

## HSC 4174/5925 Behavioral and Environmental Determinants of Obesity

### Department of Health Education and Behavior

Instructor: Megan A. McVay, Ph.D.  
Office: Florida Gym (FLG) Room 23  
Phone: 352-294-7029  
Email: [megan.mcvay@ufl.edu](mailto:megan.mcvay@ufl.edu)  
Teaching Assistant: Caleb Coppock, ccoppock@ufl.edu

Department Chair: Jalie Tucker, PhD, FLG-5C

#### I. Course Logistics

- a. Class meeting times: Tue 10:40-11:30/ Thur 10:40-12:35
- b. Location: FLG room 285
- c. Office Hours: Monday 10-12; Tuesday 12-1. Other dates and times available by appointment.
- d. Contacting instructor:
  - i. Use my UF email with subject line: HSC4174-(Subject)
  - ii. Emails will typically be replied to within 1 business days (note that this excludes weekends).
  - iii. To discuss grades, please visit office hours or arrange a meeting. Grades will not be discussed via email.
  - iv. Messages should be short and specific. If you have complex questions that will benefit from in-person discussion, please arrange a meeting with me.

**II. Course Description.** This course will examine the causes of obesity from a variety of perspectives. We will consider biological, psychological, social, environmental, and policy-related causes. We will also consider interventions to prevent and treat obesity with an emphasis on the assumptions of the intervention on causes and maintaining factors for obesity.

**III. Course Objectives.** At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- a. Explain the extent of obesity in the US and globally and discuss ways in which it is a public health concern.
- b. Identify and describe factors associated with the development of obesity at different levels, including individual, social, and environmental/ecological.
- c. Analyze claims of obesity causality and of the effectiveness of interventions to treat or prevent obesity, including behavioral, medical, environmental, and policy interventions.
- d. Apply knowledge about determinants of obesity to the development of strategies to promote a healthy weight.

#### IV. Course activities and evaluation

- a. **Syllabus Quiz.** Quiz on aspects of syllabus. You may look at syllabus as you take quiz.
  - a. **10 points**
  
- b. **Exams.** There will be 4 exams. The exams will cover material from class lectures, article readings, and class activities. Each exam may include multiple choice, matching, short answer, and brief essay questions. After the first exam, each exam will include about 20% of material from the previous section and 80% new material. Your lowest exam score will be dropped with exception of the final exam (Score of final exam cannot be dropped).
  - a. 100 points each. **300 total points**
  
- c. **In class activities.** There will be 14 in-class activities. These activities will include quizzes on assigned readings, reflections on material discussed in class, or other group or individual activities. These will not be announced in advance. For most of these, you get full credit for participating. A few of them are quizzes and you get credit based on how many you answer correctly. The two lowest scores on in-class activities will get dropped (so if you miss two activities, and thus get a "0" on those two activities, those 0s are dropped; in other words, you can miss two in class activities with no penalty). You can only make up in-class assignments with excused absence (see criteria for excused absences below). You must make up in-class assignments within 2 days of returning from excused absences.
  - a. In-class activities are worth 10 points each, with a maximum possible of **120 points.** (*graduate students: 7 points each, 84 points total*)
  
- d. **Writing Projects.** Additional instructions on writing assignments will be provided via canvas.
 

Writing assignment 1, part 1. You will be asked to write a one-page summary of an original research article. We will discuss the article extensively in class prior to the assignment.

  - a. **30 points.** (*graduate students: 16 points*)

Writing assignment 1, part 2. You will revise the summary of the article you read for part 1 based on feedback I provide. You will also write a second summary of a different original research article.

  - b. **70 points**

Writing assignment 2. In this assignment you will be asked to write a set of recommendations on how a large corporation (and their associated health insurer) should address obesity among their employees and employees' families.

