

GEOG 503 - ADVANCED TOPICS IN HEALTH GEOGRAPHY FALL 2023

Number of credits: 3

Prerequisite: GEOG 303 or GEOG 403 or permission of instructor

COURSE MEETING AND LOCATION

Friday 8:35 to 11:25

Burnside Hall, room 308

INSTRUCTOR

Professor Mylène Riva (elle/her/she)

Burnside Hall, room 419

Email: mylene.riva@mcgill.ca

always indicate GEOG 503 in email subject

Office hours: Friday 11:45-12:45 or by appointment

Hello and welcome to GEOG 503 Advanced Topics in Health Geography! I look forward to working with you this semester and to critically explore and discuss how place and housing impacts health and well-being in myriad ways.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Housing is a human right and a fundamental determinant of health, with effects across the lifespan. In its *Housing and Health Guidelines*, the WHO defines healthy housing as shelter that supports physical, mental and social well-being; provides a feeling of home; is structurally sound and provides protection from the elements; facilitates comfortable temperatures, adequate sanitation, sufficient space, and protection from pollutants and hazards. Healthy housing further depends on the local community which enables social interactions, provides access to services, green space, and public transport options, and protection from pollution and the effects of disasters, such as climate-related extreme weather events.

In Canada as in many high-income countries, and even more so in lower and middle income countries, many people and households experience inadequate (e.g., poor conditions, insufficient hygiene infrastructure, overcrowding) and unstable housing conditions (e.g., rental tenure, unaffordability, homelessness), compromising their physical and mental health. The COVID-19 pandemic has made even more evident the importance of healthy and affordable housing. In recent years, the increase in shelter and shelter-related costs (e.g., utilities) has been putting a strain on the budget and health of many households. Living in healthy and thriving neighborhoods is increasingly inaccessible because of the steep increase in house prices and in rent. In some Inuit communities and First Nations, the high prevalence of housing needs, food and water insecurity is compromising the health and well-being of individuals and families. Climate change related extreme weather events remind us that housing offers shelter against the same elements that can quickly destroy homes and infrastructures, profoundly disrupting (and taking) lives.

In GEOG 503, we focus on housing – a fundamental determinant of health and a human right. We will explore housing as a place where health, well-being, diseases and illness are produced and as a setting for intervention, i.e. how changes in housing conditions can translate into improvements in health and well-being. In addition to the dwelling itself, or lack of in the case of homelessness, the

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health impacts of housing is further be explored in the context of neighborhood development (e.g., gentrification) and climate change. Through its focus on housing, the course includes perspectives of environmental and social determinants of health and well as of population health intervention research.

COURSE STRUCTURE, INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD AND PARTICIPATION

This is a graduate-level seminar course intended for graduate students and upper level undergraduate students interested in health geography. Students are expected to have basic understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods. GEOG 503 is a highly interactive and collaborative course, with small group and whole class discussion of scholarly literature.

The course meets for three hours, 8:35-11:25 on Friday mornings. While I will be leading formal lectures throughout the course, the course strongly relies on discussions around the week's topics and the readings. I will use the lecture-portion of the seminar to provide more background information on the week's topics and to unpack important concepts in the readings. This part of the seminar could be condensed in the first half of the course, or delivered in blocks around the readings. The other part of the seminar is dedicated to whole group and/or small group discussions around the readings. Lectures, readings and associated questions, and student-led discussion and presentation thus constitute the foundation of the course.

The readings for the course cover a wide breadth of material from the scientific literature in the fields of health geography, population health and related disciplines. All readings will be available on myCourses. For each seminar, we will read 3 to 5 scientific articles (sometimes more for some of the weeks). You are expected to complete the readings before class, as they will provide the information for the discussions taking place during the seminars.

The success of the course depends on collaboration, dialog, and active learning facilitated by interaction. Due to the interactive nature of the course, preparedness and involvement in discussion and attendance are very important. You need to prepare for the seminars by reading all the material, formulate and submit one reading question for each reading, and be prepared to discuss the readings. You are expected to be in class on time, attend each 3-hour session in class and to participate actively in all of them. This is an advanced seminar course and the expectation is that everyone is eager to participate. Your participation is thus essential for the success of the course and for your success in this course.

