

SPPH 525 Syllabus, Fall 2018

SPPH 525: Issues and Concepts in Public Health

Term 1: September to December 2018

Time: Wednesdays 2 – 5 pm

Location: SPPH B151

Instructor: Martin Guhn (martin.guhn@ubc.ca)

Assistant Professor, Human Early Learning Partnership, School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine

Office Location: Room 478, SPPH

Teaching Assistant: Lynn Kennedy (lynnkennedy93@gmail.com)

MPH student (2nd year), School of Population and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine.

Instructor & TA Office Hours: By appointment.

Course Overview: SPPH 525 is an introductory, graduate-level course that provides an overview of topics selected from the field of population and public health and introduces concepts related to the themes within the 4 divisions of UBC's School of Population and Public Health. (Epidemiology, biostatistics and public health practice; Health in populations; Health services and policy; Occupational and environmental health). Students will be challenged to critically examine current issues in public health.

This work will be done through a variety of individual and group-based activities, including class discussions and assignments, as well as readings in advance of class. Guest presenters will be invited to speak on a select number of population and public health issues sampled from across the themes. **Please recognize that in a course of this length, not every topic in population and public health can be addressed** and the sample topics represent solely a small selection of current issues, strategies, and approaches relevant to a variety of population and public health problems.

Course Objectives:

- To gain an understanding of the breadth of the field of population and public health.
- To introduce concepts, issues, and organizations involved in each of the areas of public health presented.
- To gain practice in systematic and critical analysis from the perspective of supporting decision making for population and public health issues.
- To gain oral presentation skills.
- To practice inter- and multi-disciplinary dialogue, using class groups and interaction with guest speakers as an opportunity to critique one another's approaches or proposals, with a view to improve understanding and constructive improvement.

Course Components:

- Lectures and guest presentations
- Class discussions and group work
- Individual homework and assignments

Required Readings: Required readings will be available for free on the course Canvas website. These are related to each scheduled class. Students are expected to be familiar with the reading prior to class so that they can participate actively in class discussion and activities.

Optional Readings: These are not required but are ‘optional’.

Course Materials & Canvas Website: All of the required materials for the course (e.g., syllabus, course schedule, required readings, and assignments) will be posted on Canvas (<http://canvas.ubc.ca>). Readings and session materials will be organized into folders by the date of the session. Each of these folders will also contain any new assignment information. The course schedule and syllabus, which may be updated from time to time, will also be posted at this site. I will endeavor to also post guest presenters’ slide sets on the course Canvas site, with their permission. Course materials may not always be available prior to class. If this is the case, the materials will be posted in the folder corresponding to the date of the class directly following the session.

Instructions to Access Canvas

- Go to the following website: <http://canvas.ubc.ca>
- Login with your Campus Wide Login ID (CWL) and password
- If you find that you do not have access to the course under your ‘Course List’, please contact Lynn Kennedy, the TA for this course. If you lose or forget your CWL ID or password, please contact the UBC IT Helpdesk (<https://it.ubc.ca/got-question-about-it-products-and-support#helpdesk>)
- If you encounter technical difficulties with the Canvas site, please first check the login page for current service notices and bulletins. If you are unable to connect after a few tries, please contact the IT Helpdesk as mentioned above. When contacting the IT Helpdesk, please include the type and version of browser you are using (e.g., Explorer 11), your computer operating system, and a detailed description of the problem you encountered.
- **Note:** An orientation to the Canvas course layout is available, by request, with the course TA. Please contact Lynn Kennedy to schedule a suitable time and date.

Laptop use during class: While class is in progress, you are welcome to use your laptop for activities directly related to the course (e.g., note-taking, to reference readings). However, out of respect for your instructor and peers, please do not use your laptop for unrelated activities (e.g., checking email, looking up unrelated web pages) during class time.

