 10 minutes for instructor wrap-up.

**Social Determinants Paper Introduction (35% of module grade for paper, 15% for peer feedback)**

One of the most difficult challenges in public health writing is to comprehensively, yet concisely, summarize previous literature in order to motivate a research question. Public health journals often dedicate only 2-5 paragraphs for introduction and background, in which an author makes a case for the relevance of his or her research. For this assignment, you will develop such an introduction for a social determinant research question of your choice. You are limited to 1,000 words (about 2-3 double spaced pages), not counting references. While structure for this sort of writing varies, I suggest the following:

1. Brief description of the health topic and behavior you are targeting (1-2 paragraphs)
2. Description of the key social determinant(s) you propose to research, including review of relevant, previous literature, and the theoretical underpinning of the relationships among variables (2-4 paragraphs)
3. Explanation of research question and why it is important to investigate. (1 paragraph)

Two recent examples of papers with similarly styled introductions include:

In addition, because peer feedback (giving and receiving) is a necessary and useful skill in academia, you will exchange your paper with 1-2 other students for feedback. For each paper you receive, you should draft a one paragraph response with constructive criticism. During the final class, we will dedicate ~30 minutes for groups to meet and share feedback.

Papers will be assessed based on 1) appropriate inclusion of key points; 2) quality of argument in support of the research question; and 3) writing clarity and style. Peer feedback will be assessed based on the quality and clarity of the constructive comments.

Due dates:
- Email the research question you will be motivating to me by Wednesday, January 30.
- Email the completed paper to me and the members of your peer feedback group before 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, February 10.
- Bring 2 copies of each peer review paragraph with you to class on Wednesday, February 13, one for me and one for the author. Be sure to indicate both your name and the original author’s name on each paragraph.

January 9, 2012: Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health

Objectives for the class: 1) Define social determinants of health; 2) Explore processes that result in social stratification and inequalities; 3) Consider general social consequences of inequality


Optional:
January 16, 2012: Stratification and its Tools

Objectives for the class: 1) Describe processes of social categorization; 2) Understand current trends in stratification; 3) Explore key terms: capital and power


Optional:

January 23, 2012: Socioeconomic status

Objectives for the class: 1) Identify multiple dimensions of socioeconomic status; 2) Identify potential causal pathways explaining correlations between socioeconomic status and health


Optional:
January 30, 2012: Social constructions of identity

Objectives for the class: 1) Identify health disparities based on race, gender, other aspects of identity and their intersections; 2) Explore processes of resource distribution, stigmatization and role assumption that may result in identity-based disparities in health and behavior.


Optional:

February 6, 2012: Place and social space

Objectives for the class: 1) Identify key physical and social components of place with importance for health and health behavior; 2) Consider appropriate aggregation of space as meaningful place.


Optional:

**February 13, 2012: Modifications to Social Structures to Enhance Health**

*Objectives for the class:* 1) Identify strategies for addressing social determinants of health; 2) Consider practical strength and limitations of such strategies; 3) Explore two case examples of structural interventions to address health.

• Choose one of:

Optional:
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. *A new way to talk about the social determinants of health.* Available at: [http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/legacy-parents/a-new-way-to-talk-about-the-social-determinants-of-health](http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/legacy-parents/a-new-way-to-talk-about-the-social-determinants-of-health)