Course Description
The social determinants of population health have profound impacts on inequities across crucial moments of the life course, as do population-level interventions – some resulting in reduced inequities, while at others (unintentionally) exacerbate inequities. This course builds on the foundational ideas introduced about population health and determinants of health in SPPH 527: Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health, with a special emphasis on population subgroups who are highly marginalized.

Purpose and Objectives
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
• Understand reasons why social determinants of population health are differentially expressed and experienced across the life course and across subgroups of the population
• Identify the key mechanisms by which population-level interventions either exacerbate or reduce social health inequities
• Describe approaches to population-level intervention that are equity promoting and/or that ameliorate negative impacts on population subgroups who are highly marginalized.

Instructors
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All Office Hours are by appointment.

Class Time & Location:
Wednesdays, 1pm – 4pm, SPPH Room B112. Classes commence on 8th January and the final class will be held on 2nd April. There will no class on 19th Feb, due to UBC Reading Week.

Class will start promptly at 1pm, and students are expected to attend and to arrive on time, except under extenuating circumstances. Each class will begin with a short quiz and no extra time will be given for latecomers to class.

Evaluation
Critical assessment of population-level intervention (wk 5, 5th Feb) 20%
Mid-term examination (in-class, wk 7, 26th Feb) 35%
Policy briefing paper (due 4th April by 5:00 pm) 35%
Participation - weekly short quizzes (10) 10%

***NOTE: By Week 3, you must have confirmed with Fast and Poon the topic for your policy briefing and receive approval of the intervention to be included in your critical assessment.
IMPORTANT

No late assignments will be accepted without penalty. Extensions of the due date for the written assignments will be considered on a case-by-case basis in advance of the deadline pending extenuating circumstances. Assignments submitted later than the due date will be penalised 10% of the possible grade for each day past due. Each written assignment is due to be emailed to one of the course instructors on time and on the designated due date.

Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism, that plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct, and that such misconduct is subject to penalty. Please review the Student Discipline section of the UBC Calendar (available on-line at www.ubc.ca).

Please note: The course outline and readings are in draft and are subject to change

SPPH 544 Course materials and Wiki

We will use an on-line wiki to store all our course materials, readings and supplementary materials.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 – Coordinator: Danya Fast, Brenda Poon, Lindsey Richardson

We will review some key concepts and terms pertaining to population-level health inequalities. We will also introduce foundational ideas associated with life course approaches to studying these inequalities. We will provide examples of ongoing life course studies pertaining to population health in Canada and elsewhere. During this class, we also will review the course outline and administrative issues.

Reading:

Supplementary reading:

Week 2 – Coordinator: Lindsey Richardson

Health inequalities at older ages: are often overlooked in the study of social health inequalities, particularly in comparison to those during childhood and the working life. This class focuses on the nexus of social and biological processes that contribute to inequalities and their impacts later in life.

Readings:

Week 3 – Coordinator: Lindsey Richardson

Income, Income Inequality and Health: In industrialized nations there is a correlation between income inequality and health inequalities. There is also considerable debate about how the best way to measure income and income inequality and the mechanism that translates income inequality into health inequalities. In this class we will examine the relationship between income and health inequalities, and explore the debate about measurement and mechanisms.

Readings:

Supplementary/Optional Reading:


**Week 4 – Coordinator: Lindsey Richardson**

**Work, worklessness and health:** The link between work and health is well established: while the ability to avoid unemployment and poor quality work environments influences individual health outcomes, individual health also impacts labour market participation. In the first half of class we will explore employment trajectories across the life course and the mechanisms that have been proposed to explain the relationship between work and health. In the second half we will examine the relationship between health and work in a disease-specific context using HIV infection as a case study.

Readings:

Supplementary Reading:

**Week 5 – Coordinator: Lindsey Richardson**

**Critical appraisal is due today**

**Health disparities among and between vulnerable subpopulations:** The labour market is not a level playing field across the population. Vulnerability during the working years and labour market disadvantage have been documented across socio-demographic characteristics and diseases. This class will focus on the impacts of demographic and structural labour market disadvantage on population health outcomes.

Readings:

**Week 6 – Coordinator: Lindsey Richardson**

**Interventions to mitigate the negative effects of work and worklessness on health:** Efforts by the states, regions, cities and communities to mitigate the impacts that poor working conditions or worklessness may have on health encompass a range of public policies. Differentiating between the relative success and failure of population level initiatives is not, however, straightforward. In this class we will explore different types of social support and occupational interventions and the impacts they have on unemployment and health.

