

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (PHP 1920)

COURSE SYLLABUS

GENERAL INFORMATION

Instructor

Diana Grigsby-Toussaint, Ph.D., M.P.H.
Associate Professor
Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences
Department of Epidemiology
Brown University School of Public Health

Teaching Assistants

Ashley Gomez
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11am – 1pm
Schedule Office Hours: www.calendly.com/ashley_gomez/1920
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Time and Location

Time: Fall Semester, Mondays 3:00pm-5:30pm
Location: [203 Salomon Learning Center](#)

Access to the Instructor

Office Location: 121 S Main Street, 8th Floor
Office Hours: Thursdays, 1pm – 2pm and by appointment
Phone: (401) 863-6163
Email: diana_grigsby-toussaint@brown.edu (preferred contact)

Audience

Course is open to graduate students and advanced undergraduate students.

Mask Policy

Please keep your mask on at all times. We will take at least two mask breaks during each class session.

Course Description

This course provides an overview of social determinants of health. Examples of topics include health effects of educational attainment, social integration, racial discrimination, early life adversity, mindfulness and job strain. Mixed teaching methods will be used, such as small and large group discussions, debates, student presentations, and lectures.

The human body is embedded in communities with particular attributes such as collective lifestyles and health practices, population-based health programs, economics, health services, built environments and social characteristics (**Figure 1**). Those communities are embedded within contexts of the natural environment, culture and politics, which all exist within a particular place and time in history. These upstream factors influence health and physiologic underpinnings of disease.

CEPH Competency	Learning Outcomes and Assessment
Health Behavior	
Examine the causes and consequences of health disparities from the perspective of multiple behavioral; and social sciences	Learning Outcomes: 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 Assessment: Students will be expected to engage in discussions related to the causes and consequences of health disparities and will be expected to synthesize their

	understanding of these disparities on exams and a term paper.
ASPPH Competency- Social and Behavioral Address the socio-economic, behavioral, biological, environmental, and other factors that impact human health and contribute to health disparities	1,2,3,7

<u>Domains Covered</u>	Assignment
<u>Disparities</u>	
Identifying and Addressing Population Health Challenges: Address the concepts of population health, and the basic processes, approaches, and interventions that identify and address the major health-related needs and concerns of populations	
1. Introduction to Processes and Approaches to Identify Needs and Concerns of Populations	Lecture and discussion on social determinants of health; term paper option on a social determinant of health; Readings on social determinants of population health
2. Introduction to Approaches and Interventions to Address Needs and Concerns of Populations	Lecture and discussion on Interventions and Health; term paper option on interventions and health; Readings on psychosocial interventions and health
Health Policy, Law, Ethics, and Economics: Address the basic concepts of legal, ethical, economic, and regulatory dimensions of health care and public health policy, and the roles, influences and responsibilities of the different agencies and branches of government	
3. Ethical dimensions of health care and public health policy	Lecture on discrimination and health; term paper option on discrimination and health; Readings on discrimination and health inequities
<u>SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL</u>	
Human Health: Address the underlying science of human health and disease including opportunities for promoting and protecting health across the life course	
4. Health Promotion	Lecture on interventions and health; term paper option on interventions and health; readings on changing health behaviors in a social context
<u>DISPARITIES AND SOCIAL/BEHAVIORAL</u>	
Determinants of Health: Address the socio-economic, behavioral, biological, environmental, and other factors that impact human health and contribute to health disparities	
5. Socio-economic Impacts on Human Health and Health Disparities	Lecture and discussion on SES and social determinants of health; term paper option on SES; readings on socioeconomic status and health
6. Behavioral Factors Impacts on Human Health and Health Disparities	Lecture on behavioral economics; readings on behavioral economics and health
Domains Introduced	
Overview of Public Health: Address the history and philosophy of public health as well as its core	

values, concepts, and functions across the globe and in society	
Public Health History	Lecture and discussion on social determinants of health; readings on social determinants of population health
Role and Importance of Data in Public Health: Address the basic concepts, methods, and tools of public health data collection, use, and analysis and why evidence-based approaches are an essential part of public health practice	
Evidence-based approaches	Term paper options on social determinants of health
Identifying and Addressing Population Health Challenges: Address the concepts of population health, and the basic processes, approaches, and interventions that identify and address the major health-related needs and concerns of populations	
Population Health Concepts	Lecture and discussion on social determinants of health; term paper option on social determinants of health
Health Communications: Address the basic concepts of public health-specific communication, including technical and professional writing and the use of mass media and electronic technology	
Professional Writing	Term paper option on social determinants of health
Concepts Exposed	
Critical Thinking and Creativity	Term paper option on social determinants of health
Cultural contexts in which public health professionals work	Term paper option; lectures related to discrimination and health, as well as social determinants of health

