

MDSC 203
Inquiry I: Developing Health Research Literacy I

Course Coordinator and Instructor:

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Instructors:

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Office Hours/Policy on Answering Student Emails

All student meetings will be by appointment and scheduled individually.
All course communications must occur through your @ucalgary email, and a response can be expected within 2 working days.

Teaching Assistant:

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Time:

Tuesdays and Thursdays 09:00-11:20

Prerequisite:

Admission to the BHSc Honours program

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the interdisciplinary scope of health research. Through reading, writing assignments and group presentations, students will acquire the fundamental skills for academic research, develop their ability to evaluate scientific information and communicate with a scientific audience.

Overarching Theme

Research is the systematic acquisition of knowledge through investigation. Research is undertaken in academic (e.g. university), industrial (e.g. technology company), or non-governmental (e.g. thinktank, charity) environments. All improvements in the human condition produced by human activity are based on knowledge in some form, which is based on some form of research. While scientific research is meant to be cumulative, universally disseminated, and unbiased, research is often (perhaps always) influenced by broad social factors.

The Bachelor of Health Science (BHSc) degree is a research-intensive undergraduate degree. The conduct, interpretation, and application of research requires specialized skills. You will develop these skills in the first year of the BHSc program and, as you progress through the years, build on these skills by using them in increasingly complex and specialized research endeavours. The purpose of this course is to build an effective foundation for these skills.

A central skill for conducting research is the ability to communicate both orally and in writing. Even the most significant discoveries would be lost if the person or team behind them is unable to communicate them effectively to others. Research communication can take many forms, depending on the purpose and intended audience: a scientist may share results within a research discipline, researchers from different fields may seek to collaborate or cooperate, or a journalist may transmit researchers' findings to non-specialists.

Research is never completed in isolation; it is a team effort. This is particularly true in the biomedical sciences, where research is conducted in teams that often span institutions and countries and in which people with different skill sets must be able to work together towards a common goal. Even when scientists collect and analyze data independently, they converse with fellow scientists by publishing their findings and by presenting at and attending conferences. The ability to work in teams is emphasized throughout the BHSc program. In this course, you will work with classmates on group presentations that are based on your collective analysis of an important health issue.

Global Objectives

Researchers need to communicate within their research community. In some cases, it is also important to communicate information effectively with researchers working in other fields. One of the challenges facing the health sciences is that there are many distinct research sub-disciplines focussed on health, each with its own perspective and culture, defined by its values, conventions and practices.

Communication between these sub-disciplines can be difficult to achieve. This course will introduce you to different research cultures and perspectives so that you can begin to appreciate different research styles and contributions. More importantly, you will see how different perspectives can complement one other to create a deeper understanding of important problems, their interaction often underlying the most important discoveries.

Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain, at the level of an educated layperson, the basic principles of the conceptual foundations of biomedical science and social science health research
- Analyze an academic paper in the health sciences and grasp:
 - whether the paper is a primary research article or a secondary source
 - whether the paper tests a hypothesis
- Explain the concept of a research perspective and its importance
- Apply academic standards for citation when writing
- Write a text that is clear and accessible to a well-educated layperson and that conforms to standards of academic writing
- Work in a group to create and deliver a presentation that is well organized, clear, concise and understandable to an educated layperson

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 MDSC 203 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.
- **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
- **Numeracy:** Use mathematical information such as numbers, symbols, words, and graphics to do tasks.
- **Project Management:** Conceptualize, initiate, plan and execute a plan to achieve a predetermined goal (project) by effectively prioritizing activities and meeting deadlines.
- **Written Communication:** Share ideas and information by using words, images, and symbols.

Learning Resources

Links or citations for all required readings will be available on D2L or sent by email.

Recommended Textbooks/Readings

General Reading

1. Latour, B., Woolgar, S. 1975. "An anthropologist visits the laboratory" from *Laboratory Life: The construction of scientific facts*.
2. Bush, V. 1945. *Science: The endless frontier*.

