Instructor: Sonja Senthanar, MPH, PhD  
Email: sonja.senthanar@ubc.ca  
Office hours: TBD  
Teaching assistant: TBD

Course summary: SPPH 301 introduces you to key concepts in the research and applied field of the Social Determinants of Health. It shifts your perspective from a traditional model of health in which germs and individual choices cause health and disease, to a socially determined model in which health is determined by the conditions people grew up in and live in. You will learn about key findings, applications, current debates, challenges, and remaining questions in social determinants of health research. You can expect the weekly class meetings to be interactive, requiring active participation and critical thinking.

Learning objectives:
1. Define key concepts of social determinants of health;
2. Discuss the roles that various social determinants play in shaping health outcomes;
3. Describe the potential mechanisms and pathways through which social factors influence the health of individuals, families, communities and nations;
4. Examine how different social factors contribute to health inequalities; and
5. Compare policies and interventions either proposed or currently in place to address social determinants in population health

Required course readings and videos: There is no required textbook for this course. All course readings and academic videos are available online through the UBC Library (www.library.ubc.ca) and if not, direct links will be provided.

Evaluation

Students have to complete all assignments/course evaluations in order to receive a passing grade.

The grading guidelines at UBC suggest that results in an average class will fall somewhere within the following broad limits:
Grade "A": between 5% and 25% of the class; Grades "A"/"B": combined not over 75% of the class; Grade "F": not over 20% of the class

The average course grade is expected to fall within a B-range (i.e., 68% to 79%). However, there is no grade scaling policy in place (i.e., final grades will not be scaled up/down).

Evaluation in this course will consist of:

Reading reflection (10 x 1%): Posting reading reflections and responses to others' reflections accounts for 10% of your online participation grade (feel free to post more than 10, but you will only receive 10
points, 1 point for each post). When you are reflecting on an assigned reading or video or responding to someone else’s reflection, avoid simply summarizing what was said. Instead, discuss what surprised you, where you agree/disagree, how it relates to other concepts you’ve learned about, and expand by adding your own perspective.

**Midterm exam (25%)**: The mid-term exam is designed to assess your understanding and application of key concepts from social determinants of health that have been covered both in class and in the readings. The exam will be completed in-person during class and will consist of multiple choice and open-ended short answer questions.

**Group presentation (25%)**: In groups of 3, students will give a presentation that includes a description and summary of evidence of a social determinant of health, pathways to health outcomes, and a population-level intervention. Presentations will be roughly 15 with 5 minutes of discussion. Presentation topics need to be approved by the instructor at least 2 weeks before the presentation. Each topic can only be covered once.

**Final policy brief paper (40%)**: The purpose of this assignment is to prepare a policy brief describing the relationship between a determinant of health and health outcomes, and a recommendation for action. Students can choose between 3 predetermined topics.

The paper should follow a standard briefing paper format: issue and background, current situation and rationale for needing change, and the recommended action to modify the determinant or relationship. The paper should not exceed 1,500 words, double spaced (excluding references, figures, tables) and should include at least 5 research papers.

For detailed information on course evaluations, please visit Canvas.
Class Schedule & Required Readings (subject to change)

**WEEK 1: Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health**

**Tues Sept 6th** Course overview, syllabus, review of expectations

**Thurs Sept 8th** Thinking about health, illness and social conditions/contexts: An introduction and overview

**Required readings:**

**Required video material:**
Unnatural causes (documentary, available through UBC library) – Episode 1: In sickness and in wealth (56 minutes)

**WEEK 2: Social Conditions and Lifespan Development**

**Tues Sept 13th** The SDoH across the life span I

**Thurs Sept 15th** The SDoH across the life span II *(Asynchronous learning)*

**Required readings:**

**WEEK 3: Position, Place and Health**

**Tues Sept 20th** Socioeconomic status and inequalities

**Required readings:**
Required video material:
• How economic inequality harms societies: 
  ted.com/talks/Richard_wilkinson_how_economic_inequality_harms_societies/transcript
• Della: Hurdles to health https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gLKpywffD4c

Thurs Sept 22nd
The neighbourhoods we live in
Guest speaker: Dr. Sindana D Ilango (TBC)

Required readings:

Required video material:
• Unnatural causes (documentary, available through UBC library) – Episode 5: Place matters (29 minutes)

