SSCI 600: The Geography of Life and Death

Units: 4

Term—Day—Time: Fall, 2020, Mondays, 5:00-7:50 p.m.

Location: WPH 202 and Online
Office Hours: Mondays, 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. and Thursdays, 7:00 to 8:00 p.m., or by appointment
Contact Info: jpwilson@usc.edu, 213-740-1908

Library Help: Andy Rutkowski
Office: VKC 36B
Office Hours: By appointment
Course Description

This course explores the various ways place and space have been invoked and used to improve our understanding of human well-being and the social and environmental determinants of human health during the past several decades. The class will explore these topics from a variety of perspectives, including: (1) examples of exemplary works that connect population, health and place; (2) the theoretical, quantitative, qualitative and spatial approaches used for this type of scientific inquiry; (3) the ways in which place-based human, environmental, and behavioral factors may mediate health-related exposures and human wellbeing; and (5) the role of place in shaping and perpetuating inequality. The class introduces the current state-of-the-art using an assortment of weekly readings and discussions, and a series of individual projects will allow class participants to develop their own proposals for more detailed research.

Learning Objectives

On completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the various ways place (or space) has been invoked and used to assess human well-being and describe the social and environmental determinants of human health.
- Describe the theoretical, quantitative, qualitative, and spatial approaches that are now used for this type of scientific inquiry.
- Discuss some of the ways in which place-based human, environmental, and behavioral factors mediate health-related exposures.
- Discuss the various ways in which we can resolve individual-level exposures and place-based information.
- Discuss how place affects different groups of people in different ways and why place may need to be handled carefully in plans and programs which aim to accomplish meaningful social change.
- Discuss the current approaches, methodological issues, and enduring challenges in works connecting population, health and place.

Prerequisite(s): None
Co-Requisite(s): None
Concurrent Enrollment: None
Recommended Preparation: Students must be enrolled in an existing USC Ph.D. program

Class Conduct

Harassment, sexual misconduct, interpersonal violence, and stalking are not tolerated by the university. All faculty and most staff are considered Responsible Employees by the university and must forward all information they receive about these types of situations to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for assisting students with supportive accommodations, including academic accommodations, as well as investigating these incidents if the reporting student wants an investigation. The Title IX office is also responsible for coordinating supportive measures for transgender and nonbinary students such as faculty notifications, and more. If you need supportive accommodations you may contact the Title IX Coordinator directly (titleix@usc.edu or 213-821-8298) without sharing any personal information with me. If you would like to speak with a confidential counselor, Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) provides 24/7 confidential support for students (213-740-9355 (WELL); press 0 after hours).
Course Notes
The course will be taught as a seminar and class meetings will be used to discuss the assigned readings and any questions and related topics that arise from the readings. The learning and teaching strategies are student-centered. They aim to encourage a deep-learning approach by using reflection and self-evaluation. The individual class sessions will be organized around a series of class readings that are designed to provide the essential background and framework for study. Students will be required to reflect on their learning through in-class discussions and weekly briefs.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
The weekly readings will be accessed via the USC Library’s electronic collections and/or provided by the instructor via Blackboard.

Description and Assessment of Assignments
Students must prepare a seminar, a research paper and presentation, a series of weekly briefs, and participate in class discussion on a regular basis.

Class Participation (10%): A class participation grade will be assigned based upon how actively students engage in the course. Students will be required to read all material outlined for each week of the course, and be prepared to lead and participate in group discussions about the readings in class. Failure to attend, or not be adequately prepared to discuss the readings will lead to the assignment of a lower grade for that week.

Weekly Briefs (40%): Each week students will use the Blackboard Discussion Forum to provide a critique of an article from the class reading list for that week of their own choosing. These electronic commentaries will be shared among the class, and graded based on the overall quality of the contribution. To help simulate discussion, each student will comment on at least one other student’s critique each week.

Class Presentation (10%): Each student will present on one of the articles included in this syllabus in consultation with the instructor. The student will prepare a one-page summary that will be distributed in advance of the class itself and make a short 20-minute presentation summarizing the work at hand and its strengths and weaknesses.

Final Project (40%): In the second half of the course, each student will work on a project determined in consultation with the instructor. These projects will focus on a specific health problem or challenge and the final report (25%) and class presentation (15%) will summarize the current understanding of the problem or challenge and the kinds of solutions that have been attempted thus far, as reported in the published literature.

Grading Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>No. of Assignments</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Projects</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Briefs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>100</td>
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**Assignment Submission Policy**

Assignments will be submitted for grading via Blackboard using the due dates specified in the Course Schedule below.

**Additional Policies**

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class session and to complete and upload all assignments before the deadlines noted in the Course Schedule below. Late work will be assessed a penalty of 10% per day and zero grades will be assigned for work more than one week late.

**Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1 8/17</th>
<th>Topics/Daily Activities</th>
<th>Readings and Homework</th>
<th>Deliverables/Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Population, Health, and Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/31</td>
<td>The second part of a two-part discussion exploring the various ways in which geographers have used place to help frame and clarify the key relationships linking people, health and place in recent decades.</td>
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Wilson (2019). Connecting population, health and place with geospatial tools and data. In D. Berrigan and N. A. Berger (Eds.), Geospatial approaches to energy balance and breast cancer (pp. 3-28). Berlin, Germany: Springer.


Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 8/27.

Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 8/31.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
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<td>9/7</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Theory, Methods, and Data</th>
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<tr>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>An introduction to the various ways in which theory, methods and data are woven together to construct study designs in projects that explore the connections</td>
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Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 9/10.

Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 9/14.
Oshan et al. (2020). Targeting the spatial context of obesity determinants via | Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 9/17.  
Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 9/21.  
Submit class presentation abstracts on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 9/21. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Qualitative Methods</th>
<th>Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 9/24</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/28</td>
<td>An introduction to the various ways in which qualitative methods are used to explore the connections between population, health, and place, and a discussion of some of the outstanding methodological challenges and issues.</td>
<td>Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 9/28.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Spatial Analysis and Modeling Methods</th>
<th>Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 10/1.</th>
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<tr>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>An introduction to the various ways in which spatial analysis and models are used to explore the connections between population, health and place, and a discussion of some of the outstanding methodological challenges and issues.</td>
<td>Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 10/5.</td>
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- Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 9/24.
- Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 9/28.


- Dennis et al. (2020). Relationships between health outcomes in older


*Higgs et al. (2019).* The Urban Liveability Index: Developing a policy-relevant urban liveability composite measure and evaluating associations with transport mode choice. *International Journal of Health Geographics* 18: 14.


*Keralis et al. (2020).* Health and the built environment in United States cities: |

| 10/12 | Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 10/8.

Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 10/12.

Submit final project abstracts on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 10/12. |
| **Week 10** | **Natural Environments** | Measuring associations using Google Street View-derived indicators of the built environment. *BMC Public Health* 20: 215.  
Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 10/19. |
| 10/19 | A discussion of the various ways in which the role of the natural environment has been conceptualized and measured in research projects exploring the connections between population, health and place. | Abhijith et al. (2017). Air pollution abatement performances of green infrastructure in open road and built-up street canyon environments: A review. *Atmospheric Environment* 162: 71-86.  
**Kheirbek et al. (2016).** The contribution of motor vehicle emissions to ambient fine particulate matter public health impacts in New York City: A health burden assessment. *Environmental Health* 15: 89.  
**Wild (2005).** Complementing the genome with an “exposome”’: The outstanding challenge of environmental exposure measurement in molecular epidemiology. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* 14(8): 1847-1850.  
### Week 11

**10/26**

**Human Behavior**
A discussion of the various ways in which the role of the human behavior has been conceptualized and measured in research projects exploring the connections between population, health and place.

- **Clary et al. (2017).** Between exposure, access and use: Reconsidering foodscape influences on dietary behaviors. *Health & Place* 44: 1-7.
- **Mmako et al. (2020).** Green spaces, dementia and a meaningful life in the community: A mixed studies review. *Health & Place* 63: 102344.

**Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 10/22.**

**Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 10/26.**

### Week 12

**11/2**

**Role of Place in Shaping Inequalities**
A discussion of the ways in which place affects different groups of people in different ways, and how a deeper understanding of place might contribute toward meaningful social change.


**Submit briefs on Bb no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, 10/29.**

**Comment on at least one other brief on Bb no later than 1:00 p.m. on Monday, 11/2.**
Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

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<tr>
<th>Week 13</th>
<th>Final Presentations</th>
<th>Final research papers to be uploaded to Blackboard no later than 11:59 p.m. on Monday, 11/23.</th>
<th>Students present their projects and answer questions from audience. Allow 20-25 minutes per student assuming students work alone and no more than 6 students in the class.</th>
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<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>Students will present their final projects, summarizing the insights gathered from their research of the specific problem context they chose.</td>
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**Namin et al. (2020).** The legacy of the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation and the political ecology of urban trees and air pollution in the United States. Social Science & Medicine 246: 112758.


Support Systems

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. 
[https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/).

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. [http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. [https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/](https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/).

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: [http://sarc.usc.edu/](http://sarc.usc.edu/).

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. [https://equity.usc.edu/](https://equity.usc.edu/).

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. [https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/).

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. [https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/](https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa/).

Diversity at USC – [https://diversity.usc.edu/](https://diversity.usc.edu/)
Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students.