3. Merton, R. 1942. "The Normative Structure of Science" from *The Sociology of Science: Theoretical and empirical investigations*.
4. Panagiotakos, D. 2008. "The Value of p-Value in Biomedical Research." *Open Cardiovascular Medical Journal*. 2: 97-99.

Biomedical Perspective (mechanisms)

1. Massoud, T.F., Hademenos, G.J., Young, W.L. et al. (1998) Principles and philosophy of modeling in biomedical research. *FASEB Journal*. 12: 275-285. <https://www-fasebj-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/doi/pdf/10.1096/fasebj.12.3.275>
2. Richard, D. (2015) Cognitive and autonomic determinants of energy homeostasis in obesity. *Nature Reviews Endocrinology*. 11: 489–501. <http://www.nature.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/articles/nrendo.2015.103.pdf>
3. Badman, M.K., and Flier, J.S. (2005) The gut and energy balance: Visceral allies in the obesity wars. *Science*. 307: 1909-1914. <http://science.sciencemag.org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/content/307/5717/1909/tab-pdf>
4. Zheng, H. and Berthoud H-R. (2007) Eating for pleasure or calories. *Current Opinion in Pharmacology*. 7: 607–612. <http://www-ncbi-nlm-nihgov.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/pmc/articles/PMC2194753/pdf/nihms36005.pdf>

Evolutionary Perspective (origins)

1. Lieberman, D.E. (2015) Is exercise really medicine? An evolutionary perspective. *Current Sports Medicine Reports*. 14: 313-319. <http://ovidsp.ovid.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/ovidweb.cgi?T=JS&CSC=Y&NEWS=N&PAGE=fulltext&AN=00149619-201507000-00013&D=ovft&PDF=y> (cut and paste to address to internet search)
2. Nesse, R.M., Bergstrom, C.T., Ellison, P.T., et al. (2010) Evolution in health and medicine Sackler colloquium: Making evolutionary biology a basic science for medicine. *Proceedings of the National Academy of the United States of America*. 107 Suppl 1: 1800-1807.

Social Perspective (political, environmental and economic determinants)

1. Mikkonen, J. and Raphael, D. (2010) Social determinants of health: The Canadian facts. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. Available online at: <http://www.thecanadianfacts.org>
2. Tremblay, M.S. and Willms, J.D. (2003) Is the Canadian childhood obesity epidemic related to physical inactivity? *International Journal of Obesity*. 27(9): 1100-1105.
3. Raphael, D. (2006) Social determinants of health: Present status, unanswered questions, and future directions. *International Journal of Health Services*. 36: 651–677.
4. Braveman, P.A., Egerter, S.A. and Mockenhaupt, R.E. (2011) Broadening the focus: The need to address the social determinants of health. *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*. 40 Suppl 1: S4–S18. <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/science/article/pii/S0749379710005635>
5. Larsen, K. and Gilliland, J. (2008) Mapping the evolution of 'food deserts' in a Canadian city: Supermarket accessibility in London, Ontario, 1961-2005. *International Journal of Health Geography*. 7:16. <https://ij-healthgeographics.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/1476-072X-7-16>

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.

A laptop, desktop, tablet or mobile device is required for D2L access. If you need help accessing or using D2L, please visit the Desire2Learn resource page for students: <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/d2l-student/>.

Evaluation

The University policy on grading and related matters is described in section F of the 2024-2025 Calendar.

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

Group Assignments

Each student will be assigned to a small group to work with throughout the semester. The course schedule includes multiple set times to meet with your group and a course preceptor as well as times for groups to meet without their preceptor. Library rooms can be booked for student use. Each student in the group receives the same presentation grade.

