

*Syllabus - EPID 8300
Epidemiology of Aging
Spring 2007*

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Course Information

Instructor: Claire Robb, Ph.D., MPH

Office Location: The Institute of Gerontology, 255 East Hancock Avenue, Athens
(located on the corner of College and Hancock downtown)

Phone: (706) 425-3222 Note: Always follow up all telephone messages with an email

Email: crobb@geron.uga.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Meeting Time and Location

9:30-10:45 AM Tuesday/Thursday; C. Paul D. Coverdell Center, S141 – Conference Room

Textbooks and Other Required Course Material

- Satariano, W.A., *Epidemiology of Aging: An Ecological Approach*, Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Inc., 2006.
- Journal articles and other articles of interest which will be posted on WebCT as the class progresses.

Course Description

This course addresses the rapidly increasing need for specialized knowledge among epidemiologists in order to effectively promote the health of the aging society in the United States. Using an ecological model, this course will present the epidemiology of aging from a public health perspective with a specific focus on epidemiologic methods and their application to the study of function and disease in the elderly. Some of the topics to be covered will include the significance of an epidemiological perspective in the study of aging of human populations; the interrelation of aging, health, and the environment; survival, mortality, and cause of death; physical functioning and activities of everyday life; cognitive functioning; depression; falls, injuries, and automobile crashes; disease and comorbidities; health, frailty, and “successful” aging. Students will examine methods for conducting epidemiological studies in older populations and the implications of an aging society on public health practice.

Course Learning Objectives

The syllabus, outside reading assignments and all course lectures will be posted on WebCT. The syllabus is a guide only and dates may change. Changes in class assignments will be announced during class and will be posted as an announcement on WebCT.

FOR MPH STUDENTS: *Epidemiology of Aging* addresses the following core competencies for epidemiology as set forth by the American Public Health Association:

- Explain the importance of epidemiology for informing scientific, ethical, economic and political discussion of health issues.
- Describe a public health problem in terms of magnitude, person, time and place.
- Apply the basic terminology and definitions of epidemiology,
- Identify key sources of data for epidemiologic purposes.
- Evaluate strength and limitations of epidemiologic reports.

FOR GERONTOLOGY CERTIFICATE STUDENTS: *Epidemiology of Aging* can be considered as an elective for those students in the Gerontology Certificate Program

The class will consist of formal lecture sessions, group discussions and student presentations. Group/individual projects will involve review of epidemiologic research in detail in a specific area of gerontologic epidemiology. These projects will emphasize understanding of some aspect of epidemiologic methods. The size of the class will determine whether the projects are group projects or individual projects.

Students in the course will have the opportunity to:

- Learn how the principles and methods of epidemiology can be applied to the study of aging.
- Learn about special concepts in the epidemiologic study of older persons.
- Learn about the distinctions between disease and disability.
- Learn about key methodological considerations for conducting epidemiologic studies of older persons.
- Review health assessment techniques which are used for conducting epidemiologic studies of older persons.
- Learn about the epidemiology of selected diseases, syndromes and conditions common to old age.
- Examine primary, secondary and tertiary prevention, as applied to older persons.
- Learn how to critically evaluate research in this field.

Course Requirements for Grading Purposes

This course requires review of a journal article with a paper and presentation, and a group/individual project/presentation. Details of the paper presentation and the project presentation will be discussed during class. Final grades will be based on the following percentages:

- Two tests (Midterm and Final Exam*)10% each
- Journal article review/in-class presentation 10%
- A group/individual project with presentation 25%
- Student-led discussions of assigned papers 45%

* Final exam is take home exam

All reading assignments should be done prior to class and you are expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss what you have read. There will be two (2) tests. The midterm will be taken in class and lasts approximately one-hour. The final is a take-home exam. Tests may be composed of multiple choice, true-false and/or essay questions. Missing or failing to turn in a test on time counts as a zero. The final exam must be turned in at the due date at the Institute of Gerontology. Exam dates are as follows:

Tuesday, February 20

MIDTERM EXAM (in class)

Thursday, May 3

FINAL EXAM DUE (take home exam)

I will grade tests and assignments as quickly as I can. I will post test grades on WebCT and return assignments in class.

Topical Outline

Tuesday, Jan. 9: Introduction, overview of the class, review of syllabus.

Thursday, Jan. 11: Lecture, Chapter 1. The Aging of Human Populations: The Significance of an Epidemiologic Perspective; discussion of: Fried, L.P., 2000, *Epidemiology of Aging*.

