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, 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

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

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 23rd, 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

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 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

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

An Introduction to Health Geography, Epidemiology, Population Level Perspectives

Dunn CE (2013) Showcasing geographies of health research: An introduction to selected research from the 14th 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.


Critical appraisal


Greenhalgh T (1997) How to read a paper: Papers that summarize other papers (systematic reviews and meta-analysis). BMJ 315:672-75.


Systematic Review


Example published systematic reviews from GEOG 503:


Context and Composition


The Social Gradient in Health

Obesogenic environments

Geo-Social Determinants of Health and Health Policy