Class Schedule (Tentative – please check Canvas regularly for changes and updates)

Date		Topic	Presenter(s)
Sept 5	1	Introduction to Course	Martin Guhn
	2	Visit UBC Totem Pole	
Sep 12	1	Cultural Continuity in Aboriginal Communities	Martin Guhn
	2	Early Child Development	Martin Guhn
Sep 19	1	GenSqueeze	Paul Kershaw
	2	Income Inequality & Social Determinants	Martin Guhn
Sep 26	1	Healthcare Priority Setting	Craig Mitton
	2	Global Health & an Equity-Sensitive Perspective	Jerry Spiegel
Oct 3	1	Alternative Approaches to Substance Use Treatment	Eugenia Oviedo-Joekes
	2	Opioid Crisis & Pharma Industry	Martin Guhn
Oct 10	1	Health Policy – PharmaCare 2020	Steve Morgan
	2	Diet, Food Policy, and Public Health	Rachel Murphy
Oct 17	1	Mental Health	Naomi Dove
	2	Eradication of Infectious Disease	Hasina Samji – TBC
Oct 24	1	Injury Prevention	Shelina Babul
	2	Substance Use Prevention Strategies	Kenneth Tupper
Oct 31	1	Environments, Risky Outdoor Play, and Health in Children	Mariana Brussoni
	2	Occupational Health: Research & Policy	Chris McLeod
Nov 7	1	GetCheckedOnline: Online STI Testing	Mark Gilbert
	2	SCOPE and Live 5210	Shazhan Amed – TBC
Nov 14	1	HELP EXPO Robson Square – 9am to 12noon	TBD
	2	Workshop to work on presentations	Lynn Kennedy
Nov 21 & 28		Student Presentations & Discussions	All MPH students

Student Evaluation:

- 1) **Participation (10%)** – This mark will be derived from instructor observations of student participation during lectures, activities, and class discussions.
- 2) **Assignments (2 assignments * 15% each = 30%)** – Students may choose to complete 2 out of 3 of the following activities:
 - a. **2 reflective writings on 2 different topics (2 * 7.5% each = 15%)**
 - b. **Op-ed (15%)**
 - c. **Briefing Note (15%)**
- 3) **Group-based assignments and presentation (20%)**
- 4) **Individual final assignment (40%)** – For their final assignment, students will complete the following: Part 1) A 1-page proposal on a selected public health discussion topic or intervention (10%) and Part 2) A final paper on the topic outlined in their proposals (30%).

Note: The instructor is open to suggestions by students for alternative assignments, including alternative formats (e.g., art work; video; sketch; knowledge translation; poster). Please contact Martin Guhn if you are interested in developing your own alternative assignment.

Further details and instructions regarding the above course assignments are outlined below (see the section titled “Student Evaluation and Assignment Details”). You are strongly encouraged to approach Martin Guhn and/or Lynn Kennedy with any questions, concerns, or ideas regarding your course assignments.

Assignment Submission Guidelines: In general, please submit all assignments as a Microsoft Word file, as this is the easiest format for us to provide feedback with. All written submissions should be double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, using 12-point font. Please number all pages and include your name and student number in the top right corner of page 1. For all assignments, references and appendices (if included) will not count towards the allotted word count and page limits. For your references, please make sure to use a consistent citation format (APA; AMA; or Vancouver Reference Style).

Assignments should be submitted to the Assignment Dropbox found on the course Canvas website by the designated due date and time. In the event you encounter difficulties logging into Canvas around the submission deadline, please submit the assignment via email to both the instructor and the TA. We ask that if you send either of us an email outside of the Canvas website (e.g., from your Hotmail or Gmail account), please be sure to include ‘SPPH 525’ in the subject line.

Assignment Deadlines: All assignments must be submitted by the designated due date and time. Assignments submitted later than the due date will be penalized 10% of the assessed grade for each day (or portion of a day) past the due date.

Grading: Grading will be in accordance with UBC Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies policies (<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/grading-practices>). Note that 60% is the minimum passing grade for graduate students, and for doctoral students, requirements are more stringent.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct subject to penalty. All students are expected to know what constitutes plagiarism, and as such, please take some time to review the Academic Integrity and Plagiarism guidelines at UBC (<http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-plagiarism/>).

Here are a few useful online tutorials on the topic available at no cost to you:

- **SFU Library's Plagiarism Tutorial:** <https://canvas.sfu.ca/courses/15986>
- **York University's Academic Integrity Tutorial:** http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/how.html

You are encouraged to complete these modules if you have any concerns regarding your understanding of the appropriate use and citation of materials.

Student Evaluation and Assignment Details:

1. Participation (10%)

Purpose: To encourage discussion and critical commentary on information presented and dialogue on public health issues. Students are expected to attend all classes and to come to class prepared. Readings are to be completed before class and students should be ready to participate actively in class and group discussion and activities, to critically consider materials presented in class and from readings, and to offer content to the class and group discussions based on these, as well as other experiences (including from other classes/ learning).

