Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) health: a population perspective

HBEH 705 / HPM 707
Spring 2014, Tuesdays: 2:00 p.m. to 4:50 p.m.

Course Instructor
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Course description
This course introduces students to health inequalities faced by LGBT populations and offers possibility for interventions thereon. Students will come away from the course with a working knowledge that includes: terminology and history related to LGBT health, key frameworks and concepts relating to LGBT identity and health, information about who LGBT populations are, and knowledge of what health inequalities LGBT populations face. The class is organized by a social ecological approach, beginning with interpersonal influences on health, moving to families, organizations, healthcare, and to the media environment. We will end by focusing on state and federal policy, unique considerations for researchers, and the possibility of interventions to improve health. We will examine LGBT health inequalities with an eye towards public health policy, meaning both policies that impact health and the potential for policy-based interventions to improve health. While the course will not be an exhaustive survey of all health inequalities experienced by LGBT people, it will introduce students to a variety of these topics. Our discussions will span a breadth of health behaviors and health outcomes, determinants of health, identities, and settings.

As this is a public health course, it will focus particularly on community and population determinants that influence the health of LGBT populations. Underpinning the substantive information throughout the course will be information about conceptual and research paradigms used in LGBT health research and practice.

This course’s seminar format requires active participation from all students. Most classes will have a lecture, a discussion of assigned readings, as well as an activity to apply that week's material. Students will develop a general appreciation of issues that permeate lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health, and related practice and research endeavors.

Course objectives
- Students will be able to identify health challenges relevant to LGBT communities
- Students will understand “best practices” in LGBT health research, including sexual identity operationalization
- Students will be exposed to LGBT-specific factors that influence such populations’ interaction with the US healthcare system, including quality of care and the patient-provider relationship
Note: This syllabus (and schedule), while comprehensive, is a living document and therefore subject to flux (e.g., changes in guest speakers’ availability). As such, the instructors reserve the right to modify the syllabus at any time. Updates will be communicated by email.

Grading and assignments

- Participation in class, including team-based presentations on readings - 25%
- Problem [or protective factor] memo - 15%
- Policy intervention memo - 15%
- Media interview project - 15%
- Blog dissemination product - 15%
- Policy briefing - 15%

Academic integrity and UNC Honor Code

Course assignments are all subject to the UNC Honor Code, which may be summarized (crudely) as: “Conduct all academic work within the letter and spirit of the Honor Code, which prohibits the giving or receiving of unauthorized aid in all academic processes.” Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, and any breach in academic integrity, however small, will be investigated and accordingly addressed. If you have any questions regarding the Honor Code, please consult with someone in either the Office of the Student Attorney General (966-4084) or the Office of the Dean of Students (966-4042). Read “The Instrument of Student Judicial Governance” (http://instrument.unc.edu).

Disability

We encourage students with disabilities that may affect their participation in the course to contact the student coordinators to make alternate arrangements as appropriate. Additional support regarding such matters may be accessed from the UNC Office of Disability Services: www.disabilityservices.unc.edu or 919-962-8300.

Required readings

We will post readings on Sakai. Each week at least one reading group (to be assigned during the first week of class) will be responsible for summarizing and leading discussion of indicated articles.

There is also a required podcast that ($0.99) that must be downloaded from iTunes or Amazon.

Recommended resources


The Health Sciences Library has compiled an excellent guide for LGBTIQ health that contains a variety of resources online at http://guides.hsl.unc.edu/lgbtiqhealth. The guide includes research databases, journal articles, professional organizations, and clinical training materials.
**Course schedule**

**Week 1 (1/14): Course introduction**

Learning objectives:
- Course overview and student introductions
- Define the frequently-used vocabulary and concepts related to LGBT health
- Identify the components of a population perspective on LGBT health

Reading:

Discussion/activities:
- Introductions
- Lecture: Population perspectives and levels of influence on LGBT health
- Activity: influence across ecological levels
- 3:30 p.m., Clare Barrington, PhD, MPH, on her work and on research opportunities.
- Discussion
  - Why a population perspective of LGBT health? What are advantages and disadvantages to such an approach?
  - Where are we in thinking about LGBT health?
  - The instructors made a conscious decision to leave out Q (for queer), as well as I (intersex) in this course title and material. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a decision?
- Activity: Current understanding of major disparities and major causes.

