

HSOC 403
Advanced Topics in the Social Determinants of Health

Course Coordinator & Instructor:

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Office Hours/Policy on Answering Student Emails

Please book appointments by email. Email communications with the instructor and/or TA are welcome. All efforts will be made to respond to emails within 48 hours. Substantive issues are to be addressed in person, either in class or during an appointment.

Time and Location:

Mondays & Fridays 9:00-10:15am
Check D2L for location

Please consult the course schedule on D2L to confirm location for individual sessions.

Prerequisite:

HSOC 301 or Sociology 409 and admission to the Health and Society major or minor programs.

Course Description:

Social determinants of health are key to understanding and intervening on health and disease in populations. This course builds on the understanding of the social determinants of health by exploring a few of these in greater depth. Topics will vary, but may include racism, sexism and gender identity, Indigenous health inequities, or the built environment. Students will engage with research from a number of social science disciplines to explore the complexities and nuances that shape health inequities in a variety of environments in which people live and work. Case studies and contemporary events will be used to illustrate the interplay between a select few social determinants and health inequities each semester.

Overarching Theme

A strong, critical appreciation and understanding of the social and structural determinants of health is key to understanding and intervening on health and disease in populations. Social inequities in health (i.e., differences in health between social groups that are considered to be unfair and avoidable) are significant and in some cases growing. The primary determinants of population health and health inequities are social, having to do with the socio-political and economic context (historical and current), and public policy. These determinants lie mostly outside of the health care system.

Global Objectives

1. To foster an appreciation and understanding of the multi-dimensional factors that influence health, including psychosocial, ecological and political factors.
2. To promote the value of the diversity of methodological approaches employed to investigate issues in social determinants of health.
3. To cultivate critical thinking about health inequities and population health.
4. To enhance skills essential for academic writing.

Learning Objectives

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

1. Discuss pathways through which social and structural determinants discussed in class affect population- health.
2. Debate the best ways to define, conceptualize and operationalize specific issues in social determinants of health, including strengths and weaknesses of current approaches.
3. Synthesize the state of the evidence on causal associations between the social and structural determinants addressed in class and health, including gaps in knowledge.
4. Articulate case examples of policy initiatives and programs either proposed or currently in place to address equity issues in population health.

Transferable Skill Development:

Many of the skills and abilities that you are developing in your coursework are transferable to the workforce, graduate and professional studies and other facets of life. Employers seek applicants with transferable skills because they can be an asset in the workplace, regardless of industry or sector. Transferable skills are core skills for your success in building your future career.

The work that you will do in HSOC 403 will help you build the following transferable skills:

- **Collaboration:** Work respectfully with others from different backgrounds, cultures, and countries.
- **Verbal Communication:** Learn and share information by presenting, listening, and interacting with others.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** Find different and better ways to do things, being curious, thinking imaginatively.
- **Critical Thinking:** Actively and skillfully conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information (data, facts, observable phenomena, and research findings) to make a reasoned judgement or draw a reasonable conclusion.
- **Information Literacy:** Find, understand, and use information presented through words, symbols, and images
- **Problem solving:** Identify an issue, and propose and evidence based solution
- **Written Communication:** Share ideas and information by using words, images, and symbols.

Supplementary Fees

Fees in addition to regular course tuition have been approved for this course, to cover the costs of admission (with tour) and travel by bus for the field excursion.

Learning Resources

A list of required reading, including links to sources from the University of Calgary's library collection and other publicly available resources will be posted on D2L. There is no required textbook for this course.

A Note regarding readings

A list of required readings will be outlined on D2L and links and documents will be made available, where possible. Required readings have been chosen carefully to inform you and enhance the lecture material. **Students are REQUIRED to complete assigned readings BEFORE each lecture.** Instructors will proceed in class on the assumption that students have read completely the assigned readings. Students should be aware that many of the readings they will be assigned may be of an unfamiliar nature and style. Students should allot sufficient time to allow for several reads of the assigned material.

Learning Technology Requirements

Brightspace (by D2L) is located on the University of Calgary server and will be used extensively for communication with students. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they receive all posted communications and documents and that they receive emails sent by instructors or fellow students through D2L.** Only your @ucalgary.ca email address may be linked to D2L. Please ensure that you are regularly checking your @ucalgary.ca account.

