



**HPA 2320 – 1030: PSYCHOSOCIAL ASPECTS OF HEALTH**

**Spring 2022**

**Department of Health and Human Development**

**Instructor:** Dr. Sharon Ross  
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**Class Day/Time:** Mondays 5:30pm – 8:00pm

**Class Location:** 166 Trees Hall

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

**Grading:** Letter

***The syllabus is a required text. Please read it carefully!***

**Mission/Vision of the School of Education**

We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all. We teach. We commit to student, family, and community success. We commit to educational equity. We advocate. We work for justice. We cultivate relationships. We forge engaged partnerships. We collaborate. We learn with and from communities. We innovate and agitate. We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures. We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. We shape practice and policy. We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. We lead with integrity. We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Course Description**

The major goal of this course is to increase your understanding of the diverse individual, interpersonal, institutional, and socio-cultural factors that influence health, physical activity, and nutrition-related behaviors. The first part of the course (Module 1) examines social identities and the role of the social determinants of health in exacerbating health disparities. The second part of the course (Module 2) will highlight prominent theoretical models of health behavior change and behaviorally-oriented interventions to promote health, physical activity and healthy eating in diverse populations.

**Course Objectives**

By the conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify of how various individual, interpersonal, institutional, and socio-cultural factors influence health and health behaviors in diverse populations
2. Apply prominent theoretical models of health behavior change across levels of the socioecological model to improve health in diverse populations
3. To demonstrate how knowledge of the social determinants of health, health disparities, and theory can impact health in diverse populations through research and/or practice

### Course Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. All assigned readings will be posted on Canvas.

### Grading Policy

#### Course Assignments:

The assignments for this course are designed to give you opportunities to reflect on your learning and to structure your weekly participation in the course. Assignments are also opportunities for you to receive feedback on your progress and performance. Additional details for each course assignment will be available in Canvas.

**Reflective Practices & Discussion Forums (60 points)** – Weekly reflections based on the course content will be due by 5:30pm on Mondays. These reflections are worth 5 points each and account for 30% of your overall grade in this course. For the individual reflective practices, your responses should be equivalent to approximately 1 page, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 font, with normal margins. Completeness and quality of journal reflections will be evaluated based on the following criteria: Responsiveness, Communication, Critical Thinking and Analysis, and Mechanics. Points will be deducted for late submissions.

For the group discussion forums, the instructor will post discussion prompts based on assigned readings, videos, or other course materials for you to answer. Please be sure to provide your initial answers to each posted question by Fridays at 11:59 p.m. You are also required to post two substantive follow-up comments to peers by Mondays at 5:30 p.m. Please read all of your peers' posts prior to posting your follow-up. To earn full discussion points (5 points per Discussion Board), you are asked to substantively answer each posted question and provide two substantive follow up posts by the deadlines. Points will be deducted for late posts.

**In-Class Participation (40 points)** – Given the dynamic, discussion-based format of this graduate level class, regular and prompt attendance in the class sessions is essential. You are expected to read the assigned articles prior to class and to participate in daily class and small group discussions with your peers, and class activities and small group work. On the days when we have guest speakers, you are expected to read the assigned article(s) ahead of time and come prepared with thoughtful questions for the Q&A portion of the presentation. At the beginning of the semester, all students will receive a 100% participation grade. Class participation will be assessed during each class session based on the criteria detailed below:

- Arrive at class on time.
- Bring power point slides and other materials relevant to the lesson.
- Arrive prepared to discuss the homework assignments and/or readings.
- Contribute effectively to class discussion or activities by commenting, asking questions, answering questions, participating in small group work or discussions and/or completing in-class activities. Contributions should advance the academic conversation in-class.

For every session you do not meet these criteria, 2% (1 point) will be deducted from your overall participation grade. You will receive feedback on your participation grade midway through the semester to provide opportunities for improvement. However, feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns at any point throughout the semester.

If you have an excused absence, please reach out to Dr. Ross letting her know ASAP and she will provide an alternative assignment for you to complete in order to earn the participation points.

