



SOC 3673-090 Social Epidemiology (Online)

Fall 2023

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In-Person Office Hours: Fridays from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM
Office Location: BEH-S 312
Zoom Office Hours: By appointment

Required Materials

Access to a computer, a reliable Internet connection, and a calculator are required to succeed in this course. There is no required text.

Course Description

Epidemiology is the study of the distributions, causes, and prevention of acute and chronic diseases in populations. Disease, as the ongoing coronavirus pandemic has repeatedly demonstrated, is not randomly distributed. Instead, it occurs more often among people and groups with certain shared characteristics. Epidemiologists seek to learn why, how, and when some people contract diseases when others do not. The answers to these questions are necessary for monitoring the health status of a population, for developing new disease prevention efforts, and for providing an empirically derived, evidence-based recommendations to health care and policy leaders. For these reasons, epidemiology is considered a cornerstone of public health practice.

In this class, we will examine how environment affects health, how disease spreads across populations, and how public health interventions can help control or reduce the spread of disease. Furthermore, we will explore the methods used in epidemiological research with an emphasis on the analytical techniques used to isolate the causes of disease. Most importantly, we will use real-world examples to establish epidemiology as social science, highlighting the ways in which social, political, cultural, and economic circumstances influence our chances for a healthy life.

This course fulfills the Quantitative Reasoning (QB) or Quantitative Intensive (QI) requirement of the University of Utah. Although there are no formal prerequisites for this course, you are expected to have a basic knowledge and understanding of algebra and elementary statistics before enrolling.

Course Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Define epidemiology and wax poetically regarding its contributions to public health and medicine
- Calculate, interpret, and compare various measures of morbidity, mortality, survival, and disease-exposure association
- Apply epidemiological principles and techniques to real-world issues and questions
- Identify the defining features of different epidemiological study designs as well as their respective strengths and limitations

- Recognize the extent to which a complex array of social factors contributes to disparities in health outcomes

A Note on the Course Schedule

You may have noticed that this syllabus does not end with a calendar in which the due dates of all of your assignments and whatnot are listed in meticulous detail. This omission is by design. I am a proponent of a pedagogical strategy known as adaptive teaching, which posits that students learn more effectively when teachers are willing and able to adapt their curriculum to the needs of the class. The upside to this approach is that I am committed to updating my course materials to reflect your interests, preferences, and/or level of understanding. The downside, however, is that I am unable to plan more than a week or two in advance. In other words, it's impossible for me to plan for Week 9 without first seeing how the class handles Weeks 1 - 8. If the idea of adaptive teaching strikes you as absurd, or if you are the type of student who needs to know exactly what will be expected of you on, say, November 17, 2023, you should seriously consider enrolling a different section of the course.

Online Course Expectations

As is the case with in-person learning, a productive online class requires all parties involved to commit to a set of shared goals and to do their part in achieving said goals. My conception of our respective roles in this collaborative endeavor is as follows:

Instructor Expectations

Your instructor (i.e., Tom) is committed to the following:

- The instructor will design the course to include readings, example videos, and assignments that will A) challenge you and B) provide you with opportunities to learn and practice course content.
- The instructor will actively seek to create and/or modify course content in accordance with the needs and preferences of the class.
- The instructor will communicate regularly with the class via announcements, office hours, email, and feedback on assignments.
- As necessary, the instructor will hold live review and/or Q & A sessions via Zoom to ensure the students understand key course concepts.
- The instructor will provide feedback on the assignments in a timely manner.

Student Expectations

The following is expected of all students in this class (that's you):

- Students will log into Canvas regularly to remain up to date on any changes to the course schedule, assignment due dates, etc.
- Students will be proactive in resolving technology-related issues before such issues begin to affect their performance in the class.
- Students will keep up and plan ahead—procrastination and quantitative analysis simply do not mix.
- Students will make any requests for additional help, clarification, or due date extensions at least 24 hours prior to any relevant due dates or deadlines.
- Students will follow the [core rules of netiquette](#) while participating in the class, interacting with other students, and communicating with the course instructor and teaching assistants.

- Students will adhere to the standards of academic conduct outlined in the [University of Utah Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities](#). Failure to do so could result in your failing a specific assignment, failing the course entirely, and/or expulsion from the University.

Evaluation & Grading

This course is designed to be **interactive, integrative, and applied**. A variety of teaching methods will be used, including online readings, recorded lectures, documentaries, and news media.

Assessment of learning outcomes will be done through assignments, written assignments, and discussions. Assignments, which I recommend you complete in groups, are intended to help students learn how to compute and apply quantitative data to better understand disease dynamics in a real-world global setting. Written assignments are used to encourage students to analyze and critique current and foundational research in the field of Social Epidemiology. Interactive discussion activities encourage students to apply what they learn to current events in the US and around the world. Point totals and grading criteria will be available in the assignments' descriptions.