Group Presentation #1: Choose a disease or health issue. From a biomedical perspective characterize the phenomenon and explain what is known about its etiology and current interventions. Use what you have learned about etiology and interventions to identify major outstanding questions and/or future directions for research. **October 23, 28 and 30.** (Detailed instructions available on D2L.) **Weight: 20%**

Group Presentation #2: Using the same disease/health issue explored in your first presentation, build on the biomedical perspective by describing the major social determinants relevant to that disease/health issue. Explain how one or two of those social determinants influence the prevalence or severity of that disease/health issue. Present and defend relevant plausible policy initiatives that can be used to reduce the prevalence or severity of your group's chosen disease/health issue. **November 27, December 2 and 4.** (Detailed instructions available on D2L.) **Weight: 20%**

Note that each student is expected to participate in the delivery of at least one presentation. All students are expected to contribute to the preparation of both presentations and must be prepared to field questions at both presentations.

Group Work Participation: Each student will receive an individual grade for their contribution to the work of their group. This grade will be based on evaluation by the group preceptors and on feedback from fellow group members. (See D2L for group peer evaluation forms & deadlines.) During each formal meeting, the preceptor will keep notes on individual contributions to the group discussion and work. Potential misunderstandings over commitment can be avoided by informing your preceptor and peers of any absences. **Weight: 10%**

Individual Assignments

Individual Assignment #1. Paper: Choose a primary research article (a list of choices is contained in the rubric for this assignment, see D2L). Summarize key details of this paper and find 3 relevant additional scholarly papers. Draw explicit connections between the research reported in your 3 additional papers and the primary target paper. (Detailed instructions available on D2L.) **Weight: 20%. Due: Draft October 3 & Final October 20 by 23:59hrs**

Individual Assignment #2. Annotated Bibliography: a list of research sources followed by a summary, an analysis and an evaluation of each source. (Detailed instructions available on D2L.) **Weight: 30%. Due: December 10 by 23:59hrs**

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

There is no final exam for MDSC 203

Written Assignment regrading policy: Before requesting a regrade, students must first meet with their preceptor to discuss feedback on their paper. Following this meeting, regrade requests must be made in writing to Jesse Hendrikse with an explanation of why the student feels their paper should be reassessed. If that explanation is accepted, the assignment will be reviewed by two course instructors and a final grade awarded. Please be aware that the grade may remain the same or can be higher or lower than the original grade. Request for a regrade must be made within 10 calendar days of receiving your graded assignment. (If you cannot reasonably arrange a meeting with your preceptor within a week of receiving your graded assignment, this deadline will be extended.)

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:

Students will lose 10% per day late past the deadline for all assignments. Assignments will **NOT** be accepted more than 72 hours after the posted deadline and students failing to submit any assignment within this time frame will receive a mark of zero.

As per University Calendar Section G.2.3, **students who are absent from an in-class assessment will receive a mark of zero on the missed component.** Students who are absent are responsible for contacting their instructor to discuss the impact of their missed assessment. Alternative opportunities for completing missed assessments or shifting of the assessment weight **may** be possible but are not guaranteed. Students who are identified as falsifying information related to missed assessments will be subject to investigation for academic misconduct.

Extensions will NOT be granted on any assignment in MDSC 203. 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 new 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. Fabiola Aparicio-Ting, Associate Dean (Undergraduate Health and Science Education) in the Cumming School of Medicine (feapartic@ucalgary.ca).

Attendance

In order to succeed in MDSC 203, regular attendance is strongly advised. Instructors may or may not post lectures notes to D2L, and students should therefore not rely solely on material supplied by the instructors. In-class discussion and all content presented in class, including concepts and examples, can constitute substantial learning and can be considered for assessment.

Small group preceptors will note absences from scheduled group work sessions and such absences may impact students' participation scores.

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.

You may use generative artificial intelligence tools and apps for learning course material, but their use is **strictly prohibited** in all course assignments unless explicitly stated otherwise by the instructor in this course. This includes ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI 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. You could be asked to provide evidence of your own work. While we appreciate that the use of AI tools is appropriate in some contexts, in this course we will be focusing on building your own critical thinking, foundational knowledge and writing skills, which could be compromised by a reliance on AI tools.

Students *are not allowed* to upload class slides, assignment instructions, or other course materials to AI tools or platforms. These are the intellectual property of the course instructor (IP); 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 suypaca@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.