HSSP 114b – Racial/Ethnic & Gender Inequalities in Health and Health Care
SYLLABUS

Brandeis University
Health: Science, Society and Policy
Irving Schneider and Family Building (Heller School), Room G3
Thursdays, 2:00 pm – 4:50 pm

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Course Description
This course is designed to help students learn about the nature of health disparities among racial and ethnic minorities and other vulnerable populations in the United States and to become familiar with the research literature on health disparities. Through lectures, readings, class discussions, papers and exercises, students will become knowledgeable about the most commonly used indices to measure health disparities and the role of poverty, racism, discrimination, residential segregation community context, stress, genetics, and other factors on health status disparities. We will also explore the role of the intersection of race and gender on health disparities, and the needs and challenges of special populations in regard to health disparities. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to identify demographic and epidemiological patterns in health status by race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status. They will also be able to identify and critique the current theories for racial/ethnic disparities in health status, access and quality, as well as become familiar with conceptual models and frameworks for reducing and/or eliminating health status and health care disparities. Class exercises and course readings will also help students to understand and critically analyze the multiple pathways in which racial discrimination impacts on health status, access to, and quality of care. Upon completion of the course students will be familiar with and have the ability to identify and critique several public health and policy initiatives/strategies designed to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities among racial/ethnic and other vulnerable populations.

The general objectives of the course are to:
- Introduce epidemiological concepts and theories.
- Introduce and explain the differences between health status and health care disparities.
- Provide perspectives on the causes for health status and health care disparities.
- Highlight proposed strategies to address health and health care disparities.
- Highlight interventions and initiatives that are effective in addressing health status and health care disparities.
- Provide students with the ability to critically evaluate perspectives and strategies to address health and health care disparities.
- Provide ideas about their role as students and workers in addressing health disparities.

Disability Status:
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.
Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is acceptable to use the words or ideas of others, provided that the source is properly acknowledged. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the sources of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. Violations of University policy on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could result in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

Course Materials
Please note that all assigned readings will be available on Latte. That said, you also have the option to obtain the texts for your convenience, personal library, or further reading by purchasing them at the bookstore, renting them through the publisher, or viewing them as a library ebook.


Note: additional readings materials and multimedia content required for the class will be posted on Latte.

Grading
1. Individual Final Paper or Project 25%
2. Short Paper 10%
3. Class Participation (includes attendance, in-class assignments, question formulation, reflection/review papers, and current events) 20%
4. Web-Based Assignment 10%
5. Group Assignments (2): sessions 6 and 13 (each weighted equally) 20%
6. Individual Final Paper/Project Proposal (original and revision—5% each) 10%*
7. Quiz (on epidemiology, health disparity terms, & federal health agencies) 5%

*If you receive a 90% or above on your first draft, you will not be required to submit a revision and your grade will be based on your first draft.
**Class Format and Emphasis**
This course will utilize a social justice lens that reviews evidence of the social determinants of health and facilitates discussion on how nations, communities, and individuals can take action on root and secondary causes of inequities. Students will be provided with a critical health analysis, which will focus on understanding the upstream circumstances that affect health and the strategies to take action to address inequities in health. Specifically, we will address the following: what is health; what are health disparities; and what are the causes and strategies to address them. The first half of each class session will include a lecture and/or video to highlight the basic tenets of the day’s topic. For the remainder of the session, students will break into groups to process the topic and/or garner skills in public health engagement, especially advocacy in regard to health and health care disparities.

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to attend all classes, have completed all the readings, and participate in discussions. Class participation will be graded on attendance and the quality of the participation. Please make sure that readings are completed, as there is the possibility of pop quizzes, which will be calculated as part of your class participation grade.

**Current Events:** Students will be expected to be familiar with current events related to health disparities issues. Therefore, each week students will be required to read the Daily Report Headlines at [http://kff.org/disparities-policy](http://kff.org/disparities-policy). This will provide up to date information on health disparities issues. During each class, students will be called upon to briefly highlight something in the news of interest to them. Current events will be subsumed under class participation.

**Reflection/Review Papers:** On occasion students will be required to write a 500 - 1000 word (1-2 page) reflection paper on their weekly reading in class. This will happen without notice, and consequently students should be ready to meet this request. This is counted as part of class participation.

**Short Essay Assignment:** Writing a short essay will help students to think critically about and/or synthesize and integrate the readings on a particular topic. The essay assignment may require a response to a specific question, or a critique and/or synthesis of the readings. If students are asked to critique a set of readings they may want to compare and contrast arguments, methodologies, perspectives and implications. The specific assignments for the essays will be handed out in class.

