

HSC 407 *Health Equity and Social Justice in the U.S.* Course Topics, Readings and Supplementary Media

Updated April 23, 2025

All listed materials are available to students at no cost

Course Description

Explores social determinants of health associated with health inequities in the U.S. Students will learn about historical and current social justice and ethical issues affecting positive health outcomes and access for diverse and vulnerable populations. (semester)

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Describe how health equity and social justice are interdisciplinary concepts incorporating ethics, history, sociology, and health sciences.
2. Explain the recent trend in health ethics moving beyond clinical issues to the broader issues of social justice and health equity.
3. Identify and describe the distribution of health inequities and their social justice contributing factors across vulnerable population groups (age, gender, gender and sexual orientations, location, & ability), disease outcomes and access to quality health care.
4. Research and analyze the historical conceptualization of race and ethnicity as they relate to health disparities in the United States.
5. Trace and analyze the development ethical principles relevant to the culture of individuals and their communities, including the principle of autonomy, beneficence, and justice as it applies to health promotion and research.
6. Analyze how traditional ethical theories apply to various cultures (African American, Native American, Latinx, & Asian/Pacific Islanders) and extrapolate universal values that transcend culture.
7. Evaluate concepts and arguments across disciplines (ethics, history, sociology and health science) related to health inequalities and social injustice.
8. Create an organized written analytical response to describe the development of health disparities within a vulnerable population group (race, ethnicity, ability status, gender, age, or sexual identity) due to historical treatment, cultural practices, and/or acculturation and critique strategies used to address health inequalities within that population.
9. Use ethical theory to analyze case studies of health disparities and social justice issues and relate to personal narrative.
10. Use self-narrative to examine personal relationship to ethics, health disparities, and social justice.

Weekly Topics, Readings and Supplementary Media (15 weeks)

All listed materials are available to students at no cost

Reading and supplementary media list created by Brian Cole, DrPH (Instructor) with assistance from Michelle DeMars, MLIS (Librarian)
California State University Long Beach

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Wk	Topics	Readings	Media/other
1	Overview: Key frameworks and concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health equity and social justice • Ethical frameworks, fairness and justice. • Socio-ecological framework. • Social determinants of health 	Braveman et al., 2018 (open access journal article) Barrett. Ch. 1 & 2 Public Health Ethics (OER open access textbook) APHA (avail online) Policy Circle, 2023 (avail online)	APHA, 2022. How do social determinants impact public health (YouTube video) 4:35 minutes <i>Suggested Reading:</i> U Texas. Ethics Unwrapped (avail online)
2	Socioeconomic status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial disparities in income and wealth • Household vs. community deprivation • White privilege, class and health 	Braveman et al., 2010. (open access journal article)	Richard Wilkinson, 2011. How economic inequality harms societies (TED Talk). (YouTube video 16 minutes) Place Matters (Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?) (Video avail at library) 30:28 minutes
3	Racial/Ethnic Disparities and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social construction of race • Historical lens on systematic racism • Anti-racism • Intersectionality 	Bailey et al. 2017 (avail at library) Bauer, 2014 (open access journal article) Brown, 2018 (avail at library)	
4a	Social determinants of health, vulnerability and marginalization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compounding of disparities in vulnerability, services, and exposure • Marginalization vs. minoritization 	Szabo, 2022 (avail at library) Walker & Fox, 2018 (open access journal article) Barrett. Ch. 7 Vulnerability and Marginalized Populations (OER open access Textbook)	
4b	Federal laws to address social inequities and injustice affecting health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How laws affect health • History of the federal role in public health • Civil rights laws 	McGowan et al., 2016 (open access journal article) Harris & Pamukcu, 2020 (avail for free through UC Escholarship)	
5a	Culture and Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acculturation and Adaptation • Latino Health Paradox, • Cultural Competence vs. Cultural Humility 	Lekas, Paul & Fuller Lewis, 2020 (open access journal article) Community Toolbox, Ch. 27, Section 7 (avail online)	

