

SPPH 301  
Understanding the Sociocultural Determinants of the Health of Populations  
Winter 2023 – Term 2  
Tuesday & Thursday, 9:30-11 AM, MCLD 3002  
University of British Columbia

PART A: COURSE OVERVIEW

**Instructor:** Sonja Senthanaar, MPH, PhD

**Email:** [sonja.senthanaar@ubc.ca](mailto:sonja.senthanaar@ubc.ca)

**Office hours:** Thursdays 11-12:30 pm in SPPH 323 (or email to arrange another time)

**Teaching assistant:** Tina Afshar, PhD (c); [tina.afshar@ubc.ca](mailto:tina.afshar@ubc.ca)

**Course description:** SPPH 301 introduces you to key concepts in the research and applied field of the *Social Determinants of Health*. It shifts your perspective from a traditional model of health in which germs and individual choices cause health and disease, to a socially determined model in which health is determined by the conditions people grew up in and live in. You will learn about key findings, applications, current debates, challenges, and remaining questions in social determinants of health research. You can expect the weekly class meetings to be interactive, requiring active participation and critical thinking.

**Expected outcomes by the end of this course:**

1. Define key concepts of social determinants of health;
2. Discuss the roles that various social determinants play in shaping health outcomes;
3. Describe the potential mechanisms and pathways through which social factors influence the health of individuals, families, communities and nations;
4. Examine how different social factors contribute to health inequalities; and
5. Compare policies and interventions either proposed or currently in place to address social determinants in population health

PART B: RESOURCES FOR LEARNING

**Required course readings and videos:** There is no required textbook for this course. Instead, I have carefully compiled a list of required readings and academic videos for each lecture that compliment and expand on the presented lecture content. Readings and video material are available online through the UBC Library ([www.library.ubc.ca](http://www.library.ubc.ca)) and if not, direct links will be provided. Reading the required readings and watching the required videos will ensure you succeed on the midterm exam, group presentations and take-home assignment.

**Canvas:** Course-related information and materials are available on Canvas. Canvas is your primary tool in this course and you will use it for the following:

- Submit weekly reading reflections
- Submit your completed midterm exam
- Find a group to work with for the group presentation
- Submit your group's presentation

- Post and respond to 'muddy' topics or points of clarification regarding the course content (readings, class lectures)
- Access the up-to-date version of the syllabus

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend the weekly class sessions, which will include a combination of lectures and in-class activities, to be completed in small groups, pairs, or individually (your choice). While you can complete the course requirements without coming to class in-person, students who attend in-person and participate will be better prepared for the midterm and take-home assignment. This is because we will use participatory activities in class to support your learning and preparation for exams and assignments. **The midterm exam must be completed in-person.**

## PART C: ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Contributions to your final grade in the course will include the following components:

**Reading reflection (10 x 1%):** Posting reading reflections and responses to others' reflections accounts for 10% of your online participation grade (feel free to post more than 10, but you will only receive 10 points, 1 point for each post). When you are reflecting on an assigned reading or video or responding to someone else's reflection, avoid simply summarizing what was said. Instead, discuss what surprised you, where you agree/disagree, how it relates to other concepts you've learned about, and expand by adding your own perspective.

**Midterm exam (25%):** The mid-term exam is designed to assess your understanding and application of key concepts from social determinants of health that have been covered both in class and in the readings. The exam will be completed in-person during class and will consist of multiple choice and open-ended short answer questions.

**Group presentation (25%):** In groups of 3, students will give a presentation that includes a description and summary of evidence of a social determinant of health, pathways to health outcomes, and a population-level intervention. Presentations will be roughly 15 with 5 minutes of discussion. Presentation topics need to be approved by the instructor at least 2 weeks before the presentation. Each topic can only be covered once.

**Final policy brief paper (40%):** The purpose of this assignment is to prepare a policy brief describing the relationship between a determinant of health and health outcomes, and a recommendation for action. Students can choose between 3 predetermined topics.

The paper should follow a standard briefing paper format: issue and background, current situation and rationale for needing change, and the recommended action to modify the determinant or relationship. The paper should not exceed 1,500 words, double spaced (excluding references, figures, tables) and should include at least 5 research papers.