**Module 1 Application Paper (40 points)** – For this two-part paper, you will (1) critically evaluate a current policy or practice within an institution that that you engage with regularly, and (2) create a handout for a future or current place of practice to educate peers/staff/colleagues about how to create an inclusive environment to promote health equity. More details for this assignment will be shared toward the end of Module 1.

**Final Group Project (60 points)** – Your final presentation will be a culminating project that will apply and synthesize concepts and knowledge gained over the semester. Specifically, the project will demonstrate your understanding of social determinants of health, health disparities, and how to impact health of diverse populations through research and/or practice. As part of this assignment, you will also be required to submit a final group project proposal, group outline, personal reflection and group reflection. More details for this assignment will be shared later in the semester.

**Final Course Grade:**

Assignment	% of Final Grade
In-Class Participation	20%
Reflective Practices & Discussion Forums	30%
Module 1 Project	20%
Final Project	30%

**Grading Scale:**

%	Letter Grade
97-100	A+
94-96	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
84-86	B
80-83	B-

%	Letter Grade
77-79	C+
74-76	C
70-73	C-
60-69	D
59 or below	F

**Course Schedule (Subject to Change)**

Week	Meeting Dates	Topic
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<b>Module 1: Social Determinants of Health</b>		
	January 10 *Zoom Meeting	Course Introduction Social Identities
1	January 17	NO CLASS – MLK DAY
2	January 24 *Zoom Meeting	Social Determinants of Health
3	January 31	Race & Implicit Bias
4	February 7	Ethnic & National Identity
5	February 14	SES/Neighborhood
6	February 21	Age/Ability Status
7	February 28	Gender/Sexual Orientation
8	March 7	NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS
<b>Module 2: Health Behavior Theory</b>		
9	March 14	Module 1 Project
10	March 21	Evidence-based Research on Health Disparities in Diverse Populations
11	March 28	Intrapersonal (individual) theories
12	April 4	Interpersonal theories
13	April 11	Community/Group Theories
14	April 18	Final Project Work
15	April 25 – April 30 *Final Exam Period	Final Project Due

## University & Course Policies and Related Resources

### Use of Technology

This course uses a Canvas web site provided through the University. To access this, go to <http://canvas.pitt.edu> and log on using your Pitt user name and password. Or, you can go to [www.my.pitt.edu](http://www.my.pitt.edu) and access the Canvas site there. For help logging onto the course, call 412-624-HELP. This help is available 24/7. The instructors cannot assist you with log-on problems.

### Statement on Classroom Recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

### Copyright Notice

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials.

See [Library of Congress Copyright Office](#) and the [University Copyright Policy](#).

### Email Communication

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

### Statement on Scholarly Discourse

In this course we will be discussing very complex issues of which all of us have strong feelings and, in most cases, unfounded attitudes. It is essential that we approach this endeavor with our minds open to evidence that may conflict with our presuppositions. Moreover, it is vital that we treat each other's opinions and comments with courtesy even when they diverge and conflict with our own. We must avoid personal attacks and the use of ad hominem arguments to invalidate each other's positions. Instead, we must develop a culture of civil argumentation, wherein all positions have the right to be defended and argued against in intellectually reasoned ways. It is this standard that everyone must accept in order to stay in this class; a standard that applies to all inquiry in the university, but whose observance is especially important in a course whose subject matter is so emotionally charged.

### Gender Inclusive Language Statement

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair

versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications, and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their pronouns.

### **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion**

The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the [Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page](#).

We ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing [titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu). Reports can also be [filed online](#). You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

### **Accessibility**

The Canvas LMS platform was built using the most modern HTML and CSS technologies, and is committed to W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative and Section 508 guidelines. Specific details regarding individual feature compliance are documented and updated regularly.

### **Disability Services**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services \(DRS\)](#), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, [drsrecep@pitt.edu](mailto:drsrecep@pitt.edu), (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

### **University Notifications**

The University offers an Emergency Notification Service (ENS) which is used to communicate with subscribers through voice, text, and email messages, as deemed appropriate in the event of an emergency. For instructions on how to register, please refer to CSSD's website: <http://technology.pitt.edu/services/emergency-notification-service>.