**Web-based Assignments:** These assignments consist of completing a web-based course on measuring health disparities and responding to case studies. Responses to the case studies must be written up and submitted unless otherwise indicated. Evidence that you have completed the web-based course will also be required.

**Group Assignments:** One important skill is collaborative work. Students who have varying talents, perspectives and political ideologies will be required to work together to accomplish a task in a short period of time. Group assignments will usually require that students solve a real-life health disparity problem in a creative and effective manner or synthesize and/or critique health disparity documents. At the beginning of the semester, students will be assigned to a group. Both weekly discussions and group assignments may require work in or outside of class.

**Question Formulation Technique:** This is essentially a structured brainstorming technique that will help you to develop your own question formulation skills. I will ask you either in class or as homework to think about the day’s topic and generate your own questions. There will only be a penalty for not responding to the questions. They will not be graded but is counted as part of class participation.
**Final Paper or Project:** Students can choose to write a research paper or conduct a final project on a topic of interest relating to health or health care disparities. It is expected that students will use a range of references and show creativity in their work. Final papers must be submitted by the last day of class. By February 28th, students will be required to submit a 1-2 page proposal for their final assignment, including a topic, objectives, proposed methods, data sources, and a timeline for completion.

**PART 1: DESCRIBING HEALTH DISPARITIES AND CONCEPTUALIZING RACE AND ETHNICITY**

**Session 1 – January 15, 2015**

**Course Overview**

**Class Objectives:**
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Describe course goals, objectives and expectations for the course.
- Articulate why it is important to study health disparities.
- Have an understanding of the reasons that their classmates are interested in the topic of health disparities.

**View in class**
- Trailer for “Unnatural Causes”
- View Discovery Health Disparities Video (parts 1-3)

**Group Work and Exercises**
- Share with group how you define health and a health disparity

**Session 2 – January 22, 2015**

**The Historical Aspects of Race/Ethnicity and Health; Conceptualizing Race and Ethnicity**

**Class Objectives**
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Discuss population demographics in the US and its changing trends
- Discuss the definition and meaning of health
- Discuss historic examples of unequal treatment of different populations in the US
- Discuss the social roots of health disparities
- Discuss conceptual issues in defining race and ethnicity
- Define OMB Directive 15

**View in Class**
Video on Conceptualizing Race:
*RACE - The Power of an Illusion, Episode 1 The Difference Between Us*
Group Work and Exercises


Required Readings

**Historical Aspects**


Berkman, L. & Kawachi, I. (n.d.). *Historical framework for social epidemiology*. Chapter 1 (pp. 3-12)


LaVeist TA (2005). “Historical Aspects of Race/Ethnicity and Health.” pp. 1-7,


**Conceptualizing Race and Ethnicity**

“Conceptual Issues in Race, Ethnicity and Health”, pp. 7 -29 in LaVeist (2005)


Session 3 – January 29, 2015

Key Definitions and Terms, Epidemiological Profile of Racial/Ethnic Health Disparities, and Organizations that Address Minority Health

Class Objectives

By the end of class, students will be able to:

- Describe demographic trends related to racial/ethnic minorities in the U.S.
- Be familiar with key terminology and definitions used in describing health disparities.
- Define epidemiology and epidemiological terms, such as life expectancy, prevalence, incidence, age adjustment, survival curve, infant mortality, maternal mortality, life expectancy, years of potential life lost, disability etc.
- Identify the historic trends in mortality rates by race/ethnicity.
• Identify key mortality, morbidity, and other health status indicators by race, ethnicity and gender.
• Describe leading causes of health morbidity and the prevalence of conditions on sub-populations in the United States.
• Be familiar with governmental organizations that address minority health

**Group Work and/or Exercise**
• TBA

**Required Reading**

*Epidemiological Profile*


http://www.cdc.gov/DisparitiesAnalytics/topic_table.html

*Terminology*


*Government Agencies Addressing Health Care*

Report on Activities Related to “Improving Women’s Health” as required by the Affordable Care Act, HHS, 2013
PART 2: THEORIES TO EXPLAIN HEALTH DISPARITIES

Session 4 – February 5, 2015 (note quiz)
General Epidemiological Theories, Socio-economic Position, and Social Injustice

Class Objectives:
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Understand the history of human rights in regard to health.
- Describe the sources of inequitable distribution of disease.
- Understand the role of race, class and gender position in health inequities.
- Articulate the social justice perspective on health inequities.
- Describe or highlight the social determinants of health or proximate sources of health inequities.

View in Class
- Unnatural Causes: In Sickness and In Wealth Video (56 mins.)