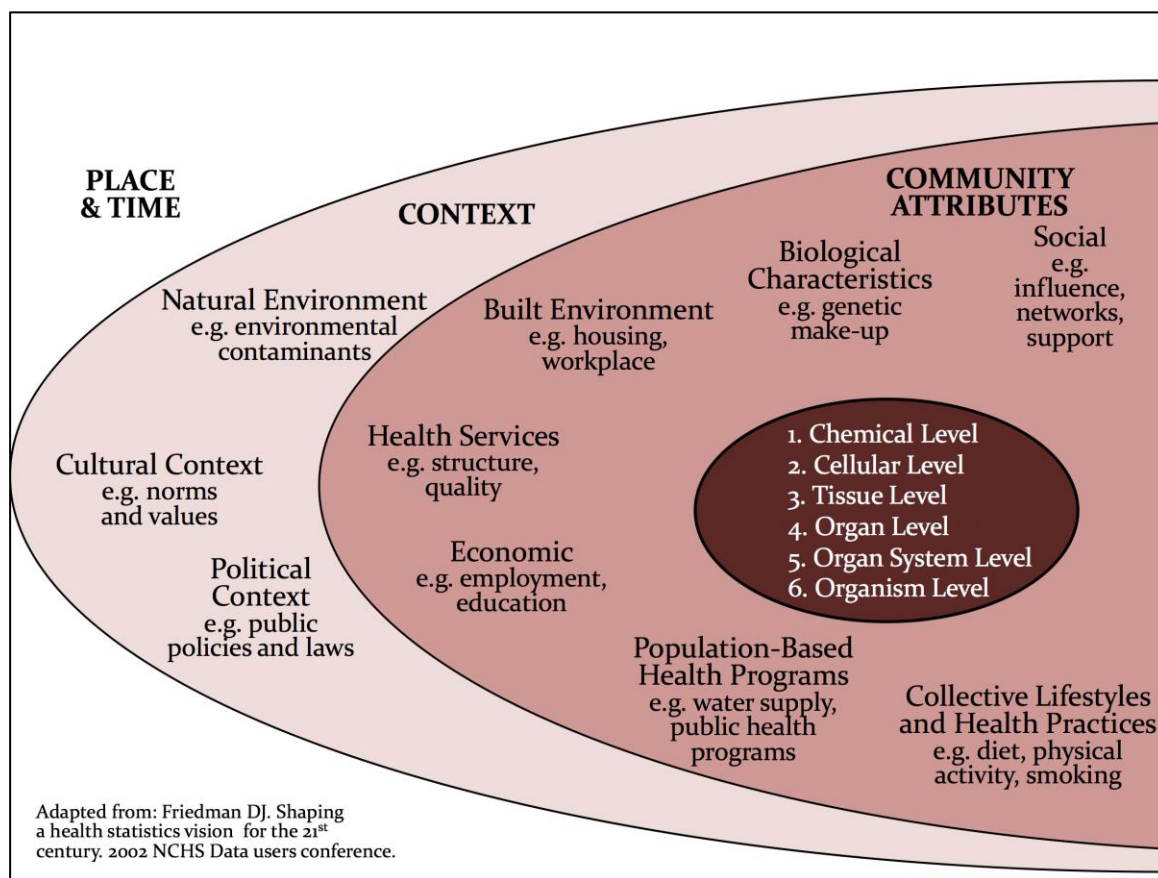


Figure 1. Influences on health: a population perspective.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