Evaluation

The University policy on grading and related matters is described in section F of the 2023-2024 Calendar.

In determining the overall grade in the course, the following weights will be used:

Description	Percentage of Grade	Due Date
Class Participation –Students are expected to arrive on time, participate in classroom activities and must be prepared to comment or raise a question about the material being considered during each class. Participation is judged based on quality rather than quantity, and marks will reward students who offer thoughtful commentary in a respectful manner.	15%	Throughout term
Reading Summaries & Discussion Questions Students will prepare a one-page summary of a reading of their choice for each module, for a total of 5 summaries, including a thoughtful discussion question that may serve as the basis for class discussion.	20%	Throughout term
Policy Contradictions Assignment Individual 5-minute chalk-talks that identify a policy contradiction and connect it to class content. Students will also submit a paper with the critical analysis of the policy contradiction that they present.	10% 20%	Presentations on April 10 th and April 13 th , 2025 Policy Contradictions paper due Monday, April 20 th by 11:59pm via D2I Dropbox
Seminar Presentations Small group presentations discussing population health intervention -policy initiatives or population-level programs - to reduce health inequities related to race/ethnicity, gender, or Indigenous status in Canada.	25%	TBA (Students will sign-up on Week 1)
Field Excursion Assignment We will have the opportunity to visit the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park or the Tsuu Tina Cultural Museum as a class. Students will complete a written reflection based on the exhibits and their connection to course material.	10%	Field excursion on Friday, March 20, 2026 Leaving Foothills campus at 8:15 am and returning around 4:30 pm. Reflection due Friday, March 27 th by 11:59pm via D2I Dropbox

There is no Registrar scheduled final exam for HSOC 403.

A student's final grade for the course is the sum of the separate assignments. It is not necessary to pass each assignment separately in order to pass the course.

A Note regarding Writing Assignments:

Writing skills are important to academic study in all disciplines. In keeping with the University of Calgary's emphasis on the importance of academic writing in student assignments (section E.2 of 2025-26 Calendar), writing is emphasized, and the grading thereof in determining a student's mark in this course. The Bachelor of Health Sciences values excellence in writing. Competence in writing entails skills in crafting logical, clear, coherent, non-redundant sentences, paragraphs and broader arguments, as well as skills with the mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation). Sources used to complete each assessment must be properly documented, unless otherwise noted by the instructor. The University of Calgary offers instructional services through the Students' Success Centre's Writing Support Services (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/writingsupport/>) for students seeking feedback on assignments or seeking to improve their general writing skills. Students are **strongly encouraged** to take advantage of these programs.

Grading Scheme:

Letter Grade	Description	Percentage
A+	Outstanding performance	96-100
A	Excellent performance	90-95.99
A-	Approaching excellent performance	85-89
B+	Exceeding good performance	80-84
B	Good performance	75-79
B-	Approaching good performance	70-74
C+	Exceeding satisfactory performance	65-69
C	Satisfactory performance	60-64
C-	Approaching satisfactory performance	57-59
D+	Marginal pass	54-56
D	Minimal pass	50-53
F	Does not meet course requirements	0-49

Missed Components of Term Work

Late assignments will receive 20% grade penalty within 24 hours of the deadline, after which assignments will not be accepted and will receive a mark of zero.

Extensions will NOT be granted on any assignment in HSOC 403. The only exceptions to this are those in keeping with the University Calendar (debilitating illness, religious conviction, or severe domestic affliction) that are received in writing and with supporting documentation. Traffic jams and late or full buses are common events in Calgary and are NOT acceptable reasons for late arrivals to class, meetings and examinations. Please note that while absences are permitted for religious reasons, students are responsible for providing advance notice and adhering to other guidelines on this matter, as outlined in the University Calendar (<https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/02ffccb6b1a541db880fe4223d122b5e>).

