Overview
This course has four broad purposes.

1. Review key features of social support, a very powerful but not well understood aspect of human behavior and experience.
2. Review applications of social support to health promotion.
3. Consider these issues from a global and cross-cultural perspective.
4. Through the group project and term paper, provide the student the opportunity to contribute to an application of peer support and examine how (a) fundamental features of and research on social support inform that application, as well as how (b) the process of application heightens understanding of fundamental features of and research on social support.

The course is divided into two sections. From January 22 through February 26, we will review foundational and research literature on social support. From March 5 to the end of the semester, we will review applications of social support, largely through peer support programs.

The underlying theme of the course is that the two sections are related, that understanding social support can enhance our ability to develop effective peer support interventions and that implementing and evaluating peer support interventions can expand our fundamental understanding of this very important but poorly understood influence, social support.
Term Project and Term Paper – **Tentative Plan – To Be Finalized 1/29**

During our first class on January 22, we will discuss students’ interests in problems or challenges to which peer support might be applied. Either in several teams and/or as individuals, students will identify on January 29 a topic for which they would like to develop a model peer support intervention. This will serve then as the focus of written assignments and several class discussions (e.g., Workshop on March 19) through the semester and in the term paper.

**Term Project** This will be a detailed outline of a peer support intervention or enhancement of an existing peer support intervention addressing a problem or challenge of the student’s choosing. The outline should be sufficiently detailed that it might guide the efforts of an organization wishing to implement the project. The report of the term project should address the topics detailed for class discussion of how to develop a peer support program, scheduled for March 19.

Students wishing to do so may propose other topics for the project, e.g., a report on some key issue, such as the integration of digital health in peer support.

The report of the Term Project will be presented by Powerpoint or other appropriate format in the last class on Monday, April 30.

**Term Paper** Reflecting on the Term Project developed during the semester, describe how (a) fundamental features of and research on social support informed your project, as well as how (b) the process of application heightened your understanding of fundamental features of and research on social support.

Due by electronic copy to edfisher@unc.edu by **Friday, May 4, 5 pm**, 12-point, Times New Roman, 0.75 in. top and bottom margins, 1.0 in. side margins, maximum = 8 pp not including cover and references.

**Mid-Term Assignment** – As preparation for the Term Paper, describe one example of each of how (a) fundamental features of and research on social support informed the work you are doing for your project, as well as how (b) the process of application heightens understanding of fundamental features of and research on social support.

Due by electronic copy to edfisher@unc.edu by 5 pm Friday, March 9. 12-point, Times New Roman, 0.75 in. top and bottom margins, 1.0 in. side margins, Maximum = 5 pp not including cover and references.

**Exercise** on identifying a fundamental feature of support and its application. In 300 words or less, a) describe some fundamental feature of peer support that struck your interest in the first weeks of the course, and b) describe how it might be applied to the peer support intervention you are developing. Be sure to discuss (a) and (b) in separate paragraphs so that the distinction between them is clear. Due to edfisher@unc.edu by 5 pm February 23.

**Example – How Fundamental Characteristics Influence Application and How Application Sharpens Understanding of the Fundamental:** Here is an example of an initial paragraph from a former student’s term paper. It shows how this student framed how applying the fundamental concepts had sharpened understanding of those concepts.

Conceiving of peer support programs and their functions seems like a straightforward enterprise. However, when layered onto a specific context such as peer support for parents with the intention of preventing child maltreatment, complexity emerges that may not have been foreseen at the outset. The application of three aspects of fundamental peer support knowledge (the built environment, directive and nondirective support types, and the identity of peer supporters) helps to underscore this nuanced nature of peer support. Numerous aspects of peer support could be considered in relation to parent support programs, including the impact of culture, theoretical foundations, and problematic peer support, among others. However, for myself, the three areas reviewed within this paper...
present unique considerations related to both unstructured peer support and the structured peer support provided by programs such as Parents Anonymous.

**Grading Scheme**  Assignment of final grades will be guided by the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Assignment</td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise on Identifying a Fundamental Feature of Support and its Application</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Project (Document or Product for the field)</td>
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**Class Discussion**

While avoiding a rigid format, discussion of readings, especially in the beginning of the course, will generally follow the following format:

Initial: What is interesting about these readings? (about 30 min)

Then:

1) What are some fundamental concepts developed through the readings?
2) How might they be applied?
3) How does that application shed light on key features of the fundamentals?

We will also use the following in class discussion:

- Spend last 5-10 minutes on what we have learned today, what’s the take-away.
- Utilize small groups or workgroups to brainstorm application of theories to a possible health problem or to the focus of workgroup projects.

