

# MCGILL DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

## COURSE OUTLINE

**GEOG 503**

**ADVANCED TOPICS IN HEALTH GEOGRAPHY**

**Fall 2015**

**Instructor:** Professor Nancy Ross

**Class Meeting Times:** 1005-1255 Fridays

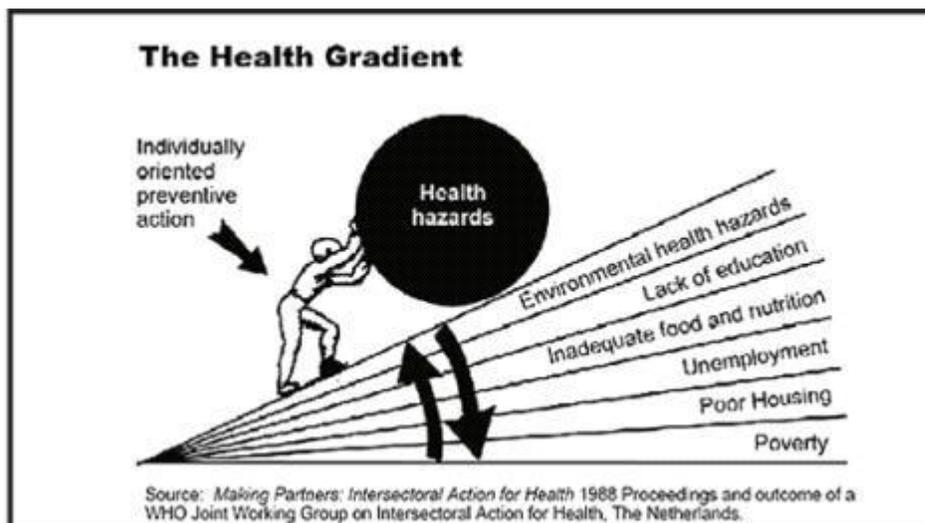
**Location:** Burnside 429

**Contact information:** Prof. Ross, Burnside Hall Rm. 420, [Nancy.Ross@McGill.ca](mailto:Nancy.Ross@McGill.ca), 514-398-4307

**Readings :** A list of readings is attached. Readings are available electronically through *MyCourses*.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a critical review of advanced topics in health geography that stem from the social gradient in health across populations at neighbourhood, urban, national and international scales. Seminars will focus on critical appraisal of conceptual and methodological approaches in health geography research. Students will develop independent project topics throughout the course, and have the opportunity to focus on selected themes in health geography.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe dominant paradigms and conceptual approaches in health geography.

2. Critically appraise literature in the health and geographic sciences.
3. Evaluate alternative methodological approaches to health geography research.
4. Facilitate seminar discussions on selected health geography themes.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD**

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There will be one 3-hour seminar every Friday. Seminars will include both instructor-led and student-lead group discussion. Students are expected to complete readings and prepare to participate actively during class discussions.

## **METHOD OF EVALUATION**

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### **Evaluation**

Thematic presentation	20%
Proposal for Systematic Review	10%
Final Paper – A publishable quality systematic review	50%
Final presentation of review paper	10%
Participation	10%

Thematic presentations: Students will present and facilitate a review of a selected paper for one of the course themes (Weeks 5, 6, 7 and 9). Students will be expected to identify an application paper appropriate to the week's topic, provide it to the instructor to post for class-wide reading, present a summary and critical appraisal of the research, and facilitate discussion related to the research and thematic topic.

Proposal for Systematic Review: Students will propose a systematic review in an area of interest to them. The proposal should be about 3 pages in length and communicate the need for a systematic review of a particular body of work. Search strategy and study inclusion criteria should be described as well as an estimate of the number of studies to be included in the review. **The proposal is due Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.**

Final paper: Students will prepare a systematic review of the literature (5,000-word maximum) on a topic related to their research interests. This review should incorporate principles of systematic review learned in class and incorporate realist philosophy and critical appraisal where appropriate. The aim is to produce a publishable quality paper that will also inform the student's research. Students will present their reviews to the class in the final course sessions. **The papers are due one week after the last day of classes, Friday, December 11, 2015 by 12pm (noon).**

Final presentation of review paper: Students will prepare a short presentation of their independent review paper, including a summary of the background, review objective, methodology, key findings, and implications of their work.

Participation: Class participation is a requirement of the course. Quality of contribution is preferred over quantity. Overall class preparation and participation as well as performance in student-led discussion will be assessed for the participation grade. Class participation will be evaluated based on evidence that students have read assigned readings and prepared for class, and regular, thoughtful contribution to weekly discussions.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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Policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the [Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities, Charter of Students' Right](#) (online at <http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/greenbookenglish.pdf>).

**Academic Integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/student/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/student/srr/honest) for more information).