Course Evaluations and Student Feedback

Student feedback will be sought at the end of the course through the UCalgary Course Experience Survey and a qualitative student evaluation. Students are welcome to discuss the process and content of the course at any time with the instructor. Students may also address any concerns they may have with Dr. Lisa Welikovitich, Senior Associate Dean (Education) in the Cumming School of Medicine (lwelikov@ucalgary.ca).

Attendance

Regular attendance is advised in order to succeed in HSOC 403. Students are expected to take notes during class and should not rely solely on material supplied by the instructors. Instructors may or may not post lectures notes to D2L, at their individual discretion. In-class discussion and all content presented in class, including concepts and examples, can constitute substantial learning and can be considered for assessment.

It is important that you make every effort to attend all sessions since much of the learning in this course will be gained through in-class discussions. Marks for participation cannot be gained unless you are in attendance. Please notify the instructor directly via email for any extended absences.

Conduct During Lectures

The classroom should be respected as a safe place to share ideas without judgement - a community in which we can all learn from one another. Students are expected to frame their comments and questions to lecturers in respectful and appropriate language, always maintaining sensitivity towards the topic. Students, employees, and academic staff are also expected to demonstrate behaviour in class that promotes and maintains a positive and productive learning environment.

As members of the University community, students, employees and academic staff are expected to demonstrate conduct that is consistent with the University of Calgary Calendar, the Code of Conduct and Non-Academic Misconduct policy and procedures, which can be found at

<https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-conduct/policy>

Use of Internet and Electronic Communication Devices in Class

The Bachelor of Health Sciences program aims to create a supportive and respectful learning environment for all students. The use of laptop and mobile devices is acceptable when used in a manner appropriate to the course and classroom activities. However, research studies have found that inappropriate/off-topic use of electronic devices in the classroom negatively affects the learning of others during class time.

Students are responsible for being aware of the University's Internet and email use policy, which can be found at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-electronic-resources-and-information-policy>

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and specifically foundational models that can create writing, computer code, and /or images using minimal human prompting includes not only GPT-4 (and its siblings ChatGPT and Bing), but many writing assistants that are built on this or similar AI technologies.

Artificial intelligence tools are very good at many things, including summarizing longer texts. This is not the same thing as reconstructing the argument an author makes in an article, book chapter, or other piece of writing. Doing the latter is an important skill that we want you to develop in this course, as is critical evaluation of arguments.

Students may use AI tools to produce a summary of readings that are assigned for this course as an initial step in understanding the readings (e.g. you may use a summary of the reading to give you enough of a sense of the content to help you make your way more easily through the reading itself). However, students may not copy or paraphrase any generative AI applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing assistants) for the purpose of completing assignments in this course. **All work submitted for class assignments must be original work produced by the individual student alone.** Use of generative AI for written assignments in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating and a breach of academic integrity subject to Academic Misconduct procedures.

Students **are not allowed** to upload class slides, assignment instructions, or other course materials to AI tools or platforms. These are the intellectual property (IP) of the course instructors; uploading these to and AI platform may breach IP rules since some of these sites may use these as training/output data.

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY POLICIES AND SUPPORTS

Copyright

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/acceptable-use-material-protected-copyright-policy>) and requirements of the Copyright Act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks, etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-non-academic-misconduct-policy>

Instructor Intellectual Property

Course materials created by instructors (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may **NOT** be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the professor. **The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited.** Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the course **at the same time** may be allowed under fair dealing.

Academic Accommodations

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures listed below. The Student Accommodations policy is available at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/access/prospective-students/academic-accommodations>. Students needing an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Accommodation-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Procedure.pdf>).

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a Protected Ground other than Disability should communicate this need in writing to Dr. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting (feaparc@ucalgary.ca), Associate Dean (Undergraduate Health and Science Education).

Academic Misconduct

The University of Calgary is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. The University of Calgary has created rules to govern all its members regarding the creation of knowledge and the demonstration of knowledge having been learned.

Academic Misconduct refers to student behaviour that compromises proper assessment of a student's academic activities and includes (but is not limited to): cheating, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance, failure to comply with an instructor's expectations regarding conduct required of students completing academic assessments in their courses, and failure to comply with exam regulations applied by the Registrar. **It also includes using of third party websites/services to access past/current course material, essay/assignment writing services, or real-time assistance in completing assessments, seeking answers to assessment questions and similar, whether paid, bartered or unpaid.**

For information of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures, please visit; <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-academic-misconduct-policy>. Additional information is available on the Academic Integrity website at: <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/learning/academic-integrity>.