**For detailed information on course evaluations, please visit Canvas.**

**Grading policy:** Students have to complete all assignments/course evaluations in order to receive a passing grade. The grading guidelines at UBC suggest that results in an average class will fall somewhere within the following broad limits:

Grade "A": between 5% and 25% of the class; Grades "A"/"B": combined not over 75% of the class; Grade "F": not over 20% of the class

The average course grade is expected to fall within an A-range (i.e., 80% to 84%). There is no grade scaling policy in place (i.e., final grades will not be scaled up/down).

#### PART D: COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance and participation:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Class will begin promptly at 9:30 am. If you have special circumstances that prevent you from joining, please email the TA. It is expected that students complete the required readings and view video material before each class and be prepared to actively participate in class activities and discussion.

**Missed midterm exam:** If you know you are going to miss the midterm exam, please contact the instructor and TA as soon as possible. Depending on the circumstances, you may be required to complete an alternative exam or complete a make-up assignment. If you are sick and need to miss the midterm, a doctor's note is required. An alternate midterm date or makeup will not be allowed in the case of multiple exams in the span of a few days unless specific to exam clashes and exam hardships. Please review UBC's policy on exam clashes and hardships before emailing me or the TA with your request: <https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/exams/exam-clashes-hardships-cancellations>.

**Policy on assignment extensions:** We understand that unexpected life events may interfere with your ability to complete assignments on time. If you need an extension for an assignment, it is required that you email me or the TA at least 3 days ahead of the deadline. Last minute extensions will not be granted. Extensions (with no penalty) are only granted on a case-by-case basis with a strong reason. Otherwise, a 5% penalty per day will be applied for everyday the assignment is late up to 5 days. There are no extensions/make-up opportunities for weekly online submission of reading reflections. For these assignments you have at least 1 week to complete them and it is expected that students plan their work and submission accordingly.

**Feedback and disputing a grade:** We will aim to provide feedback within 2 weeks of an assessment. Written feedback will be delivered by Canvas. If you feel the mark you received is unfair, please wait until we discuss overall class performance in class (e.g., areas students did well, areas with heterogeneity, etc.) before contacting the instructor and/or TA. When you contact us, include the following information:

- Your submitted assignment and rubric/marker feedback
- A detailed description of the portion/aspect of the assignment that you feel was unfairly marked
- Your rationale for why the mark should be higher

Please note that a grade review can result in no change to the grade or a change in either direction (up or down).

**Gender-inclusive and person first language:** Please incorporate and use *gender-inclusive* and *person first language* in your oral and written language. Avoid using: the schizophrenic, the homeless, the drug addict, etc. Use: The person who lives in poverty, the persons who suffer from mental illness, the person who uses illicit drugs.

**Plagiarism and academic misconduct:** Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is a form of academic misconduct. Students need to become familiar with the many different forms that plagiarism

can take, including accidental and intentional plagiarism. For more information, please refer to: <http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-plagiarism/>.

**Code of conduct:** All students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that contributes positively to an environment in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusiveness are valued. Instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination, for example, are not tolerated and subject to disciplinary measures. For more on UBC's code of conduct, please refer to: <https://students.ubc.ca/campus-life/student-code-conduct>.

**Accessibility needs:** We strive to include all students, including those with special learning needs in this course. Please let us know (or have the UBC Disability Resources Center let us know) if you have a special need documented with UBC Disability Resources Center and/or if you need a special accommodation to allow you to fully participate in the course. We adhere to UBC Policy 73: Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities. For more information, please refer to: <https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility>.

## PART E: COURSE SCHEDULE

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### Class Schedule & Required Readings (subject to change)

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#### WEEK 1: Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health

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Tues Jan 10<sup>th</sup> No class

Thurs Jan 12<sup>th</sup> Thinking about health, illness and social conditions/contexts: An introduction and overview

#### Required readings:

1. Braveman, P., Egerter, S., & Williams, D. R. (2011). The social determinants of health: coming of age. *Annual Review of Public Health, 32*, 381-398.
2. Bezrushka, S. (2001). Societal hierarchy and the health Olympics. *Canadian Medical Association Journal, 164*(12), 1701-1703.