In Class Work
- IN CLASS *Quiz (on epidemiology, health disparity terms, and health organizations)

Required Reading

**General Epidemiological Theories**


**Socio-Economic Position**


**Social Injustice**  


**Recommended Reading**  

**Session 5 – February 12, 2015 (note assignment)**  
**Theories to Explain Health Disparities; Stress and Discrimination/Racism as Variables**

**Class Objectives:**  
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Describe the three categories that make up the determinants of health model.
- Describe two theories to explain health disparities from each of three categories that constitute the health disparities model.
- Articulate the role of stress in health disparities and name and explain two models.
- Articulate the concepts of racism and discrimination and their impact on health care and health status among ethnic and racial minorities.
- Describe the relationship between perceived racism/discrimination and health outcomes.

**View in Class**
- Excerpts from *The Angry Heart: The Impact of Racism on Heart Disease Among African Americans Or*
- Episode 4 of Unnatural Causes “Bad Sugar”
- How Racism Affects Health: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opukACz_Qx8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opukACz_Qx8)

**Group Work**
- Mapping the Causes of the Cause Exercise; each group to debrief the class on their findings and their process
- How Racism is Embodied Exercise

**Required Readings**


**Stress (group 1)**


**Racism and Discrimination (group 2)**


**Recommended Readings and other media**


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**WEB-BASED ASSIGNMENT DUE: (Due 2/12/2015 at 11:59 PM) MEASURING HEALTH DISPARITIES – 10% of your grade. Assignment guidelines will be handed out & discussed in class.**

**Midterm Recess: February 16-20, 2015**

**PART 3. SPECIAL POPULATIONS AND HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES**

**Session 6 – February 26, 2015 (note assignments)**

Intersectionality, Gender Sub-populations and LBGT groups

**FIRST GROUP ASSIGNMENT DUE: Each student will choose one topic (see below) of focus for reading and will be assigned to a group that will be responsible for presenting on that topic. Guidelines for the assignment will be provided. This assignment is worth 10% of your grade. PREPARATION IS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE OUTSIDE OF CLASS.**

**Class Objectives:**
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Explain the gender paradox.
- Articulate how health inequalities differ by sex and gender.
- Discuss the concept of intersectionality.
- Discuss the importance of considering how social identities co-exist and shape one another and also interact with social processes and institutions to impact health outcomes.
- Describe research methods and measures utilized to investigate interactions between social identities.
- Describe the leading causes of health morbidity and the prevalence of conditions for different subpopulations by gender and race.
• Describe some of the causes for disparities in these subpopulations and their differences by gender.
• Describe LBGT and non-LGBT populations.
• Discuss health differences by sexual orientation and transgender status and the causes of these observed differences.
• Describe the specific and unique stressors for African-American women.
• Describe the health and health care disparities for minority children.
• Address barriers to maternal/child and other health services for minority women.
• Describe a qualitative research project which explored the causes for disparities in prenatal care utilization and birth outcomes.

View in Class
• “When the Bough Breaks”
• Group Presentations from student groups.

Group Work
• Group Presentations

Required Readings

NOTE: Everyone will choose one topic of focus for reading. The instructor will poll students re: topic in class.

Gender


PRACTICE ARTICLE
Sexual Orientation


Intersectionality
Weber, L. (2006). Intersectionality and Health: An Introduction (pp. 3-17) and Reconstructing the Landscape of Health Disparities Research: Promoting Dialogue and Collaboration Between Feminists: Intersectional and Biomedical Paradigms (pp 21-59). In A. Schulz and L. Mullings (Eds.). *Gender, Race, Class and Health: Intersectional Approaches*


Maternal and Child Health Issues


*Best and Promising Practices for Improving Research, Policy and Practice Involvement in Pregnancy Outcomes,* Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Health Policy Institute PRACTICE ARTICLE


**Session 7 – March 5, 2015 (note assignment)**

**Neighborhoods and Place/Residential Segregation and Health Disparities**

**Class Objectives**
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Describe the difference between a compositional and contextual effect.
- Discuss some of the major methodological issues related to studying the effects of context on health.
- Explain why racial residential segregation is associated with health.
- Discuss the association between racial residential segregation and racism/prejudice, as well as how racial segregation complicates the study of neighborhood effects on health.
- Describe the role of neighborhood-level social/structural processes that have influenced the spread of STD’s in the U.S.