FYI—A detailed list of assignments and due dates can be found on Canvas in the “Modules” section of the course.

What weird, idiosyncratic policies do you have as an instructor?

I'm so glad you asked! Here's what you need to be aware of:

- *Generally Speaking...*
 - I am aware that my class is not the center of your personal universe, just as I am aware that your busy lives will occasionally restrict your ability to participate fully therein. It is your responsibility, however, to inform me of any challenges you are facing. **In general, you are expected to speak with me ASAP if there is any issue or concern that may impede your ability to complete the requirements of the course. Furthermore, the question of whether a given issue is of sufficient gravity to warrant special consideration (i.e., an extension of due dates, etc.) is left entirely to my discretion.** A death in the family almost certainly qualifies; a particularly bad hangnail does not.
- *Communication*
 - **I do my absolute best to respond to emails within 24 hours**, though additional time may be required if your query requires considerable thought and/or a lengthy explanation. Or if you email me on a Friday night.
 - With the previous point in mind, **I do not respond to emails within 24 hours of exam or assignment due dates. Any questions or requests for clarification should be made well in advance.** In other words, you can be the kind of student who requires a lot of help from the instructor (and that's totally fine), or you can be

the kind of student who leaves everything until the last minute (and that's also fine), but you cannot be both simultaneously.

- Also, lately, I've been trying to only respond to student emails when I'm in a good mood, which means that you might have to wait a little bit longer for a response than you might like (depending on how my week is going, naturally). The upside, however, is that I'll be much more likely to give you what you want.

- Grading

- Given the number of math-ish (and multiple-choice) questions you'll be expected to answer this semester, it is inevitable that you will come across one or two that you consider unfair, unclear, or poorly worded. **Be advised, however, that I will only award credit for such questions if my post-quiz statistical analyses (specifically, overall response patterns and the extent to which said patterns are predictive of overall quiz/assignment scores) offer statistical evidence of bias.** Run-of-the-mill issues (i.e., forgetting to answer a question) do not meet this standard.
- Also, **there is no extra credit available.**

- Late Work

- **I do not accept late work without prior approval, though I'm comically generous in giving out prior approval.**
- **Seriously, if there's even the tiniest chance that travel, work, or a project for another class might cause you to miss a deadline, please let me know BEFORE the deadline has passed, and I will almost always give you an extra day or three. If you don't contact me beforehand, you will be at the mercy of my ironclad "NO LATE WORK" policy.**
- **If a Canvas malfunction prevents you from submitting your assignment on time, you must document the malfunction by (1) taking a screenshot of whatever error message(s) you received, AND (2) CC-ing me on an email to Canvas support.** The email must be sent prior to the due date. If you fail to do either, you will not have the opportunity to make up the assignment.

- Incomplete Grades

- Incomplete ("I") grades will be given only in the most extraordinary of circumstances, and it is left entirely to my discretion to determine whether a given student's situation meets that standard.
- Upon receipt of an "I" grade, it is your responsibility to prepare a completion schedule outlining the date(s) by which you intend to complete your remaining assignment(s). Failure to adhere to these self-imposed deadlines may result in your failing the course.

- Other Stuff

- All assignments and exams must be picked up within six weeks of the end of the semester. After six weeks, any student submissions that have not been claimed will be shredded and subsequently recycled.
- I reserve the right to amend this document at any time and for any reason.

University Policies

- 1. *The Americans with Disabilities Act.*** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.
- 2. *University Safety Statement.*** The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.
- 3. *Addressing Sexual Misconduct.*** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).
- 4. *Undocumented Student Support Statement.*** Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact—those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families. To learn more, please contact the Dream Center at 801.213.3697 or visit dream.utah.edu.
- 5. *Drop/Withdrawal Policies.*** Students may drop a course within the first two weeks of a given semester without any penalties. Students may officially withdraw (W) from a class or all classes after the drop deadline through the midpoint of a course. A

“W” grade is recorded on the transcript and appropriate tuition/fees are assessed. The grade “W” is not used in calculating the student’s GPA. For deadlines to withdraw from full-term, first, and second session classes, see the U's Academic Calendar.

6. Other important information:

- a. Student Code: <http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.php>
- b. Accommodation Policy (see Section Q):
<http://regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-100.php>

7. ***Student Mental Health Resources***

- *Rates of burnout, anxiety, depression, isolation, and loneliness have noticeably increased during the pandemic. If you need help, reach out for [campus mental health resources](#), including counseling, trainings and other support.*
- *Consider participating in a [Mental Health First Aid](#) or other [wellness-themed](#) training provided by our Center for Student Wellness and sharing these opportunities with your peers, teaching assistants and department colleagues*

8. ***Diverse Student Support.*** Your success at the University of Utah is important to all of us here! If you feel like you need extra support in academics, overcoming personal difficulties, or finding community, the U is here for you.

Student Support Services (TRIO)

TRIO federal programs are targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities.