**Week 2 (1/21): Key concepts and frameworks**

Learning objectives:
- Understand conceptual frameworks and perspectives that researchers use to explain LGBT health disparities
  - Minority Stress Model
  - Syndemic Theory
  - Intersectionality
- Assess how sexual orientation and gender identity are related to other social categories.

Student-led readings:

Required readings:
- Bowleg, L. (2013). "Once You've Blended the Cake, You Can't Take the Parts Back to the Main Ingredients": Black Gay and Bisexual Men's Descriptions and Experiences of Intersectionality. *Sex Roles, 68*(11-12), 754-767.


Discussion/activities:
● Discuss issues that arise from applying theoretical frameworks that have been initially used and validated primarily with populations of gay men with LBT populations.
● Activity: Describe major approaches.

Week 3 (1/28): Key concepts and historical context
Guest Speaker: Kate McFarland Bruce, PhD (Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Elon University)

Learning objectives:
● Understand core concepts of domains of sexual orientation and concepts of identity development
● Articulate development of trajectories of understanding of sexual orientation
● Identify pivotal events in history of LGBT health

Required readings:


Discussion/activities:
● Discuss how public health can strike an appropriate balance between acknowledging diversity within groups as intersectionality and the need to address health from a population level.
● Activity: Timelines and health.

Week 4 (2/04): LGBT health disparities
Guest Speaker: Mellanye Lackey (confirmed), MSI, Public Health Librarian, UNC Health Sciences Library

Learning objectives:
● Be able to identify three public health problems faced disproportionately by one of the LGBT populations
● Be able to identify gaps in research on LGBT population health
● Understand the diversity of health disparities experienced by LGBT populations
● Identify LGBT health resources available to students at the UNC Health Sciences Library

Student-led reading:


Required readings:

Discussion/activities:
● Discuss the inclusion of LGBT health in Healthy People 2020. What did you find remarkable about it? What might you have done differently?
● Activity: Ranking of disparities by morbidity and mortality cost.
● Activity: What's invisible in the data?

**Week 5 (2/11): Determinants of LGBT health disparities**

*Due Today: Choice of disparity area (e.g., smoking among lesbian and bisexual women, school-based bullying of transgender youth). Paper copy <1 page double spaced describing health behavior or outcome that you will investigate in greater depth in the subsequent assignments. Informally note (1) your current knowledge of the topic, (2) why the topic matters to health and health equity, and (3) what specific populations you are covering. This is not a research paper just a description of what you want to look at and why it matters. The instructor will suggest additional resources to you based on this description. This is part of your participation grade.*

Learning objectives:
● Articulate the role of the social ecological framework in understanding LGBT health disparities.
● Explore relationship between individual perceptions of health promotion and population-based perceptions of health promotion

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- Identify broad economic patterns that may influence LGBT health.
- Examine assumptions about income and wealth among LGBT populations.

Student-led reading:

Required readings:
- If you do not know what the "social ecological framework" is, then you must watch this video: Ruderman, M. (ND). An Introduction to the Ecological Model in Public Health. Available from: http://navigator.mchtraining.net/?page_id=4102

Discussion/activities:
- Activity: explaining social ecological models.
- Discussion: Explanations of health

**Week 6 (2/18): Interpersonal Factors**

*Guest speaker: Will Hall, MSW, doctoral student, UNC School of Social Work on school bullying and policy interventions*

Learning objectives:
- Identify interpersonal influences on poor health for LGBT populations
- Consider possible intervention points and historical trajectories of change.

Student-led readings:

Required readings:
- Visit: http://www.nohomophobes.com


Discussion/activities:

• Discussion: Language, representation, and stress
• Activity: Power of language and how it is modifiable.
• We will watch several of the *It Gets Better Project* videos. What do we like about this campaign? What is missing or could be improved?

