DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, AND POPULATION SCIENCES

Programs
Chair: Akilah Dulin, PhD

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 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 or result from fundamental social causes. Social science always has been, and always will be, central to public health. From understanding and addressing behaviors 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

Starting Fall 2023 the MPH in Community Health Sciences will only be offered online.

Graduate Certificates
Courses

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 solve 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 concern and submit a written field report.

SBPS 6190 Racism and Health (3)
Enduring racial inequities in health in the U.S. represent a critical public health dilemma. Inequitable patterns in the population-level distribution of disease along the “color line” can be traced to racism – both historical and contemporary forms, spanning multiple ecological levels and domains – which generates systematic differences in disease vulnerability. This graduate course is for students who want to critically evaluate research on race, racism, and health in the U.S. context. Sessions follow a group discussion format to facilitate exchange of ideas. The goal is to foster understandings of the social determinants of racial inequities in health, rather than individual-level risk factors for disease. Also discussed are concepts of white supremacy and privilege, white fragility, and anti-racist public health interventions.

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.

Prerequisite(s): SPHL 6080.

SBPS 6360 Sexual Health - A Public Health Perspective (3)
Sexual health is a growing component of public health outreach. The goal of this course is to provide students with a foundational understanding of sexual health from a public health perspective. Students will (1) critically examine and discuss common sexual health issues addressed by public health practitioners, their epidemiology, and their underlying social determinants, (2) learn to recognize and understand key methodological considerations in the measurement of sexual behavior and sexual health outcomes, and (3) gain knowledge about key theoretical foundations of sexual health promotion and their application to sexual health behavior change. Content topics include HIV/STIs; interpersonal violence; pregnancy; pornography, sex work, and erotic behaviors; adolescent reproductive health; and sexual function, pleasure, and satisfaction.
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 PH Problem (3)
This 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 leaders 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. The course offers 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. Written and oral presentation of MCH issues across scientific, clinical, social and political aspects of each issue is required.

SBPS 6610 Local Food Systems & Nutrition (2)
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 6670 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 6800 Community Training Methodologies (2)
This course introduces students to concepts and methods which will enable them to effectively train adults to perform health care functions in the community. Knowledge about adult learning is coupled with exercises designed to help develop a positive attitude toward participatory learning. Students to learn how to “train trainers” in the community to help improve community health outcomes. Emphasis will be placed upon developing a positive attitude toward interactive learning and combining this with a variety of training methodologies which will together help to create an atmosphere where communities are empowered to improve their health.

SBPS 6810 Community and Public Health Education (3)
This course is designed to provide student with the skills to effectively communicate health education messages and positively influence the norms and behaviors of both individuals and communities using the Certified Health Education Specialist competencies as a framework. The student will develop skills in the 8 core areas of health education: assessment of community needs and capacity; planning by engaging partners; implementation and monitoring of a training protocol; evaluation and research; advocacy and coalition building for change in policy, system, or environment; communication and audience analysis; leadership and management including management of resources and strategic planning; and ethics and professionalism including mentoring and professional development.

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* or GCHB 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 7200 Development Issues, Theory, & Measurement (3)
This seminar reviews major theories and debates about social, human, and economic development in the developing world, especially Africa, Latin America, and South Asia. These concepts are useful to public health researchers and practitioners aiming to advance human well-being. The first 3 weeks cover economic growth, modernization, neoliberalism, sustainable development, human development/the capabilities approach, human rights, and Marxian theory/dependency schools. The second 3 weeks review critical perspectives: post-structuralism, post-colonialism, feminist theories, complexity and dynamic systems, and social innovation. Ethnographic case studies of development and global health projects reveals how assumptions and practices translate into real-life “development” projects that can fail to address key issues and cause unintended outcomes that have effects. The readings invite us to think differently about knowledge, evidence, culture, participation, globalization, and sustainability; we consider the role of foreign aid and relevant development actors.

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 and 6060.

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 word 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.
* 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 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 7340 Population Mobility and Health (2)
This course introduces students to the inter-relationships between migration and health. Health and mobility interact in myriad ways for different types of migrants, such as refugees and other types of immigrants in receiving countries, displaced persons in societies undergoing turmoil, itinerant workers, and the homeless. The course provides an overview of how political, economic, and cultural factors at the global and local levels shape migration patterns and health of internal migrants, temporarily displaced persons, immigrants, and refugees. Major themes in the course include 1) current patterns and trends in population mobility; 2) explanatory (theoretical) models linking different types of mobility with associated health outcomes; and 3) major public health challenges to meeting routine and exceptional health needs of mobile populations.

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 build upon Ecological and Transactional models of Life Span Development and introduce the rapidly expanding evidence base for life course theory. In addition to providing a conceptual framework for understanding public health issues, the course will illustrate the application of this framework to gain practical insight into maternal and child health.
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: 3
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 and 6060 and (EPID 7120 or IHSD 8250).

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.
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 8830  Senior Graduate Research Seminar II (1)
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 8990  Independent Study (1-3)