As the instructor of this course, my goal is to create a safe and collegial course environment with a class dynamic built on trust, honesty, respect, openness and curiosity. We are all expected to contribute to creating a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. To this end, classroom discussions should always be conducted in a way that shows honor, respect, and dignity to all members of the class. Disagreements should be pursued without personal attack and aggression, and instead, should be handled with grace and care. This will allow for rigorous intellectual engagement and a deeper learning experience for all.

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and/or [Student Accessibility and Achievement](#).

Please email me before the start of class if you would like me to refer to you by a different name than the name indicated in your student record or to inform me of your preferred pronouns.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

1. Identify and describe how place(s), and more specifically housing, influence health and well-being.
2. Reconcile and reflect on alternative methodological approaches in health geography and housing and health research.
3. Appraise and synthesize empirical literature.
4. Engage in and lead discussion on complex academic topics.
5. Design and conduct a systematic review of the scientific literature.

COURSE CONTENT

The course starts with an introduction to key concepts in health geography and in population health. The course then delves into exploring housing as a fundamental determinant of health, getting an in-depth understanding of how health and well-being can be influenced by different dimensions of housing, i.e., conditions, costs, consistency, constancy, and context. A key output of this class is the production of a systematic review on a topic of your choice related to the course content. To give you the tools needed to conduct a systematic review, two sessions scheduled early in the semester will be fully devoted to in-class workshops on: critically appraising empirical papers; searching the scientific literature; and conducting a systematic review. The table below presents the topics that will be covered over the semester. Note that the order of some of the session might change. Guest speakers will join us for some of the sessions.

Week #	Date	Description
1	Sept 1	Welcome, getting to know each other, practical information about the course Introduction to course topics
2	Sept 8	Introduction to health geography and to population health
3	Sept 15	Getting a handle on, and critically appraising, the scientific literature
4	Sept 22	Conducting a systematic review of the literature – class held at the McLennan Library * Sept 21 st : Submit topics for systematic review by 13:00PM
5	Sept 29	Housing as a fundamental determinant of health
6	Oct 6	<i>No class – Reading break</i>
7	Oct 13	The costs and conditions of housing: Energy poverty and well-being *Proposal for systematic review due
8	Oct 20	The consistency of housing: Homelessness, substance use, and access to health and social services

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9	Oct 27	The constancy of housing: Sense of home, ontological security, and psychosocial outcomes; Sense of control over one’s life; mental health
10	Nov 3	The conditions of housing: Indoor air quality, exposure to contaminants, respiratory and infectious diseases
11	Nov 10	The context of housing: Gentrification, transportation, and health inequalities
12	Nov 17	The context of housing: Climate change, extreme weather events, housing and health
13	Nov 24	*Presentations of systematic reviews
14	Dec 1	*Presentations of systematic reviews + Course conclusion

COURSE ASSESSMENT

In this course, you have numerous ways to earn the overall course grade by reading, writing, reflecting, participating actively, presenting, giving peer-feedback and demonstrating your abilities to make use of the knowledge gained in class. The course includes a number of assignments that will give you the opportunity to display your learning in a number of ways. You will work alone and/or in teams, with the opportunity to focus on selected themes related to the course content that are of most interest to you. Half of the grade is attributed in various ways to the term paper, a systematic review on a topic of your choice. The assignments are described below. More information about the assignments will be provided class and will be posted on myCourses.

	% of final grade	Due date	Submission
Thematic presentation and critical appraisal (Learning outcomes #1-4)	25%	Weeks 7 to 12	Submit two potential articles to me <u>at least</u> one week prior to the presentation date. <u>Only one article will be presented.</u> Submission of 2-page critical appraisal on myCourses, before the start of class.
Systematic review	50%		
<i>Submission of topic</i> for systematic review		Sept 21 st , no later than 13:00 PM	Submission of potential topic(s) for systematic review on myCourses
<i>Proposal</i> for systematic review (Learning outcomes #5)	10%	October 13 ^h , beginning of class	Submit on myCourses