Readings:
FEBRUARY 18 – NO CLASS DUE TO UBC READING BREAK

Week 7 – Coordinator: Lindsey Richardson

MIDTERM EXAM IS TODAY.

Week 8 – Coordinator: Danya Fast

Socioeconomic status and mental health among young people: Chronic stress is posited as one likely pathway linking socioeconomic status with disparities in health outcomes over the life course. The specific ways in which socioeconomic status results in stress during adolescence, however, are complex.

Readings:
- Sweet E (2010) “If your shoes are raggedy you get talked about”: symbolic and material dimensions of adolescent social status and health. Social Science & Medicine 70: 2029-2035.

Week 9 – Coordinator: Danya Fast

Inequality, capital accumulation and sexual health among young women: How does inequality impact health among adolescents? One possible explanation is that place-based inequalities undermine levels of economic, social and cultural capital, with a number of consequences for health over the life course. In this class we will examine the relationship between place-based inequalities, capital accumulation and pregnancy among young women. We will also think about how life course discourses related to teen pregnancy can be problematic. Implications for interventions will be discussed.

Readings:

Week 10 – Coordinator: Danya Fast & Brenda Poon

Transitions from childhood into adolescence (the tweens) and early childhood development: Early adolescence has been characterized as a critical period of dramatic physical and social change and development. During this class, we will discuss proposed mechanisms by which family, peers, school, and communities create supportive environments for children who are transitioning from childhood to adolescence. We will also consider the value of qualitative and ethnographic methods in exploring questions of school connectedness among those making the transition from childhood to adolescence. Finally, in this class we will also begin our discussion of life course impacts of experiences and exposures in the early years of life. We will discuss how the interplay between early child development, environmental conditions, and experience lay the foundation for lifelong health.

Readings:

Week 11 – Coordinator: Brenda Poon

Interventions and early childhood development: Given research indicating the importance of early child development, learning, and experience to later health and well-being, there have been a myriad of interventions developed with a focus on creating supportive environments for early child development. In this class, we will discuss various types of approaches used and ways that they may act to promote (or unintentionally undermine) healthy child development.

Readings:

Week 12 – Coordinator: Brenda Poon

Interventions and childhood developmental vulnerability: During the first part of the class, one final example of an approach proposed for addressing the inequalities in childhood developmental vulnerability will be discussed. We will also provide an overview of key themes from the course and identify future agendas in life course perspectives.

Readings:

Supplementary/Optional Reading:
ASSIGNMENT #1
CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF POPULATION-LEVEL INTERVENTION

Purpose: To present a critical appraisal of 3 peer-reviewed, published papers on a population-level intervention that aims to affect population health. The topic of the critical appraisal MUST be related to the topic chosen for the Policy Brief. As well, the 3 papers selected for inclusion in the Critical Appraisal assignment MUST be negotiated and confirmed with Fast and Richardson by Week 3.

Mark Value & Due Dates: To be e-mailed to Danya Fast by 5pm on 5th Feb (Week 5). Value: 20%

Content: The paper should summarize key features of EACH article that are relevant to the assessment of the selected population-level intervention and the bulk of the paper should focus on a synthesis of evidence across the three studies, an assessment of the quality of the evidence presented, and contain a statement describing the intervention’s overall effectiveness.

Format: Please use double spacing. Maximum 1,500 words.

Criteria for Evaluation: Please refer to Marking Rubric pertaining to Assignment #1, which will be distributed in Week 3.

ASSIGNMENT #2
POLICY BRIEF

Purpose: To prepare a briefing paper describing a population-level intervention intended to address a health inequality and explaining a rationale for why you would be in favour of this recommendation for action.

Mark Value & Due Date: A 2-3 sentence topic summary is due at week 3 (required, but not graded). The full paper is due 4th April 2015, emailed to Brenda Poon by 5:00 pm. Value: 35%

Content: The paper should follow a standard briefing paper format: issue / background, current situation, options with pros and cons, and recommended action. Students may choose to follow a different format, as long as that format fits the criterion of crafting a briefing paper for a policy-maker.

Format: The paper is not to exceed 1,500 words (strictly enforced), excluding references and figures / tables (which are not required). Your paper should include 5 – 10 resources / papers that provide the evidence upon which the briefing is based. Please use double spacing and a standard reference style.

Criteria for Evaluation: Please refer to Marking Rubric pertaining to this assignment, which will be distributed by Week 8.