

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Department of Health and Human Development

HHD 2320: Psychosocial Aspects of Health

Instructor: Sally Sherman, Ph.D. – Associate Professor
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Class Days: Mondays
Class Time: 5:30p.m.-8:00p.m.
Class Location: 32 Oak Hill Court, 2nd floor large classroom

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

The School of Education Mission Statement:

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 Overview:

This course will increase students' understanding of the diverse personal, socio-cultural, and institutional factors that influence health, physical activity, and nutrition-related behaviors, and ultimately intervention design and approach. The course will cover the social determinants of health and health disparities, theoretical models of health behavior change, and intervention/behavior change strategies and tools. Students coming away from this course will have a better understanding of how to apply health behavior change models to promote physical activity and healthy behaviors in diverse populations through tailored interventions.

Course Objectives:

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

1. Identify 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

Assigned Readings:

There is no required textbook for this course. All assigned readings will be posted on Canvas or made available through the Hillman Library.

Grading Scale:

Your grade will be determined by dividing your actual points by the total number of points attainable (250 points).

A+	= 95 – 100%	237 - 250 points
A	= 90 – 94.6%	225 - 236 points
B	= 80 – 89.9%	200 - 224 points
C	= 70 – 79.9%	175 - 199 points
D	= 60 – 69.9%	150 - 174 points
F	≤ 59.9%	≤ 149 points

Course Grading:

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

Weekly reflections based on the assigned readings will be due by class time (5:30pm on Mondays). These reflections are worth 5 points each and account for 10% of your overall grade in this course. For the journal reflections, your responses should be equivalent to approximately 1-2 pages, 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. A grading rubric will be posted on Canvas with more detail about how to earn the full 5 points.

Attendance and Participation

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, to participate in discussions with your peers and class activities. On the days when we have guest speakers, you are expected to read the assigned *Class participation will be assessed during each class session based on the criteria:*

1. 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.
2. Contributions should advance the academic conversation in-class.

Research and Application Paper

For this paper, you will choose to research (1) a disease/condition and (2) a marginalized population to research. You will 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. As part of this assignment, you will complete a peer review of a fellow students' paper to engage in the peer review process and to help to better prepare your own paper for submission.

Final Presentation

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. The final class of the semester will be reserved for presenting your final group project and celebrating your work to date.

Course Content	POINTS
Attendance & Participation	120
Field Visit & Guest Speaker Assignments	25
Reflective Practices	25
Peer Review	10
Research & Application Paper	50
Research & Application Presentation	20
TOTAL POINTS	250

Canvas:

All assignments **must be submitted through Canvas by the due date/time**. For certain assignments, late submissions may be accepted. Please communicate with the professor.

Student Responsibilities:

ATTENDANCE

1. Due to the nature of the course material, attendance at our weekly meetings is expected. The following actions on your part will demonstrate attendance:
 - Be present and on time for all class meetings.
 - Be engaged during class discussions. Focus on lecture and eliminate outside distractions.
 - Cell phone use is not permitted.
 - Regular attendance is mandatory.
 - Absences are excused under the following circumstances:
 - Medical Emergency or Sickness – Must have a note from medical doctor documenting visit.
 - Mandatory Academic Event – Must have a note from advisor/professor documenting attendance.
 - Personal or Family Emergency – Communication with instructor is required prior to missing class. Discuss plan for making up classes immediately upon return.
 - A “G” grade will not be an option for students who fall behind in the course for non-emergency reasons.
2. Frequently and regularly accessing course instructional materials and assignments (assignments, discussion forums, etc.) posted on the Canvas course environment during the entire semester.
3. Read and respond to the course e-mails.
4. Read course announcements.

PARTICIPATION

Students will actively engage and participate in the online Canvas course environment. Active participation consists of the following actions and activities:

1. Engage actively in the course by reading, reviewing, and watching pertinent instructional materials provided in the Canvas course environment throughout the semester.
2. Read all assignments, instructions, and project guidelines thoroughly and come to class prepared to discuss.