Assessment: Participation will be assessed by the instructor throughout the course/term.

2. Assignments (2 assignments * 15% each = 30% total) Students may choose to complete 2 out of 3 of the following assignment options (i.e., Option 2a, 2b, 2c).

Note: As mentioned above, you may choose an alternative format – this is encouraged, but the topic/format needs to be approved in an email by the TA or the instructor.

Option 2a. Two reflective writings (2 x 7.5% each = 15%)

Deadline:

- **Reflection 1:** Wednesday, September 19th, 2018 @ 11:59 PM
- **Reflection 2:** Wednesday, October 10th, 2018 @ 11:59 PM

Purpose: To reflect on reading materials, session presentations and discussion and build on prior knowledge and experience to develop an approach to analysis of public health issues, that incorporates a variety of considerations. Over the period of the course, you can choose two of the topics/ sessions on which to write a reflection. This is an opportunity to integrate and express your own ideas about the readings and content including concepts raised in the sessions, and how these relate to what you are learning in other classes, how these may contrast to materials or approaches covered in earlier sessions as well as external sources including your own (new) field of study. It is designed to help you develop your analytical writing skills including explaining the reasons for your thoughts and ideas. You may choose to write your reflections based on content from any part of the course (readings, presentation, discussion), with due dates as indicated above.

Assignment length: Each reflective writing piece should be between 600 - 800 words (references excluded).

OR

Option 2b. Op-ed (15%)

Deadline: due by Wednesday, September 26th, 2018 @ 11:59 PM

Purpose: To practice clearly stating an opinion to a lay readership from the perspective of a public health professional, and justifying it using available data and information in a concise fashion and related to a current public health issue with which the student has familiarity. Please confirm our choice of topic with the TA or instructor.

Assignment length: The op-ed is not to exceed 1,200 words (references excluded).

OR

Option 2c. Briefing Note (15%)

Deadline: due by Wednesday, October 17th, 2018 @ 11:59 PM

Purpose: To practice debriefing a policymaker on a public health issue. The goal of this exercise is to prepare a policy briefing note to convince a policymaker to either agree or disagree with a recommendation, and to take a position or a course of action. The brief should provide a factual presentation of the evidence and a clear recommendation of future directions. Good briefs are concise, accurate, objective and strategic.

Format: Policy briefs typically do not require references, however, since this is an academic exercise, please include your references at the end of the document. The following sections should be included in your decision brief:

- **Title:** centered and bolded
- **Summary** (1/2 page): describe the issue in 3-4 bullets with key considerations that may affect the Minister's decision, including contentious issues, your recommendation and the substantive arguments in its favor.
- **Background** (2-3 paragraphs): use this section to provide relevant facts about the issue including the history of the issue, past decisions, previous action(s) taken, why the issue evolved, why the issue is being brought to the Minister's attention at this time, and major participants and stakeholders.
- **Options and Rationale** (3-5 paragraphs): identify two or three options that have been considered and the pros and cons of each. Indicate the rationale for the option/course of action that is recommended. Include the scientific evidence supporting the recommendation.
- **Considerations** (3-5 paragraphs): use this section to identify the considerations which the Minister needs taken into account in concurring with the recommended course of action such as the unintended consequences, political and financial feasibility, level of expected social acceptance, and probability of successful implementation. This section does not have to draw a specific conclusion, but rather highlights which aspects of the issue will be most important in developing and implementing the recommended policy.
- **Summary** (1 paragraph): indicate succinctly what your recommendation is and why this option is the preferred approach. This is a critical piece of the brief so ensure that you provide a specific recommendation.

Assignment length: The policy brief should not exceed 1,200 words (references excluded).

4. Group-based assignments and presentation (20%) Deadline/Presentation dates: November 21st & 28th, 2018
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Purpose: To examine and analyze a topic of public health importance, condense and present this information in a 20-minute presentation (delivery shared among all members of the group), and to lead a short class Q&A period related to your selected issue.

Format: Presentations should be completed in groups of 3 people (exceptions may be allowed, please ask). Presentation dates will be during regularly scheduled classes towards the end of the term. Time slots will be arranged based on first-come-first-serve basis. The format of the presentation should be similar to the discussion paper/ proposal outline above, but this exercise is intended to show collaborative effort and contributions from each member of the group.

