

**Public Health Nutrition Core Course (PH 206)**  
***Critical Issues in Public Health Nutrition***

**UC Berkeley, School of Public Health**  
**Fall 2021, 2 units**

**Meetings**  
**Location**

**Thursday 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM**  
**EVAN 7**

**Instructor**

**Lia Fernald, Ph.D, MBA**

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**Office Hours:** Here is my office hour link:

If you sign up for an appointment, please make sure to come to it. It is okay to cancel, but please cancel as far in advance as possible so that someone else can have your slot.

## Overview

This course is required for first-year PH Nutrition students. The course introduces students to critical nutrition issues through presenting current faculty research using a socioecological framework. Public health nutrition related theories and conceptual frameworks will be introduced moving from individual and biological to familial, social contextual, environmental and policy related influences on diet, eating behavior and public health nutrition. Health conditions such as obesity, hunger, health disparities, and environmental changes will be presented by faculty and students. This course will provide students with critical thinking skills to analyze these issues using scientific literature. Students will build group facilitation skills, library research skills, and academic writing skills. Others may enroll with permission of instructor. A background in biologic sciences and nutrition is expected.

## PHN program competencies to be addressed in this course

1. Critically analyze emerging and important issues in public health nutrition
2. Identifies and applies the concepts of life course perspective, social determinants of health, social justice, social capital, and health equity.
3. Applies appropriate conceptual models, such as the socio-ecological model, to the development of logic models and interventions to promote health.

## Course objectives

1. To become familiar with a broad array of topics making up the field of public health nutrition.
2. To critically evaluate current issues in public health nutrition as presented in popular news and media and to discuss these topics in relation to the scientific literature.
3. To explore an area of personal interest in public health nutrition and lead discussion with classmates and course instructors using key texts.

## Newspapers/Magazines/Websites

Students are expected to read a national daily newspaper influential in policy matters—the *New York Times* ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)), *Wall Street Journal* ([www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)) or *Washington Post* ([www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com))—as a basis for discussion of policy events as they occur and in order to see how these papers cover such events in comparison to coverage in other newspapers, magazines, and television. For issues related to politics in California, we encourage you to read the *San Francisco Chronicle* ([www.sfgate.com](http://www.sfgate.com)), the *Sacramento Bee* ([www.sacbee.com](http://www.sacbee.com)) or the *LA Times* ([www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)). There are other blogs that may be interesting to students in this class, including Marion Nestle’s Food Politics blog (<http://www.foodpolitics.com/>) and others.

## Evaluation

Attendance and participation in discussions	40%
Presentation	40%
Short paper (due the week after class ends)	20%

## Classroom expectations

### ***Attendance Policy***

- Attendance is required. Because your active participation is required in this class, you may not have more than 1 unexcused absence, and, you may not miss more than 2 classes throughout the semester.
  - If you miss a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> class, or you miss classes consecutively, please provide a reason for your absence and email the instructor within 48 hours of your absence to discuss how you can make up the coursework.
- Class begins on time: please arrive on time (if you arrive more than 10 minutes late, you are considered absent).
- Please note, that as governed by UC policy, **students with conflicts with any assignment due dates or other scheduling concerns are responsible to notify the instructor in writing by the second week of the semester** of any potential conflict(s) and to recommend a solution, with the understanding that an earlier deadline or date of examination may be the most practicable solution. These policies apply to student athletes, student musicians, those with out-of-town interviews, and other students with activities (e.g., classes missed as the result of religious holy days). Complete guidelines are available on the Academic Senate website: <http://tinyurl.com/schedconflictguidelines>

### ***Electronics Policy***

- Turn off all cell phones and electronic devices. No texting or emailing is permitted in class.

### ***Policy for Late Assignments***

- Complete assigned work on time.
- Most late assignments will receive a **zero**.
- For every day that you are late in turning in written work for the final project, **a full letter grade will be deducted from your final project grade**.

### ***Communications Policy***

- Before emailing the professor, please be sure to consult the course syllabus to see if your question can be answered.
- While procedural questions (i.e. yes/no) may be answered over email, please avoid asking content questions over email. Instead, please raise these questions in class or office hours where others will benefit from hearing the answer.
- Please be advised that questions asked within 24 hours of a due date may not receive an answer prior to that date.

### ***Other***

- Complete required reading in advance of assigned class periods.

- Check bCourses regularly for messages regarding class assignments and scheduling.
- Your voice matters: participate!

### Written work

Formatting requirements for all written work:

- Clearly marked with your name and student ID
- Titled with the issue you are discussing double spaced
- Double spacing
- 12 pt font
- Times New Roman, Cambria or Calibri Font
- 1-inch margins
- Do not exceed space or word limits
- Work must be written clearly; please use grammar and spell checks.