Recording of Lectures

Audio or video recording of lectures (or similar) by students is prohibited except where explicit permission has been received from the instructor.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Student information will be collected in accordance with typical (or usual) classroom practice. Students' assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty. Private information related to the individual student is treated with the utmost regard by the faculty at the University of Calgary.

Appeals

If there is a concern with the course, academic matter or a grade, first communicate with the instructor. If these concerns cannot be resolved, students can proceed with an academic appeal, as per Section I of the University Calendar. Students must follow the official reappraisal/appeal process and may contact the Student Ombuds' Office (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ombuds>) for assistance with this and with any other academic concerns, including academic and non-academic misconduct. Students should be aware that concerns about graded term work may only be initiated **within 10 business days** of first being notified of the grade.

<https://calendar.ucalgary.ca/pages/e31a7115dca740ec83579e946d4a4193>

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Policy

The University recognizes that all members of the University Community should be able to learn, work, teach and live in an environment where they are free from harassment, discrimination, and violence. The University of Calgary's sexual violence policy guides us in how we respond to incidents of sexual violence, including supports available to those who have experienced or witnessed sexual violence, or those who are alleged to have committed sexual violence. It provides clear response procedures and timelines, defines complex concepts, and addresses incidents that occur off-campus in certain circumstances. Please see the policy available at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-policy>

Resources for Support of Student Learning, Success, Safety and Wellness

Student Success Centre <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/>

Student Wellness Centre <http://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/>

Student Advocacy and Wellness Hub (CSM)

<https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/mdprogram/current-students/student-advising-wellness>

Distress Centre <http://www.distresscentre.com/>

Library Resources <http://library.ucalgary.ca>

Wellness and Mental Health Resources

The University of Calgary recognizes the pivotal role that student mental health plays in physical health, social connectedness and academic success, and aspires to create a caring and supportive campus community where individuals can freely talk about mental health and receive supports when needed. We encourage you to explore the excellent mental health resources available throughout the university community, such as counselling, self-help resources, peer support or skills-building available through the SU Wellness Centre (<https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/services/mental-health-services>) and the Campus Mental Health Strategy (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/mentalhealth/>).

Student Ombuds' Office

The Student Ombuds' Office supports and provides a safe, neutral space for students. For more information, please visit www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/ombuds/ or email ombuds@ucalgary.ca

BHSc Student Faculty Liaison Committee (SFLC)

The BHSc SFLC, with elected representatives from all majors, serves to raise issues of interest to BHSc students to the program administration, including items pertaining to curriculum, scheduling and events. A list of current representatives can be found on the BHSc website.

Student Union (SU) Information

The SU Vice-President Academic can be reached at (403) 220-3911 or suvpaca@ucalgary.ca; the SU representatives for the Cumming School of Medicine can be reached at medrep1@su.ucalgary.ca or medrep2@su.ucalgary.ca.

Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre provides services and programs to ensure students can make the most of their time at the University of Calgary. Our advisors, learning support staff, and writing support staff assist students in enhancing their skills and achieving their academic goals. They provide tailored learning support and advising programs, as well as one-on-one services, free of charge to all undergraduate and graduate students. For more information visit: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success>

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points

As part of the University of Calgary Emergency Evacuation plan, students, faculty, and staff should locate the closest Assembly Point in case of Fire Alarm. Safety signage is posted throughout the campus showing the locations and the possible route to these locations. All students, faculty, and staff are expected to promptly make their way to the nearest Assembly Point if the Fire Alarm is activated. No one is to return into campus facilities until an all clear is given to the warden in charge of the Assembly Area. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/risk/emergency-management/drills/assembly-points-and-evacuation-maps>

Safewalk

Campus security will escort individuals, day or night, anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences Centre, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). Call 403-220-5333 or visit <http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths. Please ensure your personal safety by taking advantage of this service.