1. Define all social determinants covered in class, such as socioeconomic status, social integration, racial discrimination, adverse childhood experiences, and job strain.
2. Describe the best ways to measure each social determinant, including strengths and weaknesses of existing measures.
3. Explain the state of the evidence on causal associations between the social determinants addressed in class and health, including gaps in knowledge.
4. Describe plausible mechanisms by which social factors may influence health.
5. Assess studies in the field for methodological rigor.
6. Understand strengths and weaknesses of current research on social determinants of health.
7. Understand and synthesize practical interventions (e.g. policy, clinical and population/public health implications) that could be effective at improving social determinants of health.
8. Understand the history of public health, population health concepts, and evidence-based approaches
9. Integrate critical thinking and creativity in approach to public health
10. Understand cultural contexts in which public health professionals work

COURSE CONTENT

Concept Map of the Course

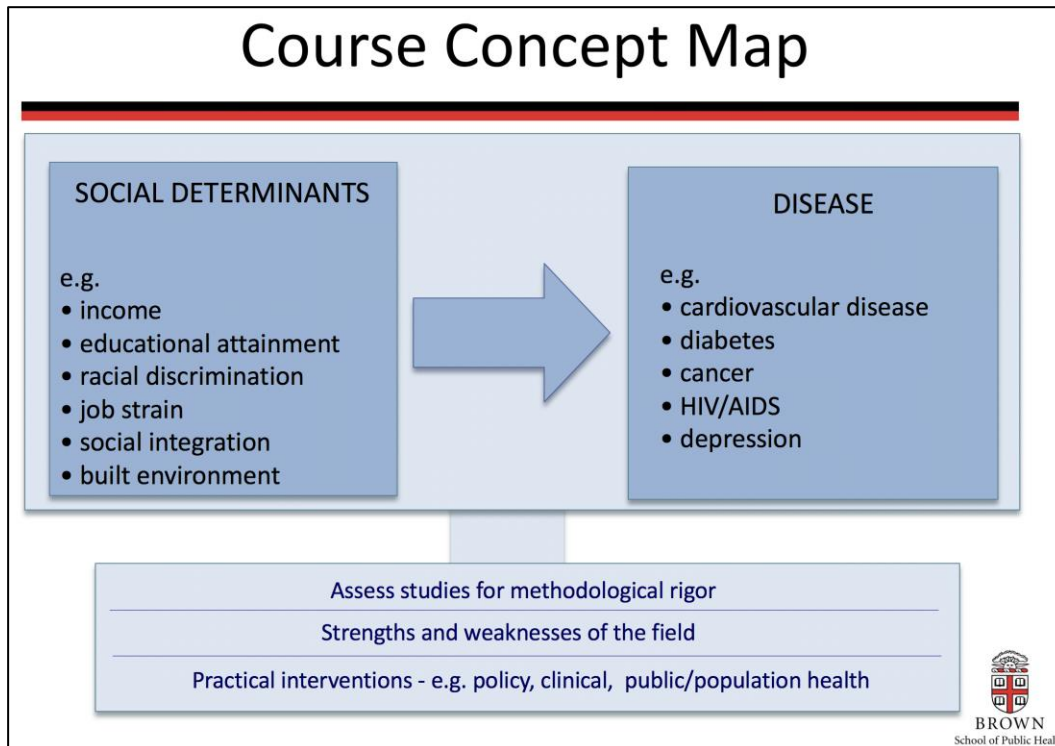


Figure 2. Concept map of the course.

Topics Expected to be Addressed in the Course

- Definitions and overarching constructs of various social determinants of health, such as socioeconomic status, social integration, racial discrimination, adverse childhood experiences, and job strain.
- Ways to measure each social determinant, including strengths and weaknesses of existing measures.
- Evidence on causal associations between the social determinants and health.
- Mechanisms by which social factors may influence health.
- Assessment of studies in the field for methodological rigor.
- Explanations of the strengths and weaknesses of current research on social determinants of health.
- Discussion and synthesis of practical interventions (e.g. policy, clinical and population/public health implications) that could be effective at improving social determinants of health.