Wk	Topics	Readings	Media/other
5b	Disparities in Health Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access, Utilization, Quality, & Insurance Social, cultural, economic barriers Health literacy 	IOM, 2003. Ch. 2 (pp. 80-124) (open access book)	
6a	Disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hearing, sight, physical, learning disabilities Access to health care and other resources Universal design 	National Academies, 2018. Overview pp. 4-14. (open access book)	Intersectionality & disability, ft Keri Gray Ford Foundation (YouTube video) 2:11 minutes
6b	Place-based Health Disparities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms linking place and health History of redlining and other forms of institutionalized housing segregation Confounding with socioeconomic status 	Corburn, 2017 (open access journal article)	Housing Segregation and Redlining in America: A Short History Code Switch NPR (YouTube video) 6:36 minutes
7	Gender and Age <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evolving legal protection of women's rights Biological vs. social determinants of health Sexual Harassment 	Daniel et al., 2020. (avail for free online reading) Kabatt-Farr and Crumley, 2019 (open access journal article)	Breaking the Silence on Women's Health Ann-Marie de Lange TEDxZurichWomen (YouTube video) 11:19 minutes How the U.S. Health Care System Can Better Support Women Commonwealth Fund (YouTube Video) 2:32 minutes
8	Latino Health Disparities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Latinx traditions of wellness and illness Cultural assets for health Immigration, discrimination and health 	Fernandez, García-Pérez & Orozco-Aleman, 2023. (open access journal article) LeBrón, 2024. (open access journal article)	Becoming American (Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?) (Video avail at library) 29 minutes
9	African American Health Disparities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical context (slavery, laws, political movements, Tuskegee Study) African traditions of health and healing 	Marill, 2022. (open access journal article) Noonen et al., 2016 (open access journal article)	When the Bough Breaks (Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?) (Video avail at library) 29 minutes
10	Asian/Pacific Islander Health Disparities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exclusionary laws Refugee experiences Cultural assets for health 	Doàn et al., 2024. (open access journal article) Gee et al., 2007 (open access journal article)	Collateral Damage (Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?) (video avail at library) 30 minutes

Wk	Topics	Readings	Media/other
12	Native American Health Disparities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical context: Genocide and displacement, and forced assimilation Sovereignty, self-determination Traditional views of wellness and illness, 	Sarche and Spicer, 2008 (open access journal article) Unal, 2018 (avail at library)	Our Cultures Are Our Source of Health (video) (Avail at library) 9:08 minutes
13	LGBTQ+ Populations and Health Disparities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical context, social & legal exclusion Health consequences of coping strategies Depression & Suicide, Homophobia, Homonegativity, and Transphobia & Transnegativity. 	Earnshaw et al, 2024. Ch. 2 (OER open access textbook) Fingerhut & Abdou, 2017 (avail at library) Cauterucci, 2025 (avail online)	
14	Community engagement for advancing health equity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community-centered vs. community-based action Capacity-building, power, participation Rationale for assets-based approaches 	Cole et al., 2023 (open access journal article)	
15a	20. Health equity in veteran populations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combat-related vs. other health risks Disparities in social determinants of health and chronic disease Overcoming the challenges of delivering care to dispersed populations 	Merians et al., 2022 (avail at library)	Agent Orange-Long term effects on US soldiers & Vietnamese communities (video) (avail at library)
15b	21. Rural health disparities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disparities in the social determinants of health vs. disparities in health care Underlying challenges of economic decline and growing social divisions Innovative models for advancing public health in rural areas 	Miller and Vasan, 2021 (avail at library)	The Hidden Crisis in Rural America: Rural Mental Health – The Atlantic (video) (YouTube video) 13:58 minutes Rural healthcare access at risk as public health efforts become politicized (YouTube video) 9:01 minutes

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