**EPID 600**

**Principles of Epidemiology for Public Health**

Department of Epidemiology, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

**Fall 2012 Syllabus, Sections 01W, 9xx (Internet, 3 credit hours)**

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Office Hours: By Appointment

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TAs: Chantel Martin, Epidemiology doctoral student

 Virginia Senkomago, Epidemiology doctoral student

(Email addresses and office hours are in Sakai)

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**Course Overview**

Public health practitioners and researchers, regardless of their discipline or specialty, rely on the results of epidemiologic research and often employ epidemiologic concepts, methods, and perspectives. Clinicians providing evidence-based health care do as well. EPID600 provides a general introduction to the approach, concepts, methods, and perspectives of epidemiology for students and practitioners in a broad range of public health and related disciplines. EPID600 employs problem-based learning where you apply the epidemiologic approach to a variety of current public health questions. Through EPID600 you will improve your ability to think analytically and to understand and interpret population-based and clinical research.

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**Learning Objectives and ASPH Competencies**

The course is designed to assist students in achieving the discipline-specific competencies for Epidemiology in the core Masters of Public Health (MPH) competencies developed by the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) Education Committee (see www.asph.org/userfiles/version2.3.pdf). After completing the course, students should be able to:

* Explain the population perspective, access key sources of demographic and public health data for countries around the world, and describe the magnitude, population distribution, and time trends of public health problems in the U.S. and internationally.
* Discuss, apply, and interpret basic epidemiologic concepts and measures of disease occurrence in populations: incidence, prevalence, relative risk, attributable risk, standardization.
* Use basic methods for investigating an outbreak of a health problem in a community, making use of the concepts of disease variation in time, person and place.
* Explain the relative strengths and limitations of epidemiological strategies (e.g., cohort, case-control, cross-sectional, ecological and intervention studies) for studying associations between risk factors or exposures in populations and rates of disease occurrence or death.
* Identify the major sources of random and non-random error in community and multinational health studies and suggest strategies to reduce error.
* Evaluate epidemiologic evidence by applying criteria for causal inference to information about an association between a population exposure and health outcome.
* Use epidemiologic methods in evaluating effectiveness of public health intervention programs in varying geopolitical contexts.
* Comprehend basic ethical and legal principles pertaining to the collection, maintenance, use and dissemination of epidemiologic data in different cultures.
* Appreciate some of the complexities in applying scientific evidence on health and disease to the making of public policy in diverse societies.

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# Getting Started

***Course materials***

All course materials except the textbook can be accessed through the course pages in Sakai (<https://sakai.unc.edu>). You will need to login with your Onyen and password (see [http://onyen.unc.edu/ for](http://onyen.unc.edu/%20for) information about these). The textbook is Aschengrau, Ann, and George R. Seage, III. ***Essentials of epidemiology in public health*.** Jones and Bartlett, 2nd or 3rd edition (Vic has posted some comments on the textbook at www.unc.edu/epid600/textbook/). If you purchase the 1st edition, please be sure to read Vic’s comments and to compare it with the 2nd edition, which among other changes has an additional chapter. The first chapter of the first edition is online; there is the instructions for module I.

***Quantitative and computing skills***

Besides word processing, email, and Internet skills, you are expected to have basic proficiency in MS Excel. If you have not used Excel, there are numerous books and Internet sites you can learn from. We strongly suggest you use Google (learn Excel) to find one that fits your learning style and time. You are also expected to be proficient in basic mathematics (e.g., through pre-calculus). A quantitative skills test will be provided so you can assess your math readiness. A list of Internet resources is available at [www.unc.edu/epid600/#otherresources](http://www.unc.edu/epid600/#otherresources)

***Writing skills***

Strong written communication skills are invaluable in both academia and the workplace. Your responses to assignments should be well-organized, clear, concise and free from grammatical and typographical errors. Graders may deduct up to 20% from the available points for poorly written answers. The UNC Writing Center ([writingcenter.unc.edu](http://writingcenter.unc.edu/)) has many excellent resources available online or through personalized consultation.

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**Course Structure**

You will be assigned to a small group and a teaching assistant (TA) at the beginning of the second week of the semester. Online students will work with their small groups, aided by their TA, in a Sakai discussion forum or through other asynchronous or real-time methods, according to their preference. Small groups arrive at consensus answers to case studies. The facilitator for that session submits the group’s answers and then receives the instructor answers for comparison.

Lectures are available as recordings in MS Silverlight or Powerpoint slides with verbatim speaker notes. Internet students taking the course in the fall semester are also welcome to attend the weekly lecture in Rosenau Auditorium (RO 133) most Tuesdays at 3:30-4:45 pm (obtain the schedule for the classroom course, since some weeks have no lecture; also, no email, Twitter, Facebook, etc., please!).

***Course Modules***

The course has 15 modules, most lasting one week. Most modules consist of a textbook reading, lecture, case study reading(s), and case study questions that will challenge you to analyze the material you are reading. The modules are:

1. Introduction
2. Basic concepts: Studying populations
3. Basic concepts: Measuring disease; incidence and prevalence
4. Basic concepts: Disease natural history; population screening
5. Strategies: Intervention trials
6. Strategies: Cohort studies
7. Strategies: Case-control studies
8. Strategies: Cross-sectional, ecologic studies
9. Hazards: Selection bias
10. Hazards: Information bias
11. Hazards: Confounding
12. Synthesis: Data analysis and interpretation, causal inference
13. Synthesis: Critical review of epidemiologic studies
14. Synthesis: Investigating disease outbreaks
15. Synthesis: Role of epidemiology in public health

***Resources***

Sakai Web Portal, sakai.unc.edu (has links to lecture slides, readings, case studies, examinations). Most course material in Sakai is organized into modules, as described below.

Readings: Reading assignments, including textbook chapters, articles, and other materials will be listed