The goal of the presentation is to speak about a Public Health topic comparing and contrasting the different approaches to prevention and intervention (e.g. voluntary vs. mandatory, technical vs. social, education vs. enforcement, economic vs. altruistic, etc.). Potential topics should be chosen from current public health issues (e.g., identified from the news/recent publications – check with Martin or Lynn if uncertain) and reflect a specific jurisdictional context (e.g., BC).

All presentations should include slides for objectives and conclusions and address the following areas:

- **Epidemiology and/or history of the issue**
- **Natural history of the disease (if applicable)**
- **Population/public health significance of the issue**
- **Economic significance of the issue**
- **Social and/or medical intervention or treatment (if applicable)**
- **Current/potential population & public health interventions to address the issue**

Different groups cannot present the same topic. Topics will be assigned on a first-come-first-serve basis and it is strongly encouraged that you discuss your topic with the instructor well before your presentation date. Topics listed below are examples – but you may come up with your own topic (subject to approval of the instructor)

1. Antibiotics resistance
2. Safe drinking water
3. Climate change
4. Dental caries in children
5. School nutrition
6. Prevention of depression and anxiety

7. Child-friendly cities
8. Universal, affordable daycare
9. Car-free/green cities
10. Sugar and nutrition
11. Minimum income
12. Mandatory immunization
13. Homelessness
14. ...

Assessment: Presentation grades will be assigned to the group as a whole and all members of the group are expected to participate equally in the preparation and presentation. Please inform the instructor if the responsibility of the work is not being shared. You will be expected to facilitate a discussion/Q&A session following presentations. Electronic copies of the presentations should also be sent to the TA one week prior to the presentation date.

Assignment length: Group presentations should be no longer than 20 minutes, in addition to a 10-minute Q&A and discussion period to follow.

5. Individual Final Assignment (40%) – Students may choose to complete one of the following assignment options (i.e., Option 5a or 5b)

Option 5a. Public health program ‘for decision’ discussion paper

- **Part 1) 1-page proposal (5%)** – due Wednesday, October 24th, 2018 @ 11:59 PM
- **Optional Part 2: Partial or full draft (15%)** – due Wednesday, November 14, 2018 @ 11:59 PM
 - Note: this is an optional step if you wish to receive some feedback on your draft.
- **Part 3) Full paper (20%)** – due Saturday, December 3rd, 2018 @ 11:59 PM

Purpose: To lay out a specific public health issue in a systematic fashion and present a proposal with an accompanying analysis for a decision-maker. A specific format for this will be provided when this task is further outlined in class. A 1-page proposal will be submitted by October 24, which states the topic/ issue selected, explains why it is of relevance for public health, and includes a few key references (including a paragraph for each stating why they were chosen/why they are relevant).

- Identifying key references: Use your critical judgement and ‘consult’ with Google Scholar: citation counts on Google Scholar give you a sense of what is most widely cited and read. Reading/citing systematic reviews and/or meta-analyses is useful with regard to the scientific background.

The final paper should incorporate the public health terminology and concepts (e.g., burden of illness, causation, effective interventions), as well as components of analyses

required to support decision-making in public health. (e.g., literature base, recommendations for an approach).

Format and Content: The following sections should be included in your “for decision” discussion paper:

- **Introduction:** Identify the issue in a summary paragraph. Typically, this will be in the form of whether a specific action should be taken along the lines of initiating a program/ intervention, or modifying or discontinuing an existing program/ intervention. What decision is being sought?
- **Background and Analysis:** What has led to the current state of needing to consider this issue? What is known about the causes of this problem and potential solutions? Analyze the components required to make a fully informed decision about this issue: causes, burden of illness, effective interventions, health economic considerations associated with interventions, implementation issues (e.g., resources, legislation, information systems, communication)
- **Options considered and their pros/ cons**
- **Recommendation:** Recommend preferred strategy and reason why
- **References:** include and any relevant tables or figures

Assignment length: The paper should be no longer than 2,500 words (references and appendices excluded).

