

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND POPULATION SCIENCES

Programs

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Mission

The mission of the Department of Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences (SBPS) is to prepare future generations of highly skilled, socially conscious, and culturally sensitive public health professionals for careers in research, program development, evaluation, and community-based health with the goal of advancing health equity. The department is comprised of a broad mix of public health social scientists working in New Orleans and around the world to provide our diverse students rigorous grounding in social, behavioral, and population science methods as applied to health interventions at the individual, community, and societal levels. Our work elucidates and addresses the behavioral, social, and structural bases of health inequities related to decision-making; economic, social, and cultural stratification; and power, place, and history.

About SBPS

The Department of Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences addresses the fundamental sources of disease burden for rich and poor countries alike. Many of the leading causes of early death either have direct links with behavior and related fundamental social causes. Social science always has been, and always will be, central to public health. From understanding and addressing behaviors like substance use to more systemic issues like racism or income inequality, social and behavioral sciences are key to public health.

Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences works to define and address the behavioral, social, and structural bases of health inequities related to decision-making; economic, social, and cultural stratification; and power, place, and history to reduce health disparities and inequities.

Students obtain strong skills for the planning, design, implementation, communication, and evaluation of preventive strategies and interventions at the community and societal levels. Students also obtain skills aimed at understanding the impact of social and behavioral factors, including structural and systemic factors, on health and the distribution of health across populations and in communities globally.

Graduate Degree Programs

- Community Health Sciences, MPH (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/community-health-sciences-mp/>)
- Health Communication and Education, MPH (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/global-health-community-education-mp/>)
- Leadership in Social and Behavioral Sciences, DrPH (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/leadership-in-social-and-behavioral-sciencesdrph/>)
- Maternal and Child Health, MPH (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/maternal-child-health-mp/>)
- Nutrition, MPH (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/nutrition-mp/>)
- Nutrition, MSPH (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/nutrition-msph/>)
- Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences, MPH (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences-mp/>)
- Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences, PhD (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/global-community-health-science-behavior-phd/>)

The MPH in Community Health Sciences is only offered online.

Graduate Certificates

- Health Education and Communication Certificate (Graduate) (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/health-education-communication-certificate/>)
- Maternal and Child Health Certificate (Graduate) (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/maternal-child-health-certificate/>)
- Violence Prevention Certificate (Graduate) (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/violence-prevention-certificate/>)

Graduate Internships

- Dietetic Internship (<https://catalog.tulane.edu/public-health-tropical-medicine/social-behavioral-and-population-sciences/dietetic-internship/>)

Courses

Social, Behavioral, and Population Sciences (SBPS)

SBPS 6030 Social and Behavioral Aspects of Health (3)

This course covers the behavioral, social, and cultural aspects of health and disease. Students identify how behavioral and social theories across levels of the social ecological model are relevant to social and behavioral health issues and interventions. Central to the learning experience is a comprehensive course project, where students conduct an evidence-based literature review, and apply theory to inform interventions to improve health.

SBPS 6140 Development of Leadership and Communication Skills in Public Health (3)

This course combines practical, skills-based exercises with strategic thinking approaches to aid the student to master several of the public health cross-cutting competencies objectives related to leadership, communication and professionalism. It has been tailored to focus on personal leadership and communication skill development and is thus of interest to all public health students. Its goals are to clarify each student's intended professional path; enhance his/her ability to utilize a strategic approach for personal and professional leadership development; and to increase each student's self-efficacy in utilizing communication, oral and written, to achieve organizational leadership.

SBPS 6150 Taiwan Strategies to Community Health Practices (3)

This course provides a field study opportunity in Taiwan for the aim of learning global public health practices, cross-culture communication and interaction, and alternative community health strategies. 10 – 12 students from partner Universities in Taiwan (Asia University and China Medical University) are paired with 10-12 students from Tulane University to form cross-cultural teams to research and develop a plan to address community health concerns at the national, provincial, city, provincial and/or community levels. Lectures and discussions will be provided by experienced faculty from university partners, government officials, and field-based practitioners in Taiwan. The cross-cultural student teams are required to make a power point presentation on their identified community health concerns and submit a written field report.

SBPS 6260 Violence Prevention Studio Seminar (1)

This course is designed to create an interactive and unique learning environment for students, community partners, and Violence Prevention Institute faculty through strengthening the partnerships between academic institutions and community organizations focused on preventing violence as well as mitigating the negative effects of various forms of violence. Seminars will include presentations by community partners and faculty from the Violence Prevention Institute. Community partners will speak about the violence prevention programs and strategies utilized by their organizations. Seminars will also include presentations by Violence Prevention Institute faculty focused on empirical approaches and competencies necessary for effective academic and community partnerships seeking to address the complex issues related to violence.