Tuesday, Jan. 16: Student-led class discussion of three articles: (1) Omran, A.R., 1971, *The epidemiologic transition: A theory of the epidemiology of population change*, (2) Olshansky, J & Ault, B., 1986, *The fourth stage of epidemiologic transition: The stage of delayed degenerative disease*, and (3) Smallman-Raynor, M., & Phillips, D., 1999, *Late-stages of epidemiological transition: Health status in the developed world*.

Thursday, Jan. 18: Lecture, Chapter 2. Aging, Health and Environment: An Ecological Model

Tuesday, Jan. 23: Student-led class discussion of two seminal articles: Fries, J.F., 1982, *The compression of morbidity*, and Verbrugge, L.M., & Jette, A.M., *The disablement process*; Review of topics for group/individual projects.

Thursday, Jan. 25: Lecture, Chapter 3. Survival, mortality & cause of death

Tuesday, Jan. 30: Chapter 3 (continued); Review of online databases

Thursday, Feb. 1: Chapter 4. Physical functioning and activities of everyday life.

Guest lecture: Dr. Elaine Cress on Physical Functioning and Disability. Group/individual project development.

Tuesday, Feb. 6 and Thursday Feb. 8: Project development. Students are expected to use these 2 class sessions to initiate and develop their group/individual projects. Additional planning time must be done during non-class hours. Students will set up appointments to discuss the progress on their project with Dr. Robb

Tuesday, Feb. 13: Lecture, Chapter 5. Cognitive Functioning.

Thursday, Feb. 15: Student-led discussion of 2 articles: (1) Seeman, et al, 2001, *Social relationships, social support and patterns of cognitive aging in healthy, high functioning older adults: McArthur studies of successful aging*; and (2) Lindsay, et al, 2002, *Risk factors for Alzheimer's Disease: A prospective analysis from the Canadian study of health and aging*.

Tuesday, Feb. 20: MIDTERM EXAM. The midterm exam will cover all lectures, chapter assignments and supplemental readings.

Thursday, Feb. 22: Lecture, Chapter 6. Depression

Tuesday, Feb. 28: Student-led discussion of 2 articles: (1) Kawachi & Berkman, 2001, *Social ties and mental health*; and (2) Prince et al, 1998, *A prospective population-based cohort study of the effects of disablement and social milieu on the onset and maintenance of late-life depression*.

Thursday, Mar. 1: Lecture, Chapter 8. Disease and Comorbidities.

Tuesday, Mar. 6 Student-led discussion on 2 articles: (1) cardiovascular disease - TBA and (2) Yanik, R., 1997, *Cancer burden in the aged*.

Thursday, Mar. 8 Student-led discussion on 2 articles: (1) diabetes - TBA AND (2) stroke - TBA

Tuesday, Mar. 13 and Thursday, Mar. 15: NO CLASS/SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, Mar. 20, & Thursday, Mar. 22: Student journal article review presentations and discussion

Tuesday, Mar. 27: Lecture, Chapter 10. Conducting Epidemiological Studies in Older Populations

Thursday, March 29: Review of on line databases; computer lab

Tuesday, April 3: Review of on line databases; computer lab (continued)

Thursday, April 5: Survey methodology and ethical issues

Tuesday, April 10: Student-led discussion of 2 articles on recruitment of older adults in research studies – TBA

Thursday, April 12: Lecture, Chapter 12: New Directions for Research and Policy.

Tuesday, April 17- Thursday, April 26: Project presentations followed by class discussion and evaluation.

Thursday, April 26: Take home final exam is handed out; **exam due by 11:00 AM on Thursday, May 3.**

Grading Policy

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Make-Up Policy

If you miss a test (i.e., the Midterm Exam), arrangements must be made to take it as soon as possible by calling me at 706-425-3222. Make-up exams will be given at the Institute of Gerontology, 255 Hancock Avenue (downtown Athens at the corner of College and Hancock).

Attendance Policy

While attendance is not mandatory, it is strongly suggested that all students attend every class session. Since we will be having guest lecturers throughout the semester, it is important for you to take complete notes on what is being said in the lectures. Test questions for both a midterm exam and final exam

Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second class meeting.

University Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and

ignorance is not an acceptable defense. The full version of "A Culture of Honesty: Politics and Procedures" detailing UGA's policies on this matter can be found on the Internet at <http://www.uga.edu/~vpaa>.

All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements should contact the instructor or designate during regular office hours or by appointment. If you have a disability and would like to request appropriate accommodations, please feel free to discuss this with me.

All individuals receiving accommodation in the classroom must be registered with Disability Services. Please visit their website at <http://www.dissvcs.uga.edu> for further information.

General Disclaimers

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

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