SCHEDULE

DATE	CLASS	TIME	FORMAT	TOPIC	CLASS LEADER
9/13	1	3:00-5:30	Lecture	Introduction to the course and Social Determinants of Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
9/20	2	3:00-3:30	Discussion	Introduction to Social Determinants of Health Journal #1 Due	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		3:35-5:30	Lecture	SES and Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
9/27	3	3:00-3:30	Discussion	Overview of Social Determinants of Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		3:30-4:20	Lecture	Social Network and Health	TBD
		4:30-5:30	Discussion	Social Network and Health	TBD
10/4	4	3:00-3:45	Discussion	SES and Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		3:55-4:30	Exam		Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		4:35-5:30	Guest Lecture	TBD	TBD
10/11	5	3:00-3:45	NO CLASS	Indigenous People's Day	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
10/18	6	3:00-3:45	Lecture	Adverse Childhood Experiences and Health Journal # 2 Due	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		3:55-4:25	Discussion	Adverse Childhood Experiences and Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		4:30-5:20	Lecture	Discrimination and Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
10/25	7	3:00-3:45	Exam		Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		3:55-4:25	Discussion	Discrimination and Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		4:30-5:20	Lecture	Area-Level Determinants of Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
11/1	8	3:00-3:45	Discussion	Area-Level Determinants of Health	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		3:55-4:25	Lecture	Behavioral Economics	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		4:30-5:20	Discussion	Behavioral Economics	TBD
11/8	9	3:30-4:15	Lecture	Social Determinants of COVID-19 and Interventions and Health Journal #3 Due	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		4:30-5:20	Discussion	Interventions and Health and COVID-19	TBD
11/15	10	3:30-4:15	Lecture	Working Conditions and Health	TBD
		4:30-5:20	Discussion	Working Conditions and Health Exam	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
11/22	11	3:30-4:15	Lecture	Policies as Tools	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint
		4:30-5:20	Discussion	Policies as Tools	TBD
11/29	12	3:00-5:00	Lecture and Discussion	Course Summary	Dr. Diana Grigsby-Toussaint

DRAFT

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD & EXPECTATIONS

- Each class session will be approximately 2.5 h duration (with a 10 min break half-way through, and two shorter mask breaks), involving lectures, group discussions, and informal student presentations. Classes will typically be arranged to use mixed teaching methods, including a blend of lectures and group work to ensure that the class remains dynamic and interesting to the students as much as possible through the duration of each session.
- Assigned readings will be provided with clear reading objectives.
- Students are expected to attend all lectures, as well as complete the corresponding assigned reading prior to each lecture.
- All assignments should be uploaded and submitted through Canvas.
- Students are encouraged to attend Instructor and TA office hours with questions regarding concepts covered in class, course reading, or homework assignments. Questions requiring detailed responses will not be provided over e-mail.
- Excused absences and extensions will be granted based on the Brown attendance policy: <http://brown.edu/academics/medical/student-handbook/section-iv-attendance-policy>
- Students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism and that such misconduct is taken very seriously and subject to penalty. Please review The Academic Code of Brown University (http://brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/academic_code.php) for more information on plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct.
- Late assignments will be penalized 10% per day unless an extension has been previously approved, or if there are exceptional circumstances. No assignments will be accepted after 7 days following the original due date.
- Use of Technology to Support Student Learning. This course will use the following technological platforms: [Canvas]. I am committed to ensuring access to online course resources by students. If you have any concerns or questions about access or the privacy of any of these platforms, please reach out to me. The IT Service Center (<https://it.brown.edu/get-help>) provides many IT Services including remote assistance, phones, tickets, and chat. Please also see the Online and Hybrid Learning Student Guide.
- Books, Supplies, and Materials
- If your Brown undergraduate financial aid package includes the Book/Course Material Support Pilot Program (BCMS), concerns or questions about the cost of books and course materials for this or any other Brown course (including RISD courses via cross-registration) can be addressed to bcms@brown.edu. For all other concerns related to non-tuition course-related expenses, whether or not your Brown undergraduate financial aid package includes BCMS, please visit the Academic Emergency Fund in E-GAP (within the umbrella of "E-Gap Funds" in UFunds) to determine options for financing these costs, while ensuring your privacy.

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY AND AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- My goal is to create a positive and constructive learning environment for all students. I view the diversity that students bring to this class as a strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials in a way that is respectful of gender, sexuality, disability, age, disease status, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. Please let me know your name and pronouns if they are different from what is on your student record. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make appropriate arrangements for you.
- I am committed to the full inclusion of all students. Students who, by nature of a documented disability, require academic accommodations should contact me by email or during office hours. Students seeking

accommodations due to a disability or medical condition should contact [Student and Employee Accessibility Services](#). Students in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact one of the deans in the [Dean of the College](#) office.