SBPS 6340 Monitoring and Evaluation of Health Programs (3)

This course provides students with an introduction to monitoring and evaluation, a widely valued set of skills in both the domestic and international contexts. The course content includes rationales for evaluation; the political, organizational, theoretical aspects of evaluation; and methods for implementing a sound evaluation. Students will gain practical experience in translating concepts into the development of an evaluation plan for actual programs.

SBPS 6460 Child Health and Development in Public Health (3)

This course covers child health and development addressing important health issues in each stage of childhood including the biologic, genetic, psychosocial, and environmental influences upon those issues, the medical aspects of their management and most importantly, fundamental public health interventions to address them. Population based approaches working to address disparities in the maintenance of health and access to primary and secondary care of children will be presented with a focus on children with special health care needs, children within immigrant families, children with developmental and psycho-social challenges, and other groups of children who carry a disproportionate burden of disease.

SBPS 6490 Key Policies and Programs in Maternal and Child Health (3)

This course examines maternal and child health policy and programs in the U.S. with a focus on the history, organization, delivery, and financing of maternal and child health, and related public health and social services at the national, state, and local levels. The course emphasizes the evolving Maternal and Child Health (MCH) -Title V Block Grant program legislative mandates and federal policies; the national, state, and local structures and roles in delivering MCH services; and how MCH fits into the overall U.S. public and private health systems.

SBPS 6500 Violence as a Public Health Problem (3)

This introductory elective course is designed to give an overview of the problem of violence as viewed from a public health perspective. We will look at the epidemiology of violence (scope, causes, risk factors, and consequences) alongside public health approaches to the problem. The course aims to balance a review of the problem with ideas and evidence for solutions. Local academic and community members in the field will lend their expertise to help students understand and address violence as a public health problem. Students will have opportunities to build skills through violence prevention training, critical analysis of media and film, and final course projects analyzing major violence-related topics.

SBPS 6510 Essential Issues in Maternal and Child Health (3)

This course explores evidence-based issues and trends in maternal and child health offering an introduction to MCH-related issues from a public health perspective with an emphasis on the social determinants of health. The purpose of the course is to identify the individual, social, economic and environmental issues currently affecting women, men and families, as well as infants and children using a life course approach. Students will develop written and oral presentations addressing scientific, clinical, social and political aspects of MCH issues.

SBPS 6610 Local Food Systems & Nutrition (3)

This course examines community influences on food habits, dietary behaviors, and nutritional outcomes. Socioeconomic and racial/ethnic inequities in access to healthy food are described as are cultural influences on food choice. Examples of applied interventions to address nutrition problems are examined throughout the local food system. New Orleans, with its rich culinary history and active engagement in food and nutrition programming serves as the backdrop for the study of these issues. The course includes field visits to local community organizations working on food and nutrition programming.

SBPS 6690 Essentials of Public Health Nutrition (3)

This graduate-level course is designed to provide an overview of the foundational elements of public health nutrition. This will include a focus on three essential components: (1) principles of human nutrition, (2) biological mechanisms influencing nutrition in health and disease, and (3) major public health nutrition programs and emerging issues. Specific topics will include essential nutrients with emphasis on their sources, function, and metabolism in the human body; nutrition needs throughout the life course; nutrition in chronic disease; national and global public health nutrition initiatives; current challenges and innovations. An emphasis will be placed on the major nutrition-related problems in the world today and evidence-based strategies to address them.

SBPS 6700 Social Innovation Tools (3)

This course offers students a toolkit of skills for complex systems thinking, systems-led leadership, and human-centered design (HCD) to prepare graduates to address complex societal problems such as climate change, violence, and poor access to health. Students learn how to map systems, identify entry-points, reframe messy problems into smaller "challenges", and address them in human-centered, creative, collaborative ways with stakeholders. Training in design thinking is offered via hands-on workshops, complemented by a theoretical framing of design for public good. Examples are drawn from public health, education, and sustainability; they span domestic, international, and global contexts. Students must participate in the Fast 48 workshop at an additional fee.