WEEK 4: Indigenous Health

Tues Sept 27th
Indigenous health and wellbeing
Guest speaker: Dr. Peter Hutchinson

Required readings:
(Forthcoming)

Thurs Sept 29th
No class

WEEK 5: Gender, Sexuality and Health

Tues Oct 4th
Sex and gender differences in health outcomes

Required readings:

Optional readings:

Thurs Oct 6th
Sexual orientation and stigma
Guest speaker: Dr. Travis Salway

Required readings:


Optional readings:

WEEK 6: Systemic Racism and Health Inequities

**Tues Oct 11th**  Racial/ethnic discrimination and health

Required readings:

Optional readings:

Required video material:
- How racism makes us sick: [https://www.tedmed.com/talks/show?id=621421](https://www.tedmed.com/talks/show?id=621421)

**Thurs Oct 13th**  Immigration status and health

Required readings:

Optional readings:
• Capernaum by Nadine Labaki: The award-winning film Capernaum is available on Netflix and through Criterion-on-demand at the UBC library: https://media3-criterionpic-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/htbin/wwform/006?T=MON2717

**WEEK 7: Employment and Health**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tues Oct 18th</td>
<td>Precarious employment and health from and intersectionality lens</td>
<td>Guest speaker: Dr. Anita Minh</td>
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**Required readings:**

(Forthcoming)

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs Oct 20th</td>
<td>MIDTERM (In person at UBC)</td>
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**WEEK 8: Social ties, Social networks and Health / Population Health Interventions**

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<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues Oct 25th</td>
<td>Social ties, social networks and health</td>
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**Required readings:**


**Optional readings:**


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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs Oct 27th</td>
<td>Population health interventions (Asynchronous learning)</td>
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**Required readings:**


**Optional readings:**

### WEEK 9: Student Presentations

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues Nov 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>1-4 present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs Nov 3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5-8 present</td>
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### WEEK 10: Midterm Break (no classes)

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<td>Tues Nov 8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>Thurs Nov 10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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### WEEK 11: Opioid Epidemic

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<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Guest Speaker</th>
<th>Required readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues Nov 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Social and structural determinants of health among people who use illicit drugs</td>
<td>Dr. Danya Fast</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs Nov 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Groups 9-12 present</td>
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### WEEK 12: Legal Frameworks and the SDoH

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<th>Day</th>
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<th>Guest Speaker</th>
<th>Required readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues Nov 22&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Criminalization, sex work and health</td>
<td>Dr. Andrea Krüsri (TBC)</td>
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(Forthcoming) |
| Thurs Nov 24<sup>th</sup> | Health and wellbeing in the context of incarceration (Asynchronous learning) |  |

### Required readings:


### WEEK 13: New Ways of Thinking

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<th>Guest Speaker</th>
<th>Required readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues Nov 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Pandemic environments and inequalities in health outcomes</td>
<td>Dr. Chris McLeod</td>
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(Forthcoming) |
| Thurs Dec 1<sup>st</sup> | Groups 13-16 present | |
Course Policies

Attendance and participation: Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Class will begin promptly at 9:30 am. If you have special circumstances that prevent you from joining, please email the TA. It is expected that students complete the required readings and view video material before each class and be prepared to actively participate in class activities and discussion.

Gender-inclusive and person first language: Please incorporate and use gender-inclusive and person first language in your oral and written language. Avoid using: the schizophrenic, the homeless, the drug addict, etc. Use: The person who lives in poverty, the persons who suffer from mental illness, the person who uses illicit drugs.

Plagiarism and academic misconduct: Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is a form of academic misconduct. Students need to become familiar with the many different forms that plagiarism can take, including accidental and intentional plagiarism. For more information, please refer to: http://help.library.ubc.ca/planning-your-research/academic-integrity-plagiarism/.

Code of conduct: All students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that contributes positively to an environment in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusiveness are valued. Instances of bullying, harassment and discrimination, for example, are not tolerated and subject to disciplinary measures. For more on UBC’s code of conduct, please refer to: https://students.ubc.ca/campus-life/student-code-conduct.

Accessibility needs: We strive to include all students, including those with special learning needs in this course. Please let us know (or have the UBC Disability Resources Center let us know) if you have a special need documented with UBC Disability Resources Center and/or if you need a special accommodation to allow you to fully participate in the course. We adhere to UBC Policy 73: Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities. For more information, please refer to: https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/centre-for-accessibility.