OR

Option 5b. Critical analysis of a selected population/public health topic (e.g., a strategy/program/initiative/policy that aims to enhance public health)

- **Part 1) 1-page proposal (5%)** – due Wednesday, October 24th, 2018 @ 11:59 PM
 - Include a brief description of the topic, explain why it is important (background, evidence, value to society) and why it is worthy of a critical analysis (e.g., opposing theories, inconsistent empirical evidence), and provide at least 5 key references.
 - Identifying key references: Use your critical judgement and ‘consult’ with Google Scholar: citation counts on Google Scholar give you a sense of what is most widely cited and read. Reading/citing systematic reviews and/or meta-analyses is useful with regard to the scientific background.
- **Optional Part 2: Partial or full draft (15%)** – due Wednesday, November 14, 2018 @ 11:59 PM
 - Note: this is an optional step if you wish to receive some feedback on your draft.
- **Part 3) Full paper (20%)** – due Saturday, December 3rd, 2018 @ 11:59 PM

Note: If you choose this option for your final assignment, please first select a topic of interest and confirm the topic with Martin and cc your email conversations to the TA.

Format and Content: The following sections should be included in your critical analysis paper:

- **Abstract:** a brief overview of the following components (similar to a structured abstract).
- **Introduction:** The introduction should provide a background on the selected topic. This could include the relevance for population health, burden of disease, the proportion of the population that are exposed to a health risk, and/or historic or emerging trends.
- **Methods:** After reading this section the reader should understand how the data/materials/references to conduct the critical analysis were chosen. This includes:
 - i) a brief summary of search strategies for identifying literature (reports, research studies, grey literature) on the selected topic; ii) inclusion/exclusion criteria; iii) experts contacted (researchers, practitioners, individuals affected by public health issue or involved in intervention); and iv) your approach (or framework) for conducting the critical analysis (e.g. criteria used to assess whether a program or policy was effective or not).
 - **Please note:** Not all of the sections are equally applicable/relevant for every topic. Focus on those most relevant to your analysis.
- **Results** (3-4 pages, includes tables/figures/graphs where appropriate): This is the main section where you present the results of your critical analysis. Some questions to consider and comment on are the process issues that may have an impact on the success of the intervention:
 - Is it too early to tell if it is working or not?
 - Was the intervention implemented as planned?
 - Did ethical or cultural issues hamper the effectiveness of the intervention?
 - Did the intervention reach the target population?
 - Was the intervention based on sound scientific evidence?
 - Is the intervention administered appropriately (under the jurisdiction of the federal or provincial government or a non-government organization)?
- **Discussion and Conclusion:** The particular population/public health strategy/initiative/program/policy from the selected topic should be discussed with respect to the strengths, limitations and potential to enhance population/public health. Draw comparisons between your analysis of the strategy/initiative/program/policy under study and the other empirical evidence available; e.g., in the published literature, the grey literature, or with expert opinion. The discussion must include commentary on how the strategy/initiative/program/policy could be improved, expanded or changed to improve population/public health.

Assignment length: The paper should be no longer than 2,500 words (references and appendices excluded).

General grading criteria for assignments

Grade	Descriptor
A+ (90-100) A (85-89) A- (80-84)	Demonstrates exceptional breadth and depth of understanding of the subject matter; demonstrates proficient use of existing research literature and exceptional analytic and critical thinking skills, articulates ideas unusually well in both oral and written form, consistently makes strong, explicit connections between theory and practice; shows a high degree of creativity and personal engagement with the topic.
B+ (76-79) B (72-75) B- (68-71)	Demonstrates good breadth and depth of understanding of the subject matter; demonstrates good use of existing research literature and strong analytic and critical thinking skills, articulates ideas well in both oral and written form, at times makes strong, explicit connections between theory and practice; shows some creativity and satisfactory personal engagement with the topic.
C+ (64-67) C (60-63) C- (55-59)	Demonstrates adequate breadth and depth of understanding of the subject matter; demonstrates some ability to use existing research literature in simple ways, and some indication of analytic and critical thinking skills, oral and written skills are adequate but need some work, occasionally makes connections between theory and practice, but ideas need to be developed further; few creative ideas and/or a low level of personal engagement with the topic.
D (50-54)	Breadth and depth of understanding of the subject matter are minimal; minimal use of existing research literature even in basic ways, and minimal indication of analytic and critical thinking skills, oral and written skills are barely adequate; minimal connections between theory and practice; minimal indication of creative thinking and/or a low level of personal engagement with the topic.
F (<50)	Breadth and depth of understanding of the subject matter are far from adequate; shows consistent misunderstanding of core concepts of the course; may have been caught plagiarizing or copying; work is extremely deficient or sub-standard. * Adapted from UBC Faculty of Education