#### Required video material:

1. Unnatural causes (documentary, available through UBC library) – Episode 1: In sickness and in wealth (56 minutes)

#### Optional readings:

1. Cockerham, W.C., Hamby, B.W., & Oates, G.R. (2017). The social determinants of chronic disease. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine, 52*, S5-S12.

#### WEEK 2: Social Conditions and Lifespan Development

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Tues Jan 17<sup>th</sup> The SDoH across the life span I

#### Required readings:

1. Cohen, S., Janicki-Deverts, D., Chen, E., Matthews, K. A. (2010). Childhood socioeconomic status and adult health. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1186*, 37-55.
2. Zaccani, J. H. (2004). How to assess epidemiological studies. *Postgraduate Medicine, 80*, 140-147.

Thurs Jan 19<sup>th</sup> The SDoH across the life span II (**Asynchronous learning**)

#### Required readings:

1. Maggi, S., Irwin, L., Siddiqi, A., & Hertzman, C. (2010). The social determinants of early childhood development: An overview. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health, 46*, 627-635.

#### Required video material:

- How early childhood experiences affect lifelong health and learning:  
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-early-childhood->

- [experiences-affect-lifelong-health-and-learning/](#)
- Clyde Hertzman: Presentation to WHO 1:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EJvxNO4ET1U>
- Clyde Hertzman: Presentation to WHO 2:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBva4F4rti8>
- Clyde Hertzman: Presentation to WHO 3:  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73iz\\_5Qx51w&t=147s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73iz_5Qx51w&t=147s)

### WEEK 3: Position, Place and Health

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Tues Jan 24<sup>th</sup> Socioeconomic status and inequalities

#### Required readings:

1. Willson, A. E. (2009). 'Fundamental causes' of health inequalities: A comparative analysis of Canada and the United States. *International Sociology*, 24, 93-113.
2. Review the Generation Squeeze website (with a focus on housing affordability solutions and family affordability solutions): <http://www.gensqueeze.ca>

#### Required video material:

- How economic inequality harms societies:  
[ted.com/talks/Richard\\_wilkinson\\_how\\_economic\\_inequality\\_harms\\_societies/transcript](http://ted.com/talks/Richard_wilkinson_how_economic_inequality_harms_societies/transcript)

Thurs Jan 26<sup>th</sup> Neighbourhoods and homelessness

#### Required readings:

1. Price, J. H., Khubchandani, J., & Webb, F. (2018). Poverty and health disparities: What can public health professionals do? *Health Promotion Practice*, 12(2), 170-174

#### Required video material:

- Della: Hurdles to health <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLKpywFD4c>
- New insights on poverty:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/hans\\_rosling\\_new\\_insights\\_on\\_poverty?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/hans_rosling_new_insights_on_poverty?language=en)

### WEEK 4: Gender, Sexuality and Health

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Tues Jan 31<sup>st</sup> Sex and gender differences in health outcomes

#### Required readings:

1. Krieger, N. (2003). Genders, sexes, and health: what are the connections – and why does it matter? *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 32, 652-657.
2. Denton, M., Prus, S., & Walters, V. (2004). Gender differences in health: A Canadian study of the psychosocial, structural and behavioural determinants of health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 58(12), 585-600.

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**Optional readings:**

1. Butler-Jones, D. (2012). The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada, 2012: Influencing Health – The Importance of Sex and Gender. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada.

Thurs Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>

Sexual orientation and stigma  
Guest speaker: Dr. Travis Salway

**Required readings:**

1. Hatzenbuehler, M.L., Phelan, J.C., & Link, B.G. (2013). Stigma as a fundamental cause of population health inequalities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(5), 813-821.
2. Scheim, A. I., Coleman, T., Lachowsky, N., & Bauer, G. R. (2021). Health care access among transgender and nonbinary people in Canada, 2019: a cross-sectional survey. *CMAJ open*, 9(4), E1213–E1222.

**Optional readings:**

1. LGBTQIA+ glossary of terms for health care teams:  
<https://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/publication/lgbtqi-glossary-of-terms-for-health-care-teams/>
2. Meet the methods series: “What and who is Two-Spirit?” in health research:  
<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52214.html>

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WEEK 5: Systemic Racism and Health Inequities

Tues Feb 7<sup>th</sup>

Racial/ethnic discrimination and health

**Required readings:**

1. Williams, D.R., & Mohammed, S.A. (2013). Racism and health I: Pathways and scientific evidence. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(8), 1152-1173.
2. Veenstra, G. (2011). Mismatched racial identities, colourism, and health in Toronto and Vancouver. *Social Science & Medicine*, 73(8), 1152-1162.