**Week 7 (2/25): Sexuality, Relationships, and Family**

*Guest speaker:* (1) Terri Phoenix, PhD (Director, UNC Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Center) on leisure activities and identity/relationships

**Due at the beginning of class:** Write a two-page (excluding references), single-space background memo to a policymaker regarding the disparity you have chosen.\(^1\) This should “bring them up to speed” on the disparity, who it affects, its impact/costs/effects, and what is known about the origins of the disparity. It should be formatted as a memo. Remember: The policy maker to whom you are addressing this memo is not an expert on the subject matter, does not know the acronyms, and only has 10 minutes (or less) to read it. Cite your sources using whatever citation style you think most appropriate.

Learning objectives:

• Describe the strategies used to form non-traditional kinship structures and families
• Formulate a resiliency framework to understand LGBT relationships and families

Required readings:


Discussion/activities:

• Film clip: Watch *Paris Is Burning*. Discuss how communities within the film formed, and articulate the influence they have on the health of its members. How might public health take lessons from these communities to form individual, community, or population interventions aimed at promoting LGBT health?

**Week 8 (3/04): LGBT Healthcare**

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\(^1\) Think of it this way: The new Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services asks you, “I want to know what is known about X disparity?” You can pick if that’s the US DHHS or the NC DHHS...
Guest speakers: (1) Regina Rutledge (confirmed), MPH (Graduate student, Department of Health Policy and Management, University of North Carolina) on reproductive health care for lesbian and bisexual women; (2) Cramer McCullen (tentatively confirmed), medical student, UNC School of Medicine, on sexual minority healthcare access in Latin America; (3) Christina Drostin, MD, MPH, Resident, UNC Department of Family Medicine on LGBT healthcare needs; and, (4) Justin Smith, MPH, Fellow, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Learning objectives:
- Describe aspects of the health care experience that influence the health of LGBT persons.
- Formulate strategies that could be employed within and outside of the health care system to improve the provider-patient relationship for LGBT persons.
- Explore issues related to medical decision-making for sexual minorities in the context of past and present sociopolitical climates and regulations.

Student-led reading:

Required readings:

Discussion/activities:
- Panel Discussion: Rutledge, McCullen, Drostin (2 - 3 p.m.)
- Guest Lecture: Justin Smith (4 - 4:50 p.m.)
- Activity: Office improvements in healthcare.
- Discussion: What are important similarities and differences in the health challenges faced by LGBT populations as we look across cultures and nations?

**Week 9 (3/11):** No class: Spring Break

**Week 10 (3/18):** Schools, Churches, and Community Organizations
*Guest speaker:* David Jolly, DrPH, MSPH, MEd (Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Public Health Education, North Carolina Central University)

Due: **Identify an LGBT-serving organization (state, local, or national in any country) that has a health-related program (broadly defined). Write a one-paragraph description of their program based on any**


**Learning objectives:**

- Identify possible organizational policies and strategies to promote health.
- Identify lessons learned from past LGBT organizing.
- Describe how the presence and characteristics of organizations can influence health.

**Student-led readings:**


**Required readings:**


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**Week 11 (3/25): Sexualities in Space and Place**

**Speaker:** Melinda D. Kane, PhD (Assistant Professor, Sociology, East Carolina University)

**Learning objectives:**

- Identify features of the physical environment of LGBT-dense neighborhoods that can hinder and promote health.
- Place LGBT health disparities in a framework of neighborhood health disparities.
- Describe key tenets of the demography of same-sex couples.

**Student-led reading:**


**Required readings:**


**Discussion/activities:**

- Discussion: What are "gay and lesbian spaces?"
• Activity: Domains of Bernard framework.
• Discussion/Activity: How do each of the domains relate to LGBT health?