### Presentations

Students will present the topic of the day in the second half of the semester. Each person in the class will be expected to take the lead role for one presentation and the supporting role for a different presentation. Presentation days will be assigned by the instructor, but topics for the presentations will be determined as a group in the first weeks of class. The expectation for your presentation is that you will find a minimum of **two recent academic journal articles** and **one or more recent news articles** relating to the topic for that day and that you will send these readings out a week before your presentation. At least one of the academic journal articles should be theory based or have a strong underlying conceptual framework. You will then be responsible for leading the discussion of the topic or a group exercise based on the readings, with the expectation that classmates have read the materials in advance. Students presenting on the same day should coordinate their presentations and discussions/group exercise.

### Guidelines for class presentations

#### Select reading materials

1. Select 2-3 excellent, high quality—**very recent, original research journal articles** / or a **review of the research** on the topic from a research journal—articles that we can all read to get up to date on the research currently available on your topic, the underlying theory or conceptualization, and that will give us a sense of both what research has been done in the area, as well as what the gaps are - what we know, how we know it, what we still need to learn.
2. Don't give us too much – be very selective! (you can and should read more, but only give us 2-3 articles)
3. Select at least one other thought provoking **editorial** or **news article** - recent - to help us put the topic into current political context - to help us understand the policy/economic issues – help us understand why we should care about this topic.
4. Post the reading materials on the course bcourses one week before your presentation to give us a week to read the materials.

**Work individually or with your partner.** Individuals or partners should work to identify the materials selected for class readings. Discuss:

1. The summary of the issues – what do we know?
2. The implications - for health care, prevention, programs we know, etc
3. Gaps, what do we not know?
4. Next steps – what is needed? More research, more advocacy? More communication? More money? More laws or regulations?
5. Decide on a group process method for the class presentation that will engage the class in the material, and get everyone interested enough to keep up with the topic in the weeks/months ahead.

**Presentation Guidelines:** You will have one hour of class time for your presentation. Work on listening to the group as well as managing the group discussion. Both partners should play a role in the presentation.

1. **Summarize key issues:** List the key issues, things to pay attention to, gaps still there, etc. (don't try to tell us everything about the topic – get us interested enough to read more) a power point presentation is encouraged if you want and/or use a short one page handout/briefing/fact sheet as a guide to emphasize the key issues.
2. Use a technique to get the group to **personalize** the issue to themselves, just to get started in a discussion.
3. **Engage the group:** Be creative! Use a technique such as - small groups, agree/disagree with rationales, a debate if there are two obvious sides to the issue, discussion questions. Let the group know the process you have used.
4. **Conclude:**  
What still is needed?  
What should we be watching for?  
Action steps we can take? As individuals, as professionals?

## Short Paper (due a week after the last day of class)

The purpose of this project is to review the literature on a specific problem in public health nutrition that particularly interests you. The topic can be the same as, or related to, your presentation topics, or it can be different. Since the length of the paper is limited to **five** pages (including references), you will have to decide on the most important concepts to communicate. You must use original papers and/or reviews as resources. The format of the paper should be double-spaced, font 12, on one side of the paper leaving one-inch margins and should include the following sections:

- **Background and Significance: What is the problem or issue?**
  - For a specific problem relating to public health nutrition, the background should include a clear definition of the problem, the prevalence and other epidemiologic information relating to the problem, and the etiology of the problem.
  - For policy analysis papers, the background should also include a clear discussion of what the public health nutrition-related problem is (e.g. if you want to discuss school lunch policy, you should start with what nutrition problem the policy tries to address). The background should also include a history of the development of existing policies and a discussion of key stakeholders.
  - The underlying theory or conceptual framework used to assess the issue should be explained.
- **Existing Research and Limitations: What are the major research findings related to this issue?**
  - For epidemiologically focused papers, this section should include key research findings relating to your topic, consequences for individuals and/or populations, a description of methodological issues, and limitations of the existing research.
  - For policy analysis papers, you should include a clear discussion of what policies have been proposed (or enacted) to alleviate the public health nutrition-related problem. Then, you should clarify why the proposed policy solution that you are examining solves the problem, and pros/cons in comparison with other options.
- **Application and Discussion:**
  - For epidemiologically-focused papers, the question being addressed in this section is what has been done to alleviate the problem at the individual, community and/or policy level. You can then evaluate the success of these efforts, and examine important issues or controversies that remain to be addressed.
  - For policy analysis papers, you would be expected to examine whether the politics of the situation have been taken into account and addressed by your proposed policy solution. You should also include an analysis of how the issue is “framed” in the media. Finally, you should comment on whether there has been enough sufficient or credible evidence provided to justify the policy you are examining.