SBPS 6750 Population Nutrition Assessment (3)

This course offers a thorough review of the tools used for the assessment of nutritional status of populations. Topics include anthropometric, biochemical, and socioeconomic indicators of nutritional status; methods for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of dietary data; measurement of household food security; and the use of data from nutrition monitoring and surveillance sources. Students will get exposure to major nutrition problems and their causes in variety of country contexts. They will also develop their abilities "to tell a story with numbers." Analyzing data, interpreting the results, and communicating about these results verbally is a necessary part of the planning and programming of nutrition and health interventions.

SBPS 6770 Food and Nutrition Policy (3)

This course surveys domestic policies and programs that affect nutrition at the population level. Subjects include: dietary policy, including the politics of the food guide pyramid; food labeling policy; food access policy, including the U.S. food assistance programs; food safety and food supplies policy; the obesity epidemic, including the role of the food industry; environmental determinants of nutrition outcomes and efforts to improve them; actors and agencies involved in making policy; and nutrition advocacy.

SBPS 6780 Nutrition in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (3)

The purpose of the course is to familiarize students with the current public health nutrition-related issues affecting low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including the co-existence of under and over nutrition (i.e., double burden of malnutrition), issues with infant feeding behaviors, iron-deficiency anemia and other relevant micronutrient deficiencies, food insecurity and the impact of climate change on diets. Students will learn about the biological, social, and environmental factors influencing these issues as well as the nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive policies designed to address them.

SBPS 7010 Health Communication Theory and Practice (3)

This course is designed to examine research and practice in health communication, with a special focus on how health media campaigns are planned and executed in order to stimulate change in knowledge, attitudes, behavior and subsequent health outcomes. This examination will include the review of the history of health communication campaigns, the theoretical foundation for the design and implementation of campaigns, and selected case studies of campaigns. Practical aspects of designing campaigns and media messages will be covered.

Prerequisite(s): SBPS 6030* and SPHL 6080*.

* May be taken concurrently.

SBPS 7100 Public Health Policy & Practice (3)

This course is designed to deepen the students' understanding of public health practice and use of policy to improve population health. There is a strong focus on governmental public health services delivered by federal, state, and local government, along with the services and organization of non-profits that are involved in the delivery of public health services. Students will actively engage in simulations of those roles through real world case studies, team projects, scenarios, and exposure to prominent individuals working and practicing in the field of public health and policy. Students will develop skills related to policy development and advocacy and integration of public health practice, policy development and integration with the clinical sector.

SBPS 7160 HIV Surveillance in Hard to Reach Populations (2)

In the context of health sciences, sex workers, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, transgender persons, migrants, homeless persons, youth living on the streets and other stigmatized and vulnerable populations, are at higher risk for HIV, TB, hepatitis, and other infections. Measuring the behavioral and biological risks affecting these populations is essential to creating effective prevention programs, allocating funding and modeling future epidemic scenarios. Respondent driven sampling (RDS) is a highly robust and effective method to recruit samples of 'hard-to-reach' populations that are connected through social networks. This course will provide participants with practical and relevant up-to-date information about the methodological and theoretical issues and analytical concerns from one of RDS's world-leading practitioner. It will draw on a variety of lectures, presentations of actual field research, hands-on analysis and practical experience in designing surveys using RDS.

SBPS 7220 Community Organization: Community Work for Social Justice (3)

This course focuses on community work as a major approach to social change and highlights community participation as a means to address social determinants of health. The course explores concepts relevant to community engagement and examines how gender, race, ethnicity, power, and structural racism inform community work. The roles of community members, institutions, public health practitioners and others in improving or hindering community work is also examined. The course stresses critical thinking and application of community work skills with an emphasis on participatory approaches, empowerment, intersectionality, community assessment, group process for partnership development, and evaluation of community-level programs. Common strategies for community-level change will be discussed in the context of case study reviews.

SBPS 7250 Evidence-Based Research Methods in Social and Behavioral Sciences (3)

Research methods are at the center of our approach to knowledge and understanding in public health. Theories are supported by empirical evidence. This class provides an introduction to this way of thinking, i.e., into methodology or the "science of finding out." The purpose of this course is to train students in how to collect and analyze data on social and behavioral phenomena in a rigorous and scientific manner. This knowledge requires an understanding of three different components: 1) inquiry and research design, 2) data collection, and 3) data analysis.

Prerequisite(s): (SPHL 6050 or 6850) and (SPHL 6060 or 6860).

SBPS 7260 Social Marketing (3)

This skills-based course examines the application of marketing principles to social and public health problems. Basic and advanced social marketing principles and methods are explored, and a framework for carrying out social marketing is provided. The course covers the features, components, process and methodology of social marketing, and has a focus on real world applications. Skills building exercises are incorporated as both in-class and outside homework assignments. Exam(s) assess student knowledge and application of social marketing principles and elements. Students are required to prepare brief presentations throughout the semester that demonstrate understanding and application of course material. A final project is designed to apply and integrate material from the entire class.