Week 12 (4/01): The Media Environment
Guest Speaker: Rhonda Gibson (confirmed), PhD, Associate Professor, UNC School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

Learning objectives:
• Describe the role of the media environment in promoting or hindering health
• Articulate potential pitfalls of emphasizing disparities in media outreach
• Identify unique potential in LGBT media for intervention

Student-led reading:

Required readings:

Discussion/activities:
• Activity: Articulating media effects frameworks
• Discussion about media representation and identity
• Lecture: RWJF Framing of Social Determinants of Health

Week 13 (4/08): Policy Context: Local, State, and Federal Governments
Guest Speaker: Anna Kirey, MA, Research Fellow, Human Rights Watch [speaking on global LGBT issues]

Due: Upload a five minute media interview between you (the expert) and a volunteer news reporter discussing the disparity topic you have chosen and post the link to Sakai. (We do not care about video quality; it is fine to use your mobile phone to record.) Remember, a reporter may know little about the topic. Do you have a pithy "sound bite" embedded in your answers? The instructor will distribute a score sheet, and, after scoring by the class, the instructor will give our first and second place prizes for best interview.

Student-led reading:

Required readings:

Learning objectives:
- Discuss potential pitfalls of using health as an organizing framework for civil rights.
- Activity: policy processes as health interventions

**Week 14 (4/15): Research Issues in LGBT Health**

Guest Speaker: Derrick D. Matthews (confirmed), PhD, MPH, Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Pittsburgh

**Due:** Using the style and length of the blogs identified in “Keeping the Community Posted: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Blogs and the Tobacco Epidemic” (available on Sakai), develop a blog post and post it to Sakai on your disparity of interest. What would you write if you were asked by the blog’s owner for a guest post on the disparity topic you have chosen? What does the community need to know? Remember: your audience is not researchers and is only partially policymakers.

Learning objectives:
- Explain how sexual and gender minorities are excluded from research and its consequences
- List several ways that community-based participatory research can assist in research endeavors involving LGBT populations

Student-led reading:

Required readings:

Discussion/activities:
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Week 15 (4/22): Interventions

Guest speaker: Alicia K. Matthews (confirmed), PhD, Associate Professor of Health Systems Science, University of Illinois at Chicago on tailoring health interventions for LGBT populations

[Guest judge appearance: judging of blogs.]

Due: Course Evaluations

Due: See readings below regarding It Gets Better Project.

Learning objectives:
- Identify intervention strategies that have been, or may be, used with LGBT groups
- Understand criteria of efficacious, effective, and culturally-appropriate interventions with LGBT groups
- Explain why we believe that these interventions may (or may not) work differently with these populations.

Student-led reading:

Required readings:
- Investigate the popular press's coverage of the It Gets Better Project. Bring in one article (blog post, newspaper article, or academic paper) on the project.

Discussion/activities:
- Contrast the population strategy of intervention with what Rose names the “high-risk” strategy. When might certain types of interventions be preferable to another? Are there unique considerations when developing interventions for LGBT populations?
- Pick a health disparity experienced by LGBT populations, and articulate an intervention approach that leverages the “high-risk” and population strategy.
- Think through how you would develop a comprehensive intervention to prevent LGBT adolescent health risk behaviors (e.g., suicide, tobacco use). You can consider prior efforts such as the *It Gets Better Project* as a starting point from which you can launch your intervention.

Week 16 (5/05 at 12 p.m.): FINAL EXAM PERIOD: Policy briefing

Learning objectives:
- Demonstrate ability to synthesize and efficiently present information regarding LGBT health disparities.
- Develop skills in effective presentation style.
Due: **Without PowerPoint, provide a 7 minute overview of the disparity you have chosen and recommendations to address it to an audience of policy makers, staff, and reporters. You can use notes, but you cannot read them verbatim. Remember to talk slowly. Remember that you are the expert on this subject.**

Final Exam Period

Due: **Write a policy memo making recommendations for addressing the health disparity you have chosen. This should be no more than two pages (excluding references) and should use single spacing. The policy maker to whom you are addressing this memo wants to know what should be done and why you believe that to be the case. It should be formatted as a memo. You should think across the levels of the social ecological framework (there must be at least two levels or a clear rationale for why there are not). You should only briefly describe the disparity (since they already have your previous memo). Remember: they have 10 minutes (or less) to read and understand this memo.**

For additional guidance on writing a policy memo see the following resources:
- [http://slc.berkeley.edu/writing/PublicPolicy.htm](http://slc.berkeley.edu/writing/PublicPolicy.htm)

**Acknowledgements**

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