SBS 188-08 Spring – Stress and Health in Communities

Faculty:
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Meeting times:
Tuesday, 1:30-4pm

Lecture Room:
Eaton Hall, Room 123

Office hours:
Tuesday 4:10-5pm

Course Description
The biggest health challenge facing the world in the twenty-first century is from the effects of stress on individuals and communities. Stress-related diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and hypertension, are one of the biggest contributors to early mortality and our overall health. The term “stress” carries a negative connotation. However, stress is a human’s response to changing circumstances in the environment and a part of everyday life. To understand why stress can have such damaging effect to our health, we must ask, how does stress cease to become toxic to the body? What are the underlying pathways the link stress and health? Are all stressful experiences created equal? What can we do today to buffer the effects of stress on health?

This course is designed to review theories and research examining the role of stress in health. The course will review basic concepts and models of stress and the mechanisms by which stress may influence health outcomes. Through these concepts and models, this course will cover a range of topics, including the neurobiological underpinnings of stress and health and socio-ecological stressors and their influence on racial/ethnic health disparities. A key aspect of the class will be to critically evaluate and discuss the research of stress and health through the critique of studies’ methods, data, and conclusions. This course will foster an interdisciplinary approach to comprehensively understand stress and health in communities.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:
• Describe the basic concepts and models of stress
• Understand the various sources of stress and their responses influence to the mind and body
• Identify and critique mechanisms that link stress and health
• Identify the gaps in the existing literature and detect new areas for future research
• Learn stress management techniques and other coping strategies that can help buffer effects of stress on health.

Pre-requisites
CH 1 and one of the following: CH 55, CH 104, CH/CEE 154, CH 56
Assignments and Class Participation

Grading Overview
Class participation
  Attendance-5%
  Class discussion-10%
  Paper presentation-5%

Class Presentation Blitz
Proposal
Outline of paper
First draft of paper
Final paper

Class participation (20% of grade):
  Attendance is required. Students who will be absent from class due to a religious holiday,
  travel with a university-affiliated team or group, or because of unavoidable circumstances, should
  speak with the instructor during the first day of class or as soon as possible thereafter, so that
  appropriate arrangements can be made. Please note that airline schedules are not considered
  unavoidable conflicts. You are expected to come to class prepared and ready to actively participate
  in class discussions, having done the required readings for the week that day. Attendance will count
  for 5% of your total grade.

  During the semester, we will engage in in-depth discussions. You are expected to participate
  during these discussions by sharing your critical analyses of the readings and participating in group
  activities. Read and critically evaluate the assigned readings for each week by Monday’s class
  meeting. You must bring one question that you wish to pose to your classmates for discussion. This
  aspect of class discussion will count for 10% of your grade. Moreover, you are required to sign up as
  a facilitator for one of the classes in the semester, where you will bring one article (empirical or
  theoretical) that complements the readings for the given week. You will present an article to the
  class and facilitate the group discussions. As noted above, the paper presentation will count for 5%
  of your grade.

Class presentation Blitz (25% of grade; 4/24/18):
  At the end of the semester, you will each
  prepare a five-minute presentation outlining the key points of your final paper. The purpose of these
  presentations is to help you prepare an “elevator speech” of your final paper. These presentations
  should be concise and to the point, another key characteristic of academic writing. The presentation
  will consist of the following:
  Introduction of your topic (Slide 1, 1-minute)
  Brief discussion of the potential connection between stress and health (must be based on the
  readings or literature; Slide 2, 1-minute)
  A brief description of an intervention to help reduce the disparity (must be based on the readings or
  literature; Slide 3, 1-minute).
  Question and Answer (Slide 4, 1-minute)

Final paper (4/27/18 at 5pm; 25% of grade):
  The overall goal of this assignment is to become an
  agent of a topic within the area of stress and health. You have the opportunity to choose any topic
  within this field, not limited to the following: the examination of a particular stressor that influence
  health, the health consequences of stress; the exploration of how stress contributes to physical or
mental health disparities, the discussion of the controversies within the area of stress and health. In the paper, you are to present a comprehensive overview of this topic. Within this context, present empirical evidence to undergird the importance of your chosen topic (e.g., present current national or local statistics of the health outcome and psychosocial stress contribute to disease). You are to offer one intervention (at the individual, community, or policy-level) that may help reduce the effects of stress on health. This exercise will allow you to provide a critical analysis of the given literature, develop innovative ways to improve the health and well-being of targeted communities, and offer a thoughtful assessment of the pros and cons of implementing the intervention in the community that you wish to target. The final paper should be no longer than 20 pages (double spaced) and must be submitted in Trunk. You will have an opportunity to receive feedback from the instructor and classmates as the manuscript develops. The process is segmented into four sections. Further information will be provided in class:

1) 1-page paper proposal (10% of grade)- due 2/5/18
2) 1-page outline of paper (10% of grade)- due 2/26/18
3) 10-page draft of paper (10% of grade)-due 4/2/18
4) 20-page final paper (25% of grade)-due 4/27/18

Notes about assignments

All assignments must be typed, using 12-point font (Arial or Times New Roman), and 1” margins (note that the default in some earlier versions of Word is 1.25”). No handwritten assignments will be accepted. All references and in text citations must use APA format only (pay particular attention to how to cite internet sources). Reference page is not considered part of the page count. Correct use of APA format is part of your grade for written assignments. If you need help with referencing or research, contact a Health Reference Librarian at the Tisch Library. All assignments must be submitted in class on the due date unless otherwise noted. Use reputable sources for your references, namely books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and credible media sources (Eg., Routers, Associated Press, NY Times, Boston Globe, Christian Science Monitor, The Economist). The following are examples of sources that are not acceptable references: Wikipedia, Comcast homepage or some other home page, anything without an author or a date of publication. Written assignments are to be of the strong quality expected at the collegiate level: proofread your work and write in one tense only. You are encouraged to take advantage of the writing support available at the Tufts Academic Resource Center.

Late and Make-up Work: Deadline extensions will not be given for any paper. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval from the instructor. All assignments are due at the start of class unless otherwise specified.

Academic Integrity: Tufts University strives to uphold academic integrity and honesty in all domains of academic learning. You should endeavor to achieve these core principles in your writing. Therefore, plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. If you have any questions, please consult with the instructor or the Tufts Academic Resource Center. For more information, please see the link below: https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy

Student Accessibility: Please refer to the following resource and notify the instructor as soon as possible for accommodations. https://students.tufts.edu/student-accessibility-services
**Cell Phone/ Electronic Devices:**
The use of laptops is allowed in the classroom. However, we expect laptops will be used solely for course-related activities while in class. Students violating this policy will be asked to discontinue use of their laptop. The use of cell phones and other electronic devices are not permitted in the classroom. Please keep them off during class time.

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1 -- 1/23/18**

**Introduction**

**Review of the syllabus**

**Expectations and Goals**

**Week 2 -- 1/30/18**

**What is stress? Concepts and models**


**Week 3 -- 2/6/18**

**Is there a link between stress and health?**


**Week 4 -- 2/13/18**

**1-page paper proposal**

**Pathways and mechanisms linking stress and physical health: biology and behavior**


**OPTIONAL**

Sapolsky, RM (Chapter 2 all; Chapter 3 pp 37-50; Chapter 4 pp 57-63; Chapter 8 pp 144-164). In Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers, Henry Holt and Company, 2004


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**Week 5--2/20/18**

Pathways and mechanisms linking stress and physical health: mental health


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**Week 6--2/27/18**

Reviewing evidence for an association between stress and health: Experimental models


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**Week 7--3/6/18**

1-page outline of paper due

Reviewing evidence for an association between stress and health: Observational research


OPTIONAL
Sapolsky, RM (Chapter 5 pp 71-91; Chapter 8 pp 164-178) In Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers, Henry Holt and Company, 2004

**Week 8--3/13/18**

**Stress: A mechanism by which social disadvantage results in health disparities**


OPTIONAL

**Week 9--3/20/17**- **SPRING BREAK**

**Week 10 3/27/18- 10-page draft of paper due**

**The role of gender in stress and health**


Reiker PP, Bird CE. Rethinking gender differences in health: Why we need to integrate social and biological perspectives. Journals of Gerontology Series B. 60B:40-7, 2005

Umberson D, Williams K. Marital quality, health, and aging: Gender equity? Journals of Gerontology Series B. 60B:109-12, 2005

**Guest Speaker:** Carolyn Rubin, EdD, Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, Tufts University School of Medicine
Week 11--4/3/18

**Emotion, personality, and health**


Week 12--4/10/18

**Bringing in a life course perspective**


**OPTIONAL**


**Guest Speaker:** Yolanta Kovalko, Department of Community Health, Tufts University

Week 13--4/17/17

**Resilience and reversibility**


Week 14--4/24/18
Class presentation Blitz

Week 14--4/28/18
Final paper due