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Presentation of systematic review (Learning outcomes #4-5)	10%	Nov 24 and Dec 1 st	Email presentation prior to class to Prof. Riva; Friday 8AM at the latest.
Final paper (Learning outcomes #1-5)	30%	Dec 11 th , 5PM	Submit on myCourses
Participation (Learning outcomes 1-4)	25%		
Reading questions	15%	24h before each class - THUR 8:35AM for weeks 2, 5, 7 to 12	Submit on myCourses
Participation to group discussion (quality of contributions to in-class discussion, punctuality, presence)	10%	Ongoing in class	Active participation in class

Thematic presentation and critical appraisal (25%)

In teams, you will write a 2-page critical appraisal of a scientific paper of your choice for one of the course themes covered during weeks 7 to 12. The size of teams will be confirmed after the add/drop deadline on Sept 12, 2023. Teams will identify an empirical paper appropriate to the week's topic. To guide the choice of the paper, teams are asked to identify 2 potential papers and to share them with me for consideration at least one week ahead of the lecture. Teams will give a presentation of the paper (20 minute) and will facilitate discussion (20 minute). The written critical appraisal and the presentation/discussion will count for 10% each.

Systematic review of the scientific literature (50%)

You will conduct a systematic review of the scientific literature on a topic related to their research interests (and to housing and health!). The review must incorporate principles of systematic review and critical appraisal learned in class. The aim is to produce a publishable quality paper. The grades for the systematic review will be allocated to: a proposal of the systematic review (10%); a presentation of the main results (10%); and a final paper (30%). You can decide to do the systematic review as an individual assessment, or in a team of maximum 2 students.

Proposal for systematic review: You will propose a systematic review on a topic of your choice related to the course content. The proposal must communicate the need for a systematic review of a particular body of work and justify the rationale for conducting the review. If a systematic review has been conducted on your chosen topic in the past 10 years, you need to provide an argument to explain how the proposed systematic review will be different from the one(s) already published. The proposal must also include: a search strategy (keywords searched), a description of criteria for including/excluding studies, an estimate of the number of studies to be included in the review, and a

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reference list of the potential studies to be included in the review. Because each topic is different, it is difficult to assess the numbers of papers that will be included in the review, and the numbers of papers included will vary between students. The word count of the proposal should be between 1000-1500 words, excluding tables and the list potential studies to be included in the review. The proposal is due on Thursday, October 12th at 5PM on myCourses.

Before you submit your proposal, I strongly encourage you to submit topics for your systematic review to me ahead of the proposal due date. Finding a topic is hard, and by the time the proposal is due, you might find that it will be difficult to conduct a systematic review on your chosen topic. Therefore, I ask that you submit two to three research question/topics for the systematic review on myCourses no later than Monday September 21st, 13:00PM. Having thought of potential research topic(s) will maximize your time during the Sept 22nd workshop dedicated to searching for scientific literature. Seeing your topic(s) will also allow me to provide feedback and to guide you in developing your proposal.

Presentation of systematic review: You will prepare a 10-minute power point presentation of your systematic review paper, including a summary of the background, review objectives, methodology, key findings, and implications of your work. You will present your systematic review during the last weeks of the course, ahead of the final submission of the paper so you can integrate comments received from your peers and from me. The presentation of the systematic reviews are scheduled in the last two weeks of the course.

Final paper: You will write-up your systematic review along the following sections (this is a guideline): introduction/rationale, methods, results, discussion and conclusion. The aim is to produce a publishable quality paper of 4000 to 5000 words. In addition you will be invited to summarize your review in an abstract of 250 words. Note that the word count for your paper excludes the abstract, tables/figures, and references. The final paper is due for submission on Monday December 11th, 2023 by 5PM on myCourses.

Participation (25%)

As mentioned, your participation is essential for the success of the course and for your success in this course. Participation will be assessed based on your formulation of questions from the readings (15%) and from your participation to group discussions (10%). The focus is on the quality of the contributions to in-class discussion – not on the quantity.

Reading questions: The reading questions account for 15% of your total participation grade and will be self-graded, meaning you will assess your own preparation (how thoroughly you did read the material) and the reading questions asked. This approach gives you the opportunity for self-reflection and self-assessment on the course content. You will be grading your own performance for weeks 2, 5, and 7 to 12. When grading your own reading questions, consider which of the three categories your performance lies within: 1: Below average, 2: Average, 3: Above average.