Prerequisite(s): SPHL 6080* or 6880.

* May be taken concurrently.

SBPS 7280 Qualitative Methods I: Basic Foundations (3)

Qualitative methods can be highly useful in the conduct of community-based population health research and evaluation. Students will receive foundational training in the design, implementation, analysis, and synthesis of qualitative methods. Emphasis will be given to the appropriate uses of commonly used methods and analytic procedures in community-based health research and evaluation. This course is for graduate students in SPHTM.

SBPS 7290 Qualitative Methods II: Theory and Methods (3)

This course – the second in a two-part sequence – builds on Qualitative Methods I (SBPS 7280) to provide students hands-on experience analyzing, interpreting, and writing up the results of qualitative research. The goal of this course is to provide students with skills in qualitative data analysis, interpretation, and writing. In SBPS 7280, students were trained in NVivo. In SBPS 7290, students will apply these skills to a dataset provided in the course to explore different analytical approaches and develop analyses.

Prerequisite(s): SBPS 7280.

SBPS 7510 Maternal Child Health: The Life Course Perspective (3)

In this course students are taught to use a life course perspective to approach important issues of public health. As Neil Halfon put it, “the life course perspective seeks to address the causes of poor health trajectories [which] require addressing the nested social ecology of health development.” Over the semester, basic principles of human development, from preconception to end of life, are explored and examined through the conceptual framework provided by life course theory. Particularly, students will learn about the mechanisms, timing and dynamics of health as a developmental process, which can inform development of early interventions. The course will introduce the rapidly expanding evidence base for life course theory and practice and application.

Prerequisite(s): SBPS 6030 and 6510.

SBPS 7950 Dietetic Internship I (6)

Supervised practice for dietetic intern students with DPD Verification statements. Experiences are provided in food service management, medical nutrition therapy, and community nutrition at various facilities in southeast Louisiana.

SBPS 7960 Dietetic Internship II (6)

Supervised practice for dietetic intern students with DPD Verification statements. Experiences are provided in food service management, medical nutrition therapy, and community nutrition at various facilities in Southeast Louisiana.

Prerequisite(s): SBPS 7950.

Course Limit: 2

SBPS 7980 Professional Practice Seminar (1)

This is a capstone course, all elements of which are designed to integrate and synthesize competencies in nutrition. As such, this course and its final report satisfies the Integrative Learning Experience for students in the MPH Nutrition Program. Specifically, it will enhance Nutrition Program or Foundational competencies, such as those in programming, evaluation, policy advocacy, communication, team building, ethics, cultural-competence, leadership, and professional development that students have developed throughout the program. Students will describe the challenges they face in the workplace either in their Applied Practice Experience or in another professional setting. They will develop solutions to these challenges in a team-building environment. Students will also learn about professional employment, continuing education, professional associations, and employment resources throughout the field of public health nutrition

SBPS 7990 Independent Study (1-3)**SBPS 8200 Evaluation Theory (3)**

Evaluation theory provides the conceptual framework for assessing the effectiveness of evaluation practice. This course presents theories of evaluation, and the theoretical assumptions that underlie evaluation organized around the five components that Shadish, Cook, and Leviton consider to be important to evaluation theory: theories of knowledge, value, use, social programming and practice. While the course begins with a review of evaluation methods and data sources, the seminar focuses on the key figures in the field and exemplary evaluation designs and uses. This is an active learning course applying evaluation principles. Students will be required to participate actively through preparing seminar papers and participating in class discussions.

Prerequisite(s): SPHL 6080 and SBPS 6340.

SBPS 8220 Community Organizing for Social Change (3)

This advanced course is intended for DrPH students to develop a scholar-activist approach to public health practice. We will focus on community organizing as a social change strategy, looking to historical and contemporary examples of social movements. Students will read and synthesize literature across disciplines to gain an understanding of community organizing frameworks and strategies. Students will apply the toolkits of leading community organizers such as the Midwest Academy to gain experience in community analysis and planning.

SBPS 8700 Maternal and Child Health Advanced Methods Seminar (1)

The Maternal and Child Health Advanced Methods Seminar will provide a weekly series of presentations that allow students to deepen their understanding of contemporary challenges in empirical, applied and translational maternal and child health research and practice. Broadly, topics will include innovative research areas, emerging methodologies, and effective solutions for advancing maternal and child population health equity. The seminar series is intended to complement and expand knowledge and skill-building in the areas of life course theory, maternal and child population health sciences, and reproductive epidemiology. The goal of the seminar is to assist participants in integration of learning across program curricula.