**View in Class**
- Episode Five: *Place Matters* of Unnatural Causes Series (28 minutes)

**Group Work**
- Find your Passion
- What are your social change intentions?
- Writing A Mission Statement for advocacy intention

**Required Readings**

*Neighborhoods, Place and Health*

Why Place and Race Matter, Policy Link, 2011
http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7b97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-e6a3bbe35af0%7d/WPRM%20FULL%20REPORT%20(LORES).PDF. PRACTICE ARTICLE


OR

http://www.jointcenter.org/sites/default/files/upload/research/files/Place%20Matters%20Community%20Reports%20Summary.pdf

Webinar on Promise Zones

**Residential Segregation**


*Final paper/Project proposal due on 3/7/2015 at 11:59 PM (If required, revisions will be due the week of 3/23/2015)*

Session 8 – March 12, 2015
Immigration and Health Disparities

Class Objectives
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Explain the immigrant paradox.
- Discuss several potential explanations for this paradox.
- Discuss the general pattern of the trajectory of health over time for immigrants in the US.
- Explain the effect of immigrant status (both duration and nativity) on the health of Asians and Pacific Islanders.
- Articulate the five myths of immigrants and the U.S health care system.

View in Class
- Becoming American: Episode 2 of Unnatural Causes Series – 28 minutes.

Group Work
- Discussion of Video via learning facilitation skills for Health Equity utilizing the ORID discussion

Required Readings


*3 - 5 page paper that reflects an understanding of theories based on sessions 4 & 5. Due in class on 3/12/2015

PART 4: DISPARITIES IN ACCESS AND HEALTH CARE

Session 9 – March 19, 2015
Disparities in Health Care Access and Quality

Class Objectives:
By the end of class, students will be able to:
- Describe disparities in access to care for African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian and Native American populations.
- Articulate the Andersen and Aday Behavioral Model of the use of health care services and the factors that determine whether or not people are able to access care.
- Articulate the model for sources of health care disparities.
- Identify patient, provider, and systems level influences on disparities for health care.

**In Class Activity**
- View in Class Video on Health Care Disparities and/or develop an educational program to address health care or access disparities based on readings and the media.

**Required Reading**

**General Readings**

**Access to Care**


Cao, V. (2013). Health And Human Services Collect Data To Address AAPI Health Disparities.

**Health Care Quality/Treatment**


**Read one of the three below:**
Clinicians' Implicit Ethnic/Racial Bias and Perceptions of Care Among Black and Latino Patients,” *Annals of Family Medicine*, January/February link
Assessment of Biases Against Latinos and African Americans Among Primary Care Providers and Community Members,” *American Journal of Public Health*, January (link)*

Differences in Patient-Reported Experiences of Care by Race and Acculturation Status,” *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, Oct. 4, 2012 (link)

Read one of the following:

OR


Recommended

https://members.aamc.org/eweb/upload/Addressing%20Racial%20Disparities.pdf

**PART 5: HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES: INTERVENTIONS AND POLICIES**

**Session 10 – March 26, 2015**
Community Health Services and Promising Interventions

Class Objectives:
By the end of the class, students will be able to:
- Highlight and discuss key components of the HHS Plan to Eliminate Health Disparities
- Discuss the meaning of the term “community.
- Provide examples of effective community-based strategies and initiatives to address health and health care disparities.
- Define what a Federally- Qualified Health Center is.
- Delineate the populations served and services provided by community health centers.
- Delineate the impact that CHC’s have on health disparities.
- Explore ways that students can address health disparities.

Required Readings

Promoting Healthy Communities:  


**Sessions 11 and 12 – April 2, 2015 and April 16, 2015**

*(Note: Passover and Spring Recess is April 3-10, 2015)*

**Culturally Competent Health Care and Workforce Diversity**

**Class Objectives**

By the end of these classes, students will be able to:

- Delineate the role of cultural competency interventions, health care financing, quality improvement, workforce diversity, intersectional approaches, and legal interventions in reducing and eliminating health and health care disparities.
- Identify key interventions to address health care disparities.
- Critically evaluate 2 frameworks that have recently emerged as strategies to reduce disparities in access to and quality of care.
- Describe the key components of cultural competence.
- Identify 3 models of culturally competent care.
- Describe the effect of culturally competent systems and providers on health disparities.
- Distinguish between cultural competency, cultural humility, and cultural safety.

**View in class**


**Group Work**

- Case Studies for Chapter 12 and Chapter 13. In T. A. LaVeist, Minority Populations and Health, San Francisco, Jossey Bass (Work in groups and prepare your responses to the case studies. *(BE PREPARED TO PRESENT IN CLASS.)*)
Required Readings

**Cultural and Linguistic Competence**


**Workforce Diversity**


**Recommended Readings**

**Addressing inequities in health, legal, diversity, and cultural competency approaches**


Session 13– April 23, 2015 (note assignments)

- SECOND GROUP ASSIGNMENT DUE: instructions to follow (10% of the grade)
- FINAL PAPER/PROJECT DUE IN CLASS