  - c. **70 points**

- e. **Extra credit.** There will be only one opportunity for extra credit. To earn extra credit, you can pick a third research article to summarize for writing assignment
  - a. **12 points**
  
- f. **(Graduate students only) Presentation assignment.** Graduate students will prepare and present a 15 minute presentation on an approach to addressing obesity.
  - a. **50 points**

## V. Grades (total possible points: 600)

Points	Percentage	Letter grade	GPA value
561 and above	93.5% and above	A	4.0
540-560	90-93.49%	A-	3.67
519-539	86.5-89.99%	B+	3.33
501-518	83.5-86.49%	B	3.0
480-500	80.0-83.49%	B-	2.67
459-479	76.5-79.99%	C+	2.33
441-458	73.5-76.49%	C	2.0
420-440	70.0-73.49%	C-	1.67
399-419	66.5-69.99%	D+	1.33
381-298	63.5-66.49%	D	1.0
360-380	60.0-63.49%	D-	.67
379 or below	Below 60%	E	0

## VI. Course Policies

- a. **ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN CLASS:**
  - i. This course will have a policy of no electronic use during class activities. If you have a compelling reason for using electronics during the course (such as a disability, documented or not) please email me within one week of the course beginning to let me know why you would like an exception and I will let you know if it will be granted.
  - ii. Make sure phones are silenced.
- b. **EXTRA CREDIT.** One extra credit opportunity is provided (see above). No other extra credit opportunities will be provided.
- c. **TECHNICAL ISSUES:** If you have technical issues with Canvas, contact the UF Help Desk at Learning-support@ufl.edu or 352-392-HELP (select option 2). Any requests for make-up of assignments due to technical issues must include the ticket number and the message resolution (email) received from LSS when the problem was reported. Contact must be made with the instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if a makeup is requested.

- d. **DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS:** To give every student the best possible chance at success, students with disabilities will be given the opportunity for accommodations to meet their needs. Students with disability requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.
- e. **COURSE WITHDRAWAL AND FAILING GRADES:** Students who have a very low grade but do not drop/withdraw from this course nor explain his/her situation to the instructor on or before 12/5/18 will be given an “E” (Failing grade), NOT an “I” (Incomplete grade).
- f. **COURSE ATTENDANCE AND MISSED COURSES.** Although attendance is not required, missing excessive classes will impact your in-class activity points. It will also likely negatively impact your mastery of material needed for the exam. If you need to be absent from class, it is your responsibility to first check with your class peer about information discussed. If more information is needed about what was missed, please discuss them with me during the next available office hours. Emails concerning missed information/assignments will not be responded to.
- g. **EXCUSED ABSENCES.** Acceptable reasons for absences from class are consistent with the UF Policy which includes the following: illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements, military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate, and court-imposed legal obligations. In the event of one of these, your absence will be considered excused and you will be allowed to make up any missed in-class activities if the following conditions are met.
  - i. Provide me with notification of your absence (via email or phone/phone message) within 24 hours of the absence.
  - ii. Submit formal documentation of reason for absence via email, fax, or through campus mailbox within 24 hours of your return to class.
- h. **TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS:** All assignment are due at their designated times.
  - i. Assignments required to be submitted electronically via Canvas tool will be due on or before 11:55 p.m. on their designated due dates. If you experience a technical problem submitting your assignment you must contact the Help Desk (See Technical Issues).
  - ii. Late Assignments: Late assignments are accepted within 24 hours of their due date. All late assignment will automatically incur a 50% deduction in points (No exceptions). Late assignments must be submitted via the Canvas Assignment tool. Please note that the Assignment tool will automatically close 24 hours after the due date/time
- g. **IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES:** There will be several in-class activities.

- a. To receive the points for these activities, you must actively participate and/or sign your name on the participation sheet before the end of official class time on the day of the activity. If you arrive late, you must write the time you arrived next to your signature.
- b. Sign only your own name. Signing someone's name other than your own, is a violation of UF Student Honor Code
- c. Missed in-class activities can only be made up if you meet the criteria for excused absences as outlined in the Class Absence Policy. Please attend office hours or make an appointment to make up the activity.
- i. **DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR.** Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. A 5-point deduction will occur for each occurrence of disruptive behavior AND you will be dismissed from class for that day. This includes (but is not limited to) the use of mobile phones during class, having outside, non-lesson related conversations when I or other classmates are speaking, and any other unprofessional behaviors and/or remarks.
- j. **COURSE EVALUTION:** "Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>."
- k. **ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code at <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/students.php>. "UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honorcode/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class."

## VII. Course schedule

Date	Content	Readings (read before class)	Assignments due
Thursday 8/23	Course introduction and syllabus overview		
Tuesday 8/28	Epidemiology and consequences of obesity	Hungry Brain, Ch 1 (course reserve)	
Thursday 8/30			
Tuesday 9/4	Biological, genetic, and nutritional influences on obesity	Guyenet blog post (see link below this table)	
Thursday 9/6			
Tuesday 9/11	Cont. biological, genetic, nutrition; exam prep		
Thursday 9/13	<b>EXAM 1</b>		
Tuesday 9/18	Evaluating obesity research & introduction to Assignment 1	Asta et al 2016 article (see full citation below)	
Thursday 9/20			
Tuesday 9/25	Psychological, social, cultural, and environmental influences		Assignment 1, version 1 due
Thursday 9/27			
Tuesday 10/2	Cont: Psychological, social, cultural, and environmental influences	Moss: The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food (course reserve)	
Thursday 10/4			
Tuesday 10/9	<b>EXAM 2</b>		Assignment 1 version 1 returned
Thursday 10/11	Weight stigma		
Tuesday 10/16	Wt stigma, cont.; Pharmacological and surgical obesity treatment		Assignment 1, version 2 due
Thursday 10/18		Beamish & Reinehr 2017 adolescent bariatric surgery article (instructor will provide)	
Tuesday 10/23	Behavioral intervention in adults	Butryn: Behavioral approaches to the treatment of obesity (course reserve)	
Thursday 10/25			
Tuesday 10/30	<b>EXAM 3</b>		
Thursday 11/1	Obesity interventions addressing environment/policy		
Tuesday 11/6		To Be announced article	

Thursday 11/8	Cont: Obesity interventions addressing environment/policy; introduction to assignment 2	Bring computer in	
<b>Tuesday 11/13 NO CLASS</b>	<b>No class on Tue 11/13; Thur:</b> Interventions for children/families		
Thursday 11/15		To Be Announced article	
Tuesday 11/20	Cont., Interventions for children/families; Thanksgiving holiday on 11/22		
<b>Thursday 11/22 NO CLASS</b>			Assignment 2 due
Tuesday 11/27	Grad student presentations		
Thursday 11/29	Grad student presentations;		
Tuesday 12/4	Final exam prep		
Thurs 12/13;7:30 AM - 9:30 AM	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>		

### Selected reading citations:

- Guyenet blog post: <http://www.stephanguyenet.com/microbiota-and-obesity-is-it-all-hype/>
- Asta, K., Miller, A. L., Retzliff, L., Rosenblum, K., Kaciroti, N. A., & Lumeng, J. C. (2016). Eating in the absence of hunger and weight gain in low-income toddlers. *Pediatrics*, e20153786.
- Beamish & Reinehr (2017) Should bariatric surgery be performed in adolescents? *European Journal of Endocrinology*. 176:4, D1-D15.

## VII. Campus Resources:

### Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care:  
If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
- University Police Department, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).  
<http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

### Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learningsupport@ufl.edu](mailto:Learningsupport@ufl.edu). <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>
- Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.  
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.  
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- Student Complaints Campus: [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF\\_Complaints\\_policy.pdf](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf)  
On-Line Students Complaints: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaintprocess>

**\*\*\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announced via Canvas, and it is your responsibility to be aware of any announced changes.\*\*\*\*\***