Student Support Services (SSS) is a TRIO program for current or incoming undergraduate university students who are seeking their first bachelor's degree and need academic assistance and other services to be successful at the University of Utah.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Student Support Services (TRIO)

801-581-7188

trio.utah.edu

Room 2075

1901 E. S. Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

American Indian Students

The AIRC works to increase American Indian student visibility and success on campus by advocating for and providing student centered programs and tools to enhance academic success, cultural events to promote personal well-being, and a supportive “home-away-from-home” space for students to grow and develop leadership skills.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

American Indian Resource Center

801-581-7019

diversity.utah.edu/centers/airc

Fort Douglas Building 622
1925 De Trobriand St.
Salt Lake City, UT 84113

Black Students

Using a pan-African lens, the Black Cultural Center seeks to counteract persistent campus-wide and global anti-blackness. The Black Cultural Center works to holistically enrich, educate, and advocate for students, faculty, and staff through Black centered programming, culturally affirming educational initiatives, and retention strategies.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Black Cultural Center

801-213-1441

diversity.utah.edu/centers/bcc

Fort Douglas Building 603
95 Fort Douglas Blvd.
Salt Lake City, UT 84113

Students with Children

Our mission is to support and coordinate information, program development and services that enhance family resources as well as the availability, affordability and quality of child care for University students, faculty and staff.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Center for Childcare & Family Resources

801-585-5897

childcare.utah.edu

408 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Students with Disabilities

The Center for Disability Services is dedicated to serving students with disabilities by providing the opportunity for success and equal access at the University of Utah. They also strive to create an inclusive, safe, and respectful environment.

For more information about what support they provide and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Center for Disability Services

801-581-5020

disability.utah.edu

162 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Students across Intersectional Identities and Experiences

The Center for Equity and Student Belonging (CESB) creates community and advocates for academic success and belonging for students across inter-sectional identities and experiences among our African, African American, Black, Native, Indigenous, American Indian, Asian, Asian American, Latinx, Chicanx, Pacific Islander, Multiracial, LGBTQ+, Neurodiverse and Disabled students of color.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Center for Equity and Student Belonging (CESB)

801-581-8151

diversity.utah.edu/centers/CESB/

235 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

English as a Second/Additional Language (ESL) Students

If you are an English language learner, there are several resources on campus available to help you develop your English writing and language skills. Feel free to contact:

Writing Center

801-587-9122

writingcenter.utah.edu

2701 Marriott Library

295 S 1500 E

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

English Language Institute

801-581-4600

continue.utah.edu/eli

540 Arapeen Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84108

Undocumented Students

Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact—those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles that prevent you from engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center.

Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families.

For more information about what support they provide and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Dream Center

801-213-3697

dream.utah.edu

1120 Annex (Wing B)

1901 E. S. Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

LGBTQ+ Students

The LGBTQ+ Resource Center acts in accountability with the campus community by identifying the needs of people with a queer range of [a]gender and [a]sexual experiences and responding with university-wide services.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

LGBTQ+ Resource Center

801-587-7973

lgbt.utah.edu ([Links to an external site.](#))

409 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Veterans & Military Students

The mission of the Veterans Support Center is to improve and enhance the individual and academic success of veterans, service members, and their family members who attend the university; to help them receive the benefits they earned; and to serve as a liaison between the student veteran community and the university.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Veterans Support Center

801-587-7722

veteranscenter.utah.edu ([Links to an external site.](#))

418 Union Building

200 S. Central Campus Dr.

Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Women

The Women's Resource Center (WRC) at the University of Utah serves as the central resource for educational and support services for women. Honoring the complexities of women's identities, the WRC facilitates choices and changes through programs, counseling, and training grounded in a commitment to advance social justice and equality.

For more information about what support they provide, a list of ongoing events, and links to other resources, view their website or contact:

Women's Resource Center

801-581-8030

womenscenter.utah.edu

411 Union Building
200 S. Central Campus Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Inclusivity at the U

The Office for Inclusive Excellence is here to engage, support, and advance an environment fostering the values of respect, diversity, equity, inclusivity, and academic excellence for students in our increasingly global campus community. They also handle reports of bias in the classroom as outlined below:

Bias or hate incidents consist of speech, conduct, or some other form of expression or action that is motivated wholly or in part by prejudice or bias whose impact discriminates, demeans, embarrasses, assigns stereotypes, harasses, or excludes individuals because of their race, color, ethnicity, national origin, language, sex, size, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, or religion.

For more information about what support they provide and links to other resources, or to report a bias incident, view their website or contact:

Office for Inclusive Excellence

801-581-4600

inclusive-excellence.utah.edu (Links to an external site.)

170 Annex (Wing D)
1901 E. S. Campus Dr.
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

Other Student Groups at the U

To learn more about some of the other resource groups available at the U, check out:

getinvolved.utah.edu/

studentsuccess.utah.edu/resources/student-support