SELF-CARE

- The COVID-19 pandemic has and continues to impact all of us in many different ways. Please give your peers grace as we all continue to navigate the impact of the pandemic.
- Please remember to take care of yourself this semester.

COURSE MATERIALS

Readings will be provided online.

Additional Materials

There will be mandatory weekly readings, distributed through the course website.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

Assignments and evaluation are designed to be consistent with the learning outcomes described above. It is hoped that the assignments provide a supportive structure to aid student learning. The course is designed to be clearly structured so that the students are able to gain an excellent understanding of the key concepts in the field.

Assessment

1. **Exams.** The role of the exams are to help gauge overall understanding of the concepts of the class. The exams will be composed of short answer and short essay (e.g. 1-2 paragraph answer) questions. The questions will aim to test understanding of the learning outcomes listed above on page 2. Sample exam questions will be provided, so that students can understand expectations. There will be four exams as indicated in the syllabus, to test understanding.
2. **Term Paper.** The topic of the term paper should be a literature review of evidence on a specific social determinant of health OR a target population impacted by social determinants of health. For example, the paper could present on the state of evidence for a novel potential social circumstance that has not been covered in class, or only minimally covered in class (e.g. income inequality, social capital, certain government policies, etc.) and health. Another option would be to present on the evidence of how a particular social circumstance already covered in class (e.g. job strain, educational attainment) may influence a particular health outcome that was not covered in class (e.g. diabetes). Students are encouraged to utilize Hill's criteria of causal inference as a guide to evaluate the level of evidence on a social determinant of health. This is a chance for students to delve more deeply in an area that they are particularly interested in. Similar to the course objectives, the papers should include:
 - Definition of the social determinants of health
 - Ways to measure the social determinant, including strengths and weaknesses of existing measures.
 - Evidence on causal associations between the social determinants and health.
 - Mechanisms by which the social factor may influence health.
 - Assessment of studies in the field for methodological rigor.
 - Explanations of the strengths and weaknesses of current research on the social determinant of health.
 - Discussion and synthesis of practical interventions (e.g. policy, clinical and population/public health implications) related to this social determinant that could be effective at improving social determinants of health.

Papers should be limited to 8 double-spaced pages (not including references), using 1" margins and 11 point Arial font, 12 point Times New Roman or 12 point Calibri font.

The paper will be graded based on the following criteria:

A quality work shows creative thinking and superior communication skills: original, tightly organized, fully developed, properly documented texts; texts that require no further editing for correct language or appropriate style. Work of this quality is not only easy for readers to comprehend, summarize and remember, but it is also fresh, new and insightful. The writer shows an ability to think critically, to take a clear position and create a compelling argument with appropriate evidence. To earn a grade of A, students must do more than display information in predetermined formats and error-free language. They must also show they can summarize accurately, analyze and synthesize information, and apply what they have read in new contexts to solve new problems. In order to achieve an A, the writer must come up with his or her own ideas and be able to support them with the readings.

B quality work is of fairly high quality, lacks originality. Language may need a modest amount of editing for minor usage problems (punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, minor grammar errors). Problems in development and organization are also relatively minor. Overall, the writer can discuss the literature well

and the text can be read and understood with minimal difficulty, but it contains little that pushes beyond what was given. In addition a B paper may contain some weakness in documentation. There may be improper framing of arguments so that the reader cannot tell where the writer's ideas and the source's ideas start and end.

C quality work either says very little (offering only obvious, shallow arguments or summaries) or the work is difficult to read and understand.

NC quality work indicates failure and is usually granted in the case where the student did not do the required work, or the quality of language and analysis was so poor that the objectives of the assignment were in no way fulfilled. It may also mean that the student has been found to have committed plagiarism, which results in an irrevocable NC for the assignment and the student may be asked to leave the program.

- 3. Leading Reading Discussion:** In leading the reading discussions, students will be expected to summarize the readings in about a 5 min informal presentation, with focus on the course Learning Outcomes, described on page 2 above. Furthermore, they will be expected to share particular elements of the papers they felt were particularly applicable to the course objectives or to their first-person experience of the impacts of social factors on health. Students are expected to have questions they would like clarification on, and feedback on from the group, as both clarification for themselves, and what they feel would be important discussion topics to deepen the knowledge of students in the class, related to the course objectives. The grade (i.e. 10% of course grade) will be provided by students in the discussion group according to the criteria below.