3. Submit all assignments **electronically by the due dates and times** as specified in the guidelines provided.
4. Participate in any discussion forums by creating threads and posting comments by the due dates and times as specified in the guidelines provided.
5. Your contributions to the discussions (posts and responses) should be complete and free of grammatical or structural errors.
6. All written assignments must follow **APA format**. A link to a **Library Guide** is provided on the course menu on the left which includes guides on APA. It also includes access to journal databases related to educational psychology that you might find useful.

NETIQUETTE

Any online components of the course require the same level of professionalism, respect, and courtesy that you would show your instructor and classmates in a face-to-face setting. To that end, please observe the following standards in any online components:

1. **Discussion forums:** The purpose of discussion forums in an academic setting is to advance the understanding of a given topic. Therefore, your threads and posts should:
 - be substantive (more than a few words), constructive, and on-topic.
 - advance the discussion in a meaningful way.
 - demonstrate professional courtesy.
 - use correct grammar and punctuation (no acronyms commonly used in texting).
2. **Electronic communication:** You should avoid casual language and abbreviations commonly used in texting, which are not appropriate for in-class communication. Care should be taken to use correct grammar and punctuation.
3. **Websites:** You should use care when sharing websites in your posts by ensuring that the website is appropriate for an academic setting, non-offensive in nature, and relevant to the topic at hand.

Academic Policies:

Academic Integrity

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 [Academic Integrity Modules](#).

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, (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.

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.

Restroom and Locker Room Use

Students are welcome to use any restroom or locker room that corresponds to their gender identity. Additionally, there is a single-occupancy restroom/locker room in Trees Hall on the main floor. Please advise us immediately if you need guidance, support or if you find any of the facilities to be locked. Visit the following link to see all the single-occupancy facilities available on campus. <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/lgbtqia/restrooms/>

Content Warning and Class Climate Statement

Our course readings and classroom discussions will often focus on mature, difficult, and potentially challenging topics. As with any course in the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program, course topics are often political and personal. Readings and discussions might trigger strong feelings—anger, discomfort, anxiety, confusion, excitement, humor, and even boredom. Some of us will have emotional responses to the readings; some of us will have emotional responses to our peers' understanding of the readings; all of us should feel responsible for creating a space that is both intellectually rigorous and respectful. Above all, be respectful (even when you strongly disagree) and be mindful of the ways that our identities position us in the classroom. I expect everyone to come to class prepared to discuss the readings in a mature and respectful way. If you are struggling with the course materials, here are some tips: read the syllabus so that you are prepared in advance. You can approach your instructor ahead of time if you'd like more information about a topic or reading. If you think a particular reading or topic might be especially challenging or unsettling, you can arrive to class early and take a seat by the door so that you can easily exit the classroom as needed. If you need to leave or miss class, you are still responsible for the work you miss. If you are struggling to keep up with the work because of the course content, you should speak with me and/or seek help from the counseling center.

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](#).

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](#). I 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. 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).

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.

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. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of all genders (for example, first year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, everyone versus ladies and gentlemen, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications and recognizes both gender identity and expression. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, gendered 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. Students, faculty, and staff have the right to control their own identity and to be referred to by the name and pronouns with which they identify. People also have the right to maintain their privacy regarding information they do not wish to share about their identities, including gender identity and pronouns.

Religious Observances

The observance of religious holidays (activities observed by a religious group of which a student is a member) and cultural practices are an important reflection of diversity. As your instructor, I am committed to providing equivalent educational opportunities to students of all belief systems. At the beginning of the semester, you should review the course requirements to identify foreseeable conflicts with assignments, exams, or other required attendance. If at all possible, please contact me (your course coordinator/s) within the first two weeks of the first class meeting to allow time for us to discuss and make fair and reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or tasks.

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.

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.

Your Well-being Matters

College/Graduate school can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to maintain your well-being and seek appropriate support can help you achieve your goals and lead a fulfilling life. 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. You are encouraged to visit Thrive@Pitt to learn more about well-being and the many campus resources available to help you thrive.

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. 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.