**Section 1 – Foundations and Research on Social Support** (January 22 - Feb 26)

In this first section of the course, we will review classic and current literature on social support, what it is, how it enters into health, and how it works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1/22</th>
<th>First Class – Overview</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Several papers of general interest related to social support:</td>
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<tr>
<th>1/29</th>
<th>Fundamentals</th>
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<td><em>Does Social Support Matter?</em></td>
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<td><em>What are the Basics of Social Support? How does it “get under the skin”?</em></td>
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Harlow, H.F., & Harlow, M. (1966) Learning to love. American Scientist 54 (3), 244-272. Read 1st par, p. 244, The Infant-Mother Affectional System pp. 248-253, and pp. 268 (from: “We have a number of studies …”) through 272. (NB: PDF includes additional pages that are not required)


Conceptual Background: Interaction, Context, and Behaviorism (Not assigned but helpful as general background)


For Reference – Not Assigned:


OR


Mental Health and Peer Support


### 2/12
**Social Networks and Environmental Determinants of Social Support:**

**Question:** How do these concepts perhaps apply to the much talked about “division” in the United States?

Leyden, K. M. (2003). Social capital and the built environment: the importance of walkable neighborhoods. American journal of public health, 93(9), 1546-1551. [Replace with more recent paper on these issues]

**Consider** how these concepts would guide group programs, e.g., the trade-off between homogeneity for group cohesion and diversity for exposure to varied perspectives. An ideal group might include members who share characteristics that are important to them, but who also bring diverse “friends’ friends’ friends” (Christakis) and perspectives to the group

### 2/19
**Attachment**

**Assignment:** Bring a Valentines Day card or copy of one!

Lecture 1: Caring for Children, pp. 6-19.


### 2/26
**Culture and Social and Peer Support.** What is universal? What is specific?


doi:10.1177/0145721715574729


### 3/5

**Psychosocial studies of social support and social influence**


**Workgroup Discussion/Presentations at 4:45**

### 3/12

**Spring Break**

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**Section 2 – Social and Peer Support Interventions** (March 5 – April 23)

In this section of the course, we turn toward practical applications of social support in prevention, health, and health care.

### 3/19

**Successful Peer Support Interventions**


Read and come to class prepared to describe what you think is most interesting about your choice of a peer support intervention and its evaluation. Here is syntax for PubMed that you may find helpful:


** Fill in here terms to capture the topic of your choosing.

Please send me (edfisher@unc.edu) the title, citation, and abstract of the paper you choose by noon, Friday, March 4 so that I may consolidate these and send them around to all in the weekend over the weekend before class on Monday, March 7.

Then please come to class prepared to describe in 2-3 minutes why you thought the paper was interesting, important – or seriously flawed.

**Workgroup Discussions/Presentations at 4:45**

| 3/26 | Practical Challenges in Developing and Managing Peer Support Interventions Assigned |


**General Resource**


**Workshop:**

For the project on which you are focusing, come to class prepared to present what you think would be a fine peer support intervention. Be prepared to address:

1. The major topics or objectives of the intervention
2. Whom you will seek to recruit as peers and how you will recruit them
3. How you will train the peers
4. How or through what channels peer support will take place
5. How the peers will be assigned to and/or initially engage those they help
6. How long will the intervention last, how may it evolve over time
7. How you will provide back-up, supervision, and role enrichment to the peers
8. Whom will want to convince of the program’s value and how you will evaluate it
9. What questions you will need to answer through formative evaluation or other planning
### 4/2

**Primary Care, the Patient-Centered Medical Home, and Peer Support**

Guest Presenter (Tentative): Timothy Daaleman, D.O., M.P.H., Professor and Vice Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at UNC School of Medicine

Readings – Tentative:


**Workgroup Discussions/Presentations at 4:45**

### 4/9

**Lessons Learned, Failure Factors, Success Factors, and Key Contributions of Peer Support to Improved Health Care**


**Responsible only** for section on “Analysis of interventions with nonsignificant effects,” pp. 13-18, Table 9.


**Workgroup Discussions/Presentations at 4:45**

### 4/16

**Network Approaches**

Guest Presenter (Tentative): Valarie Clark Worthy, Sisters’ Network


Readings:
| 4/23 | Channels of peer support: eHealth, Social Networking, Online Resources  
Readings:  
Weiss JB, Berner ES, Johnson KB, Giuse DA, Murphy BA, Lorenzi NM. Recommendations for the design, implementation and evaluation of social support in online communities, networks, and groups. *J Biomed Inform*. 2013;46(6):970-6. Note: Read Table 1 and then skim case examples that follow.  
| 4/30 | **Workgroup Presentations**  
Workgroups should send current draft of Term Projects to edfisher@unc.edu by end of day, 4/29. I will post these on Sakai so that students may have access to them prior to and during class on 4/30. This of course does not preclude further work over the following several days. |