**Optional readings:**

1. Challenging racist “British Columbia” 150 years and counting:  
[https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Of%20fice/2021/02/ccpa-bc\\_Challenging-Racist-BC.pdf](https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Of%20fice/2021/02/ccpa-bc_Challenging-Racist-BC.pdf)

**Required video material:**

- How racism makes us sick: <https://www.tedmed.com/talks/show?id=621421>

Thurs Feb 9<sup>th</sup>

Immigration status and health

**Required readings:**

1. Senthanaar, S., Koehoorn, M., Tamburic, L., Premji, S., Bultmann, U., & McLeod, C.B. (2021). Differences in work disability duration for immigrants and Canadian-born workers in British Columbia, Canada. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(22), 11794.

2. Kosny, A., Yanar, B., Begum, M., Al-Khooly, D., Premji, S., Lay, M.A., & Smith, P.M. (2020). Safe employment integration of recent immigrants and refugees. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 21(3), 807-827.
3. Undercover in temp nation: <https://projects.thestar.com/temp-employment-agencies/>

**Required video material:**

- Capernaum by Nadine Labaki: The award-winning film Capernaum is available on Netflix and through Criterion-on-demand at the UBC library: <https://media3-criterionpic-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/htbin/wwform/006?T=MON2717>

**WEEK 6: Health Interventions / Midterm Exam**

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Tues Feb 14<sup>th</sup>      Where, when and how to intervene in improving population health  
 Guest speaker: Dr. Christopher B. McLeod

**Required readings:**

No readings!

Thurs Feb 16<sup>th</sup>      **MIDTERM (In person at UBC)**

**WEEK 7: MIDTERM BREAK**

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Tues Feb 21<sup>st</sup>      NO CLASS

Thurs Feb 23<sup>rd</sup>      NO CLASS

**WEEK 8: Nutrition and Health / Indigenous Health and Well-being**

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Tues Feb 28<sup>th</sup>      Nutrition and health  
 Guest speaker: Dr. Amanda Raffoul

**Required readings:**

1. Olstad, D.L., Campbell, N.R.C., & Raine, K.D. (2019). Diet quality in Canada: policy solutions for equity. *CMAJ*, 191(4), E100-102.
2. Dhunna, S., & Tarasuk, V. (2021). Black-white racial disparities in household food insecurity from 2005 to 2014, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 112, 888-902.

Thurs Mar 2<sup>nd</sup>      Indigenous health and wellbeing

**Required readings:**

1. The residential school system: [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the\\_residential\\_school\\_system/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_residential_school_system/)
2. Hamilton, S. (2021). Where the children buried? Report released in response to the finding of unmarked mass graves on residential school sites in BC. <https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/AAA-Hamilton-cemetery-FInal.pdf>

**Optional readings:**

1. In Plain Sight. Addressing Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in B.C. health care: <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/613/2020/11/In-Plain-Sight-Summary-Report.pdf>
2. First Nations Health Authority (2021). Anti-racism, cultural safety, and humility framework. <https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-FNHC-FNHDA-Anti-Racism-Cultural-Safety-and-Humility-Framework.pdf>

**Required video material:**

- The Unforgotten. A five-part anthology exploring the health and wellbeing of Inuit, Metis, and First Nations across 5 stages of life (35 minutes). <https://theunforgotten.cma.ca/film/>

WEEK 9: Student Presentations / Prison Health

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Tues Mar 7<sup>th</sup>      Groups 1-4 present

Thurs Mar 9<sup>th</sup>      Health and wellbeing in the context of incarceration  
Guest speaker: Dr. Kate McLeod

**Required readings:**  
(Forthcoming)

WEEK 10: Student Presentations / Employment and Health

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Tues Mar 14<sup>th</sup>      Groups 5-8 present

Thurs Mar 16<sup>th</sup>      Precarious employment from an intersectionality lens

**Required readings:**

1. Benach, J., Vives, M., Amable, C., Vanroelen, G., Tarafa, C., & Muntaner, C. (2014). Precarious employment: Understanding an emerging social determinant of health. *Annual Review of Public Health, 35*(1), 229-253.

