Course Overview

This course serves as an introduction to the sub-discipline of medical geography. Medical geography deals with human-environment interactions and the influence that these interactions have on public health, and encompasses a broad range of geographical work on health and health care. In this class, we will consider these issues by focusing particularly on the nexus between environmental exposures and human health outcomes. We will consider questions such as: How can concepts from geography help us to better understand health and wellbeing? How do geographic tools – such as mapping and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) – help us tackle questions in health research? This course is designed to help you to begin thinking about the complexities that geography brings to topics related to health and to provide you with some tools for studying geographic differences in health and health services. Putting data into a geographic context provides a window from which to examine possible geographic differences in health outcomes and develop public health strategies to reduce disease and improve the health of communities.

The class will focus on several distinct topical areas: (1) Global health and disparity, including population pressures, infectious disease, and issues unique to less developed nations; (2) Health transitions and issues centered in wealthier nations; (3) Epidemiology, and the unique challenges in analyzing environmental causes of human morbidity and mortality.

Textbooks/Readings

There is no required text for this course. Readings will be available online or handed out. The class calendar will be updated frequently, so check Blackboard often.

Academic Integrity

Everyone is expected to exercise academic honesty. Any acts such as, but not limited to, using unauthorized material on quizzes, class exercises, and exams or presenting work done by others as one's own work will be considered as academically dishonest and will be dealt with very severely. Acts of academic dishonesty, such as but not limited to those mentioned above, will lead to a grade of F in the course plus additional actions.

For the official policies on academic integrity and scholastic dishonesty, please refer to the University Honor Code (http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html).
**Special Concerns**

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, [http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/](http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/)

*Accommodations for religious holidays.* By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Blackboard**

This course is a blackboard course. As such, you will be expected to monitor the website for course news and relevant emails. Readings may be posted on this website. If you have questions about how to get a password and how to use this system, please contact Campus Information Technologies and Instructional Resources.
This course will have four components: (1) a midterm exam; (2) a final exam; (3) a writing assignment; and (4) attendance.

**Attendance and Participation**

Students are expected to attend class regularly, and as it is a seminar and discussion class, student presence is required to create a rich learning experience. I will take attendance, and it will count toward the grade. Please note that an excused absence is (a) an illness or family emergency that is verified with a doctor’s note or the emergency dean within one week of the class, or (b) a conflict with unavoidable university-related business.

**Exams**

There will be two examinations – a midterm and a cumulative final. The midterm will be held in-class during lecture, and the final exam will be during the scheduled final examination period.

If you are unable to take an exam at its scheduled time, it must because of (a) an illness or family emergency that is verified by the emergency dean within one week of the exam, or (b) conflict with unavoidable university-related business (about which you have told me well in advance). Your absence must be verified by the dean. There will be no make-up exams without written documentation from the dean.

**Writing Assignment**

Topics to be discussed in class.

**Details:**
There are two equally-weighted parts to this writing assignment. (1) A literature review; and (2) a completed paper. A more detailed overview will be handed out in class.

1. **Length.**
   a. **Chapter:** How long does the chapter need to be? Between 3,500 and 4,000 words. The typical double-spaced page with one-inch margins will contain between 250 and 300 words.

2. **Bibliography:** Please keep careful records of your research. Include author, title of article, name of publication or web page and web address; date published and date accessed.
   a. **Copies of web pages, interview notes, articles, brochures and any collected research information.** Turn this information in, ideally in an electronic format, but if that is not possible, use an envelope or binder. I use this information to determine the quality of your research and reporting.

3. **Due Dates**
   a. **October 26:** Literature review 1 due.
   b. **November 5:** Literature review 2 due.
   c. **December 2:** Paper Due

4. **Grading:** Grading will be based on the following:
1. Adequate length as stated above (If short, I will deduct 10 points)
2. Correct grammar and spelling (Please run spell check, and re-read your paper before you submit it).
3. References – Good quality, broad, more than just websites (!).
4. Facts supporting opinion
5. Substantive opinions rather than just bland, general statements
6. Personal flavor and character

**Grading**

If you have any questions or concerns about a grade, you must bring it to my attention within *two weeks* of when the exam/assignment was returned. To do so, please write a case for why you think the grade is incorrect. After two weeks, the grade is final.

Your composite numeric grade will be calculated as follows:

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**Field Trips**

There are 3-5 field trips during scheduled class meetings, and more information about these will be available as the semester progresses. Past field trips have included: Green Building Tours of AMD (LEED Platinum) & Dell Children’s Hospital (LEED Platinum); Dillo Dirt Sewage Composting Center; Whole Foods Market (discussions with buyers) and Wheatsville Co-op; Eco-Wise Green Living Store; ERT Electronics Recycling Center; and private film screenings when topically relevant.