**Language of Submission:** In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

**Student assessment:** For information on university and department policies for student assessment, please go to <http://www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment>

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## COURSE SCHEDULE 2015

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Date	Topic	
<b>Week 1</b> Sept 11	First meeting: introductions, student-led discussion about their research interests, course expectations, review of the syllabus	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Week 2</b> Sept 18	An introduction: health geography, epidemiology, population level perspectives	<b>NR</b>
<b>Week 3</b> 25 Sept	Critical appraisal of health literature	<b>NR</b>
<b>Week 4</b> Oct 2	Systematic review preamble Pragmatics of systematic review - getting a handle on the health literature	<b>NR+Librarian</b>
<b>Week 5</b> Oct 9	Context and composition/neighbourhoods and health	<b>NR+students</b>
<b>Week 6</b> Oct 16	The social gradient in health	<b>NR+students</b>
<b>Week 7</b> Oct 23	Obesity, environment and chronic disease	<b>NR+students</b>
<b>Week 8</b> Oct 30	Class attends "Global Environmental Health: From Cell to Society" at Thomson House	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Week 9</b> Nov 6	Urban health and health policy	<b>NR</b>
<b>Week 10</b> Nov 13	Student Paper Presentations	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Week 11</b> Nov 20	Student Paper Presentations	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Week 12</b> Nov 27	Student Paper Presentations	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Week 13</b> Dec 4	Summary and Conclusions	<b>ALL</b>

## READINGS

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### **An Introduction to Health Geography, Epidemiology, Population Level Perspectives**

- Dunn CE (2013) Showcasing geographies of health research: An introduction to selected research from the 14<sup>th</sup> International Medical Geography Symposium. *Social Science and Medicine*. 91:102-104. Please scan the Special Issue of SSM to get a sense of the breadth of research in Health Geography – the papers appear pages 105-255.
- Schwartz, S, E Susser, and M Susser (1999) A future for epidemiology? *Annual Review of Public Health* 20:15-33.
- Rose, G (1985) Sick individuals and sick populations. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 14(1):32-38.
- Susser, M and E Susser (1996) Choosing a future for epidemiology: I. Eras and paradigms. *American Journal of Public Health* 86:668-73.

### **Critical appraisal**

- Elwood M. (2002) Forward projection—using critical appraisal in the design of studies. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 31:1071–1073.
- Greenhalgh T (1997) How to read a paper: getting your bearings (deciding what the paper is about). *BMJ* 315:243-246.
- Greenhalgh T and Taylor R (1997) How to read a paper: Papers that go beyond numbers (qualitative research) *BMJ* 315:740-743.
- Greenhalgh T (1997) How to read a paper: Statistics for the non-statistician. II: "Significant" relations and their pitfalls. *BMJ* 315:422-425.
- Greenhalgh T (1997) How to read a paper: Papers that summarize other papers (systematic reviews and meta-analysis). *BMJ* 315:672-75.
- Heller RF, Verma A, Gemmell I, Harrison R, Hart J, Edwards R (2008) Critical appraisal for public health: A new checklist. *Public Health* 122: 92–98.
- Paper that we will appraise together: Génereux M, Auger N, Goneau M and Daniel M (2008) Neighbourhood socioeconomic status, maternal education and adverse birth outcomes among mothers living near highways. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 62:695-700.

### **Systematic Review**

- Pawson R, Greenhalgh T, Harvey G, Walshe K (2005) Realist review – a new method of systematic review designed for complex policy interventions. *J Health Serv Res Policy* 10: 21–34.
- Waddington et al (2012) How to do a good systematic review of effects in international development: a tool kit. *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 4:359-387.
- Barnett-Page and Thomas (2009) Methods for the synthesis of qualitative research: a critical review. *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 9:59.
- Greenhalgh T and R Peacock (2005) Effectiveness and efficiency of search methods in systematic reviews of complex evidence: audit of primary sources. *BMJ* 331:1064-65.
- Greenhalgh T, Kristjansson E, Robinson V, (2007) Realist review to understand the efficacy of school feeding programmes. *BMJ* 335:858-861.
- Example published systematic reviews from GEOG 503:*
- DeBono NL, Ross NA, Berrang-Ford L (2012) Does the Food Stamp Program cause obesity? A realist review and a call for place-based research. *Health & Place* 18(4): 747–756.

### **Context and Composition**

- Subramanian et al (2009) Revisiting Robinson: the perils of individualistic and ecological fallacy. *International J of Epidemiology* 38:342-60.

- Ellaway A and McIntyre S (2009) Neighbourhoods and health. Chapter 21 in *A Companion to Health and Medical Geography*. Wiley: New York.
- Ludwig et al. (2012) Neighbourhood effects on the long-term well-being of low-income adults. *Science* 337:1505-1510.

### **The Social Gradient in Health**

- Kulkarni VS and Subramanian SV (2009) Social perspectives on health inequalities. Chapter 20 in *A Companion to Health and Medical Geography*. Wiley: New York.
- Evans G, Kim P (2010) Multiple risk exposure as a potential explanatory mechanism for the socioeconomic-health status gradient. *Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci.* 1186 (2010) 174–189.
- Marmot M (2005) Social determinants of health inequalities. *Lancet* 365: 1099-1104.

### **Obesogenic environments**

- Hill JO (2006) Understanding and addressing the epidemic of obesity: an energy balance perspective. *Endocr Rev.* 27:750-61.
- Lopez R, Hynes P (2006) Obesity, physical activity, and the urban environment: public health research needs. *Environmental Health* 5:25.
- Swinburn B et al. (2011) The global obesity pandemic: shaped by global drivers and local environments. *Lancet* 378: 804-814.
- Gortmaker S et al. (2011) Changing the future of obesity: science, policy, and action. *Lancet* 378:838-847.

### **Geo-Social Determinants of Health and Health Policy**

- Evans RG, Stoddart G (1990) Producing health, consuming healthcare. *Social Science and Medicine* 31:1347-63.
- Exworthy M, Bindman A, Davies H, Washington AE. (2006) Evidence into policy and practice? Measuring the progress of U.S. and U.K. policies to tackle disparities and inequalities in U.S. and U.K. health and health care. *Milbank Quarterly* 84:75-109.
- Marmot M (2012) Why should the rich care about the health of the poor? *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 184:1231-2.