Any changes to normal University operations will be announced as early as possible through the ENS, the University's official website ([www.pitt.edu](http://www.pitt.edu)), Twitter (@PittTweet), and local news media outlets.

### **Academic Integrity Guidelines**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands-on practice, complete the [Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial](#).

Provided here is the School of Education [Academic Integrity Policy](#). Please read the policy carefully.

### **School of Education Grievance Procedures**

The purpose of grievance procedures is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in the EdD program believes that a faculty member has not met his or her obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow the procedure described in the Guidelines (See below) by (1) first trying to resolve the matter with the faculty member directly; (2) then, if needed, attempting to resolve the matter through conversations with their EdD advisor; (3) if needed, next talking to the associate dean of the school; and (4) if needed, filing a written statement of charges with the school-level academic integrity officer.

The more specific procedure for student grievances is as follows:

1. The student should talk to the faculty member to attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the student should talk to their doctoral advisor.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should talk to the coordinator of the EdD program, Dr. Tom Akiva.
4. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should next talk to the SOE associate dean of students (Dr. Shederick McClendon).

**The School of Education [Policies and Forms](#)** page on the SOE website explains several policies and procedures, including academic probation, course repeats, leaves of absence, monitored withdrawal, transfer credits, and statute of limitations.

### **Health and Safety Statement**

During this pandemic, it is extremely important that you abide by the [public health regulations](#), the University of Pittsburgh's [health standards and guidelines](#), and [Pitt's Health Rules](#). These rules have been developed to protect the health and safety of all of us. Universal [face covering](#) is required in all classrooms and in every building on campus, without exceptions, regardless of vaccination status. This means you must wear a face covering that properly covers your nose and mouth when you are in the classroom. If you do not comply, you will be asked to leave class. It is your responsibility have the required face covering when entering a university building or classroom. For the most up-to-date information and guidance, please visit [coronavirus.pitt.edu](http://coronavirus.pitt.edu) and check your Pitt email for updates before each class.

If you are required to isolate or quarantine, become sick, or are unable to come to class, contact me as soon as possible to discuss arrangements.

### **Food/Housing Insecurity**

Many students, both undergraduate and graduate, experience housing and/or food insecurity that can impact their academic work and general health. Please know there are resources available to you that are confidential. Of course, you are welcome to speak with me if you need support in contacting the right people/offices:

Pitt Pantry: Food Pantry available to the wider University community  
<https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/pittserves/sustain/pantry/>

Off-Campus Housing Office: <http://www.ocl.pitt.edu/>

## **Your Well-being Matters**

College/Graduate school can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to care for yourself and seeking appropriate support can help you achieve your academic and professional goals. You are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax.

It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources. The University Counseling Center is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician. You can also [visit the Counseling Center website](#).

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930.

You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.

If the situation is life threatening, call the Police:

- On-campus: Pitt Police: 412-268-2121
- Off-campus: 911

## **Additional University of Pittsburgh Resources:**

**Education Library Guide:** See this Hillman Library [customized libguide](#), a gateway to resources for education students and faculty

**Religious Observances:** See the [Provost's annual memo](#) about religious observances.

**Emergencies:** Do you have Pitt Police saved on your mobile phone? 911 works, or Pitt Police, 412-624-2121

**Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI):** Resources, consultation, and bias incident reporting: <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/>

Title IX office, resources regarding sexual harassment, gender-based discrimination, and sexual violence: <https://www.titleix.pitt.edu/>

**Catalogs:** The University Catalogs have comprehensive information about policies, programs, and courses. There are University-level policies and policies specific to the School of Education. Bookmark these links and review these documents periodically.

- [Pittsburgh Campus Graduate and Professional Studies](#)

**Student Mental Health:** Counseling Center, in the Wellness Center in Nordenberg Hall: <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cc/> Call 412-648-7930, any time.

**Sexual Assault Response:** 412-648-7856

**Care and Resource Support Team (CARS):** Email [pittcares@pitt.edu](mailto:pittcares@pitt.edu) or see: <http://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/cars/>