**Optional readings:**

1. 'COVID-19 did discriminate': Labour force data sheds light on economic disparities during pandemic. Toronto Star (7 Dec, 2021). Available from <https://www.thestar.com/business/2021/12/07/covid-19-did-discriminate-labour-force-data-sheds-light-on-economic-disparities-during-pandemic.html>

WEEK 11: Legal Frameworks and the SDoH / Student Presentations

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Tues Mar 21<sup>st</sup>      Criminalization, sex work and health

**Required readings:**

1. Shannon, K., Strathdee, S. A., Goldenberg, S. M., Duff, P., Mwangi, P., Rusakova, M., Reza-Paul, S., Lau, J., Deering, K., Pickles, M. R., & Boily, M.-C. (2015). Global epidemiology of HIV among female sex workers: Influence of structural determinants. *The Lancet, 385*(9962), 55–71.

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2. Krüsi, A., Kerr, T., Taylor, C., Rhodes, T., & Shannon, K. (2016). "They won't change it back in their heads that we're trash": The intersection of sex work-related stigma and evolving policing strategies. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 38(7), 1137–1150.
  3. Goldenberg, S. M., Krüsi, A., Zhang, E., Chettiar, J., & Shannon, K. (2017). Structural Determinants of Health among Im/Migrants in the Indoor Sex Industry: Experiences of Workers and Managers/Owners in Metropolitan Vancouver. *PLOS ONE*, 12(1), e0170642.

**Optional readings:**

1. Bingham, B., Leo, D., Zhang, R., Montaner, J., & Shannon, K. (2014). Generational Sex And HIV Risk Among Indigenous Women In A Street-Based Urban Canadian Setting. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 16(4), 440–452.
2. Lyons, T., Krüsi, A., Pierre, L., Smith, A., Small, W., & Shannon, K. (2016). Experiences of Trans Women and Two-Spirit Persons Accessing Women-Specific Health and Housing Services in a Downtown Neighborhood of Vancouver, Canada. *LGBT Health*, 3(5), 373–378.

Thurs Mar 23<sup>rd</sup>      Groups 9-12 present

**WEEK 12: New Ways of Thinking**

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Tues Mar 28<sup>th</sup>      Pandemic environments and inequalities in health outcomes

**Required readings:**

1. A terrible price: the deadly disparities of Covid-19 in America: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/29/magazine/racial-disparities-covid-19.html>.
2. Bambra et al. (2020). The Covid-19 pandemic and health inequalities. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 74, 11.
3. Burstrom, B., & Tao, W. (2020). Social determinants of health and inequalities in Covid-19. *European Journal of Public Health*, 30, 617-618.

Thurs Mar 30<sup>th</sup>      Climate change and health  
Guest speaker: Dr. Sindana D Ilango

**Required readings:**

1. Raj, C., Hendren, N., & Katz, L.F. (2016). The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment." *American Economic Review*, 106 (4), 855-902.
2. Levy, J.I. (2021). Invited Perspective: Moving from Characterizing to Addressing Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Air Pollution Exposure. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 129(12), 121302.
3. Casey, J.A., Su, J.G., Henneman, L.R.F., et al. (2020). Coal-fired power plant closures and retrofits reduce asthma morbidity in the local population. *Nature Energy*, 5(5), 365-366.

**Optional readings:**

1. Liu, J., Clark, L.P., Bechle, M.J., et al. (2021). Disparities in Air Pollution Exposure in the United States by Race/Ethnicity and Income, 1990-2010. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 129(12), 1-14.
2. Casey, J.A., Su, J.G., Henneman, L.R.F., et al. (2020). Improved asthma outcomes observed in the vicinity of coal power plant retirement, retrofit and conversion to natural gas. *Nature Energy*, 5(5), 398-408.

[WEEK 13: Student Presentations](#)

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Tues Apr 4<sup>th</sup>      Groups 13-16 present

Thurs Apr 6<sup>th</sup>      Final policy brief assignment support class