A: a student receiving an A or A- comes to class prepared; provides a clear overview of the papers that relate to all relevant course learning outcomes (stated on pg. 2 above) in no longer than 5 minutes. Students provide insightful, rich questions for discussion that lead to deeper understanding for fellow students in the topics that the readings address, and related to the course learning outcomes. A student receiving this grade facilitates the class discussion skillfully, helping students in the group to contribute readily to the conversation but not dominating it; making thoughtful contributions that advance the conversation; showing interest in and respect for others' views. Presentations are clear and show creative thinking and superior communication skills: original, tightly organized, fully developed communication of concepts. Work of this quality is not only easy for the audience to comprehend, summarize and remember, but it is also fresh, new and insightful.

B: a student received a B provides an overview of the papers, but there may be some lapses in organization of the overview, or the overview addresses some, but not all relevant course learning outcomes (stated on pg. 2 above). The overview may also go longer than the recommended 5 minutes. Students provide questions for group discussion, but questions could be more rich or insightful to help lead to deeper understanding for fellow students in the topics that the readings address, and related to the course learning outcomes. A student receiving this grade facilitates the class discussion, but misses some opportunities to foster conditions for helping students in the group to contribute readily to the conversation without dominating it; making thoughtful contributions that advance the conversation; showing interest in and respect for others' views.

C: is given to students who provide an overview of the papers, but in a problematic way. The overview is disorganized, says very little (offering only obvious, shallow arguments or summaries), or does not address the course objectives. Students provide questions for group discussion, but questions are lacking richness and insight to help lead to deeper understanding for fellow students in the topics that the readings address, and related to the course learning outcomes. A student receiving this grade facilitates the class discussion, but misses many opportunities to foster conditions for helping students in the group to contribute readily to the conversation without dominating it; making thoughtful contributions that advance the conversation; showing interest in and respect for others' views.

NC: students in this range often provide an overview of the readings demonstrating minimal understanding of the material. Students receiving an NC often have a lack of insightful questions or facilitation so that there is minimal fostering of group discussion, leading to minimal opportunities for deepening understanding for fellow students in the topics that the readings address, and related to the course learning outcomes. “NC” quality work indicates failure and is usually granted in the case where the student did not do the required work, or the quality of presentation and group facilitation was so poor that the objectives of the assignment were in no way fulfilled.

- 4. Reading Assignments:** Reading assignments will be provided weekly. This course is designed to maximize efficient use of in-class and out-of-class time. Studies have shown that surface knowledge acquisition is often more efficiently performed by students studying outside of class. However practice of that knowledge (e.g. through group discussions, presentations; practical applications, problem-based learning assignments) is necessary for attaining deep knowledge that lasts for years. Consequently students are encouraged to perform readings before class, so that the class discussions and learning will be more effective. Focused reading objectives will be provided. Answers to the reading objectives will be submitted to Canvas – 10% of grade will be given for completion of answering the reading objectives before each class.
- 5. Journal Entries:** Brief writing assignments that should integrate the readings and each student’s personal reflections and experiences relative to specific topics. Students may volunteer to share contents of the journal entries during class discussions. The professor will not disclose journal contents without prior consent of the author.

Weighting of Grades

- Term paper or Final Project: 30%
- Exams: 30%
- Journal Entries: 15%
- In-Class Exercises: 15%
- Reading Assignment Completion: 10%

Classification of Grades

Grades	Numerical Scale of Grades
A	90-100%
B	78-89%
C	60-77%
NC	0-59%

Time Expectations for this Seminar Course

Over the course students will spend 2 hours 20 minutes per week in class (28 hours total). Required readings and studying for the weekly exams is expected to take up approximately 7 hours per week (84 hours total). Preparing the presentation and structure for leading a class discussion is expected to require about 8 hours. Writing and researching for a high quality term paper is anticipated to need approximately 60 hours of student time. In total, students are expected to spend 180 hours over the semester on this course.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Professor Eric Loucks for his support with structuring this course.