The reading questions are incentives for you to thoroughly read and to reflect on the literature

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covered in class. They also offer you the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding and to critically assess and reflect on the readings. You are expected to write one question for each paper. For example, if for a seminar we read 3 articles that I will choose and 1 article chosen by a presenting student team, then you will have to submit 4 questions in total for this week.

Reading questions are submitted on myCourses 24h before each class, so on Thursday at 8:35AM at the latest for seminars in week 2, 5 and 7 to 12. Some of the questions will be used to spark up discussions in class. You are expected to write reading questions to 6 of the seminars mentioned above, but are encouraged to write questions to them all (8 in total). Should you decide to write questions to 7 or 8 seminars, your grade will be calculated based on your 6 top grades. When submitting your Reading Questions on myCourses, also clearly indicate your self-graded performance for that specific week.

A NOTE ON OFFICE HOURS

I will be available to provide feedback and to mentor you throughout the realization of your systematic review. Come and see me during office hours or send me an email to make an appointment if the allocated time for office hours conflict with another course. Of course, office hours can also be used to discuss course topics and the other assignments. Do come to office hours.

LATE POLICY

Please advise me **in advance** of an assignment due date to make suitable arrangements and provide supporting documentation. Assignments will be assessed as late at 10% per day (including weekends).

ASSESSMENT

The University [Student Assessment Policy](#) exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads.

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

COURSE ETIQUETTE AND STANDARDS

The University is committed to maintaining teaching and learning spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all. To this end, offensive, aggressive, violent, or harmful language arising in contexts may be cause for disciplinary action. Mutual respect is expected at all times amongst instructors, TAs, support staff and students at McGill University. Students are referred to [the Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) for McGill's policies on Code of Conduct.

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ACADEMIC INTEGRITY / INTÉGRITÉ ACADÉMIQUE

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 [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

(Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003).

L'Université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le [Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires](#) (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 29 janvier 2003) (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#)).

Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with text matching software within myCourses.

LANGUAGE OF SUBMISSION / LANGUE DE SOUMISSION

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. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009). Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

**Aux étudiants francophones : Ma langue maternelle est le français. Je peux donc tout à fait lire et corriger vos travaux si vous voulez les soumettre en français. La correction sera uniforme peu importe si les travaux sont soumis en français ou en anglais. (Translation : To French-speaking students : French is my mother tongue. I can therefore fully read and mark your assignments if you wish to submit them in French. Marking will be uniform across work submitted in French or in English).

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND COPYRIGHT

I ask for everyone's cooperation in ensuring that all course material are not reproduced or placed in the public domain. This means that each of you can use it for your own purposes, but you cannot allow others to use it by posting it online or giving it or selling it to others who may copy it and make it available. Thank you for your help with this.

© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, assignments, exam questions, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that copyrights infringements can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

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LEARNING SUPPORT RESOURCES

Consult resources from [Teaching and Learning Services](#) (TLS) on topics such as time management, study strategies, group work, exam prep, and more. TLS also offers opportunities to connect with an academic peer mentor through [Stay on Track](#) and to attend workshops. For further individualized support check out the programs and resources from [Student Accessibility & Achievement](#).

WORKLOAD MANAGEMENT SKILLS

If you are feeling overwhelmed by your academic work and/or would like to further develop your time and workload management skills, don't hesitate to seek support from [Student Services](#).

WELLNESS

Many students may face mental health challenges that can impact not only their academic success but also their ability to thrive in our campus community. Please reach out for support when you need it; [wellness resources](#) are available on campus, off campus, and online.

BASIC NEEDS

If you have difficulty affording food or if you lack a safe and stable place to live, and believe that these circumstances may affect your performance in this course, I encourage you to contact the [Dean of Students](#), who can connect you with support services. If you feel comfortable doing so, please let me know as well so we can discuss how I can best support your learning.

CHARTER OF STUDENTS' RIGHTS

Additional policies governing academic issues that affect students can be found in the [McGill Charter of Students' Rights](#).

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L'Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d'échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.