SBPS 8750 Social Determinants of Health I: Theory (3)

This course delves into the broad area of social determinants of health from a theoretical perspective. It is geared towards doctoral students, with an emphasis on preparing students to conduct theory-driven research in the social determinants of health. The two overarching goals for the course are for students (1) to develop knowledge about the etiology and theoretical underpinnings of social determinants of health, and (2) to develop skills in crafting a compelling, theory-based rationale for a proposed research study on one social determinant of health. These goals are accomplished through readings, class discussion, two presentations, and a culminating paper. Individual mentorship is also provided to students as they develop their ideas.

SBPS 8760 Social Epidemiology/Social Determinants of Health II (3)

The goal of this course is to prepare students for practical applied research on the social determinants of health. The first half of the course will focus on: 1) measurement of key constructs such as inequality and racism and 2) common study designs such as multilevel and natural experiments. The second half of the course will focus on: 1) common biases and limitations to social determinants research and methods used to address limitations, and 2) analytic strategies and interpretation, including linear and non-linear multilevel regression. By the completion of the course, the student will have the skills necessary to design, analyze and present data from a range of studies that consider social determinants of health.

Prerequisite(s): (SPHL 6050 or 6850) and (SPHL 6060 or 6860) and (EPID 7120* or IHSD 8250*).

* May be taken concurrently.

SBPS 8770 Social Determinants of Health in Public Health Practice (3)

This advanced doctoral level course is designed for students to display competence in the application of social epidemiological methods to analyze and address the relations between social factors and health and health disparities. Practical tools and skills will be introduced to conduct health equity research and translate evidence-based strategies into practice. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the strengths and limitations of various study designs and analyses used in social epidemiology. Experience analyzing and interpreting data surrounding various public health issues from a social epidemiological framework will be provided through classroom sessions and homework assignments. Students will also review and critique empirical applications in the public health field.

Prerequisite(s): SPHL 6060 or 6860.

SBPS 8800 Senior Graduate Research Seminar I (0)

This course is required for all doctoral students in the SBPS department for the duration of their tenure as doctoral students. It is intended to increase student's proficiency in 1) analyzing and interpreting current public health research, as represented in peer review journals; 2) determining how to apply research findings to the practice of public health, especially by developing community-based programs for disease prevention; and 3) presenting and discussing research-related topics. These objectives will be attained through a variety of activities, including faculty-and student-led discussions of required readings; faculty and student oral presentations of ongoing research projects (including the prospectus and dissertation research), and small group projects. All doctoral students will be expected to make a research-related oral presentation at least once.

SBPS 8820 Advanced Program Planning and Grant Writing (3)

This course will focus on the process of planning, and seeking funding for, the implementation of a culturally-tailored, public health program to address a health inequity. Students will identify and critique existing public health programs and tailor one program to be culturally-responsive to the needs of a target population. Students will propose an implementation framework that includes measures of implementation success for the selected program. Students will also construct a program plan and outcome evaluation, written in a format appropriate for a programmatic funding proposal. This course is intended for DrPH students.

SBPS 8830 Senior Graduate Research Seminar II (1)

The Doctoral Seminar is conceptualized as a series of content modules that provide a breadth of foundational exposure and training to departmental doctoral students over their doctoral tenure. These modules are intended to complement and expand knowledge in areas of public health and professional development that students might not receive in their current course curricula. The doctoral seminar is required of all students during their program tenure. The Doctoral Seminar serves as a forum where students and faculty can meet regularly to exchange ideas, and discuss foundational areas of public health from multiple perspectives, including empirical, programmatic, systemic, and policy. 2-3 foundational content modules are covered each semester and include 3-5 related seminars offering multiple perspectives on the topic. At the end of the module, there is a session devoted to critical reflection on, and discussion of, the various seminars within the module. Students are required to write a 2-3 page reflection about what they learned across the seminars in the module, and thoughts that it triggered for them. These reflections are shared and discussed. The seminar will consist of several types of presentations: 1) faculty presentations on current research, 2) guest presentations on community-based, governmental, policy-driven, and/or systemic initiatives, 3) student presentations on literature supporting their research project, 4) student presentations on current research in progress, and (5) professional development seminars.

SBPS 8990 Independent Study (1-3)

Independent Study