- **References:** State the sources you used for this paper as you would in an original paper. Please use American Medical Association formatting (e.g. footnotes, endnotes, alphabetical by author), it must be consistent. I would recommend using a reference manager program such as EndNote, Mendeley, or RefWorks, all of which are available to students at Berkeley. As a minimum, I expect at least 10 references to scientific papers, policy reports, or other relevant publications (but not wikipedia!)

## **SPH policies**

Descriptions of and relevant campus links to SPH school wide course policies on Disability Support Services, Accommodation of Religions Creed, Course Evaluations, Academic Integrity can be found at: <https://berkeley.box.com/s/knh3rbk9ikgvmca4ymy93msgj9bkebg5>

## Class Schedule

	Date	Topic	Presenter
1	Aug 26	<p><b>Introductions and Overview of the class</b></p> <p><i>Assignment: Bring 2-4 headlines from current news sources to class covering issues relating to Public Health Nutrition.</i></p>	Lia Fernald
2	Sept 2	<p><b>Topic Selection and Library Review – BRING LAPTOP!!</b></p> <p><i>Reading:</i> Chapter 7: Searching the Scientific Literature and Organizing Information. Evidence-Based Public Health (2nd Ed), 2011. Eds: Brownson RC, Baker EA, Left TL, Gillespie KN, True WR. <a href="http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195397895.001.0001/acprof-9780195397895-chapter-007">http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195397895.001.0001/acprof-9780195397895-chapter-007</a></p> <p><i>Assignment: bring 1-2 ideas for what topic you might like to cover for your presentation</i></p>	Michael Sholinbeck
3	Sept 9	<b>Food insecurity, sugar-sweetened beverages, and neighborhoods</b>	Barbara Laraia
4	Sept 16	<b>Weight gain during pregnancy, and behavioral, biological and psycho-social issues of nutrition</b>	Barbara Abrams
5	Sept 23	<b>Food &amp; Nutrition Interventions &amp; Policy</b>	Wendi Gosliner
6	Sept 30	<b>Physical activity in schools, and approaches to improving child health outcomes</b>	Hannah Thompson
7	Oct 7	<b>Childhood and parental obesity: approaches and interventions</b>	Susan Matias
8	Oct 14	<b>Social, economic and political factors contributing to poor nutrition, and policy interventions to address them.</b>	Lia Fernald
9	Oct 21	Student presentations	
10	Oct 28	Student presentations	
11	Nov 4	Student presentations	



	<b>Nov 11</b>	VETERANS DAY – no class	
12	<b>Nov 18</b>	Student presentations	
	<b>Nov 25</b>	THANKSGIVING BREAK – no class	
13	<b>Dec 2</b>	Student presentations	
14	<b>Dec 9</b>	Student presentations	

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**Topics from previous three years:**

The effects of chronic social stress on food choice and obesity  
Gluten free and fad diets association with Autism  
Breakfast after the bell: Reducing hunger & learning disparities  
The importance of planning: The effect of food preparation & routines on dietary intake  
School Garden: Program factors that influence dietary change  
Multi-component school-based nutrition interventions  
Child obesity programs—identification of failures in physical activity  
US Sugar Addiction: The Real Cost of Nutrition  
FDA label for sugar for easy tracking  
Mexico and the soda tax: What we hope to learn  
Tweaking the food environment—behavioral economics  
Obesity not declining when supermarkets are introduced into food deserts  
Structural racism, food deserts and dietary intake of minorities  
Social impact of models to address food waste  
The high health care costs of food insecurity and associated comorbidities  
Understanding the association between food insecurity and chronic conditions  
Addressing and reducing child malnutrition: a global perspective  
Sustainability: A growing nutrition concern  
Army shapes the American diet  
Nutrition and the microbiome  
Food policy in disasters  
Animals in public health: plant based diets  
Industrial vs. Diversified farming: impacts on PHN  
Subsidies and the Farm Bill  
Globalization and non-communicable chronic diseases  
Omega fats and disease risk  
Issues in eating behavior research  
Nutrition communication and public trust  
The HFFKA and the Farm-to-School program  
Competitive foods and beverages at school  
Community gardens  
Taxes and effects on consumption  
Fresh produce distribution in low-income communities  
Sugar-sweetened beverage interventions  
Fast food restaurants as an environmental risk factor for childhood obesity  
Plant-based nutrition in Mexican-American communities  
Food as medicine interventions  
Adverse childhood events and nutrition  
Foster youth food insecurity and potential interventions  
Government subsidies and the American diet  
Inter-generational chronic disease among Mexican-Americans  
Food industry funded research