Overview
In this course we will examine the impact of the physical environment on human health and well-being through the life course. Environmental factors to be examined include characteristics of the built and natural environment, housing and neighborhood, as well as sprawl, the dominance of the automobile and patterns of American landscape development. We will conceptualize “health” outcomes broadly to include physical health, obesity, mental health, cognitive functioning, etc. Working within the life course perspective, we will focus on environmental factors that act as either protective mechanisms – fostering the long-term resilience of individuals or as risk factors – contributing to long-term vulnerability.

Readings: Articles on blackboard: www.blackboard.cornell.edu

Requirements & Grading
• Discussion Leadership 15%
Each week, one (or two) student(s) will prepare discussion questions in advance and will email these questions to the class by the Sunday prior to our meeting. These student(s) will then facilitate discussion in class.

• Class participation & mini assignments 30%
Because this is a seminar, participation is critical. In addition to contributing to discussion, participation will involve completing several mini-assignments such as environmental evaluations, collecting a bit of data through interviews, observation, etc. or some brief analysis and writing. Students are also invited to participate in a “good news show & tell,” the last ~20 minutes of each class.

• Bridging the Gap: from Science to Action 20% product & presentation due April 7th
  • Topic, community contact, and idea due Feb 22nd
Create a research evidence-based product to address a real health/healthy environment issue in the local community. You need to connect with a real agency or organization to be your partner or client. The “product” might be a 5-minute video, a booklet or brochure, or a website, for example. Themes might include: “Walk Your Kids to School,” “Build a Park,” “Test for Radon” or health impact assessment of a local proposed project.

• Final Paper ~20 pages. 25% due Tuesday April 29
• Topic Idea 1-2 pages -- due Monday March 8
• Paper Draft 5% due Friday April 2
• In-Class Presentation of Final Paper 5% on Wednesday May 5
Your final paper will explore a topic related to environments and health. The paper must include a thorough, well-organized literature review (with at least 10 references – mostly journal articles). The paper may be either a research grant proposal or an empirical research paper (for which you collect some data & report your findings).
Other Relevant Resources


Relevant Websites:


Active Living Research, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation http://www.activelivingresearch.org/


Health Impact Assessment, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm

The Story of Stuff http://www.storyofstuff.com/
**Week 1**

**27 January, Wednesday**

**Introduction: Environmental Impacts on Health**


**Week 2**

**3 February, Wednesday**

**Historical background: Environment & Public Health (& start Theory)**

Frank et al. Chapter 2: Public health and urban form in America: historical precedents (pp. 11-37)


**Optional Readings**:  


**Week 3**

**10 February, Wednesday**

**THEORETICAL GROUNDING**

**Human Ecology & Health Promotion & The Life Course Perspective**


**Optional Readings**:


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1 Optional readings are not provided on electronic reserve. Some may be useful resources for final paper.
Week 4

17 February, Wednesday

Housing & Health – Physical Health & Mental Health


Optional Readings:


22 February MONDAY Bridging the Gap Topic, Community Contact and Idea DUE ~1 page

Week 5

24 February, Wednesday

Neighborhoods, Nutrition & Health


Optional Readings:


**Week 6**

**THE ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH BEHAVIORS**

3 March, Wednesday  

Physical Inactivity & Unhealthy Infrastructure

Frank et al. Chapter 3: Physical activity and public health (pp. 38-54)  
Chapter 6: Understanding the built environment. (pp. 99-116)  
Chapter 7: Transportation systems (pp. 117-136) [peruse]  
Chapter 8: Land Use patterns (pp.137-152) [peruse]  
Chapter 9: Urban design characteristics (pp. 152-177) [peruse]


Optional Readings:


8 March, MONDAY 12:00 noon Paper Ideas Due – 1-2 pages w/ at least 5 citations

Week 7

10 March, Wednesday The Food Environment: From Micro to Macro


Optional Readings:


Week 8

17 March Obesity & The Life Course

Frank et al. Chapter 5: Physical activity: children, the elderly, and the poor (pp. 76- 98)


Optional Readings:

### Week 9

24 March  
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**SPRING BREAK**

### Week 10

**THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

#### March

31 March, Wednesday  
The Natural Environment & Human Well-Being


Optional Readings:

#### April

2 April, FRIDAY  
**Final Paper Draft Due**

### Week 11

7 April  
**Science to Action: Bridging the Gap**  
**Assignment Due & In-Class Presentations**

#### April

7 April, Wednesday  
Bridging the Gap  
**PRESENTATIONS**

### Week 12

14 April, Wednesday  
**Environmentalism + Sustainability: Taking Care of our Planet**


**Optional Readings:**


Conservation Psychology website: http://www.conservationpsychology.org/

**Week 13**

21 April, Wednesday  **Affluenza, Consumption & Planned Obsolescence**

An *intergenerational, interdisciplinary dialog*: For this special class, community members will join us for discussion.

London, B. (1932). Ending the depression through planned obsolescence. (pdf retrieved from Wikipedia)


**Optional Readings:**


For more resources see: http://www.storyofstuff.com/reading.php#consumption

**Week 14**  **SITE VISIT -- TBA**

28 April, Wednesday

29 April, TUESDAY  **Final Papers Due by 12:00 noon**

**Week 15**  **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

5 May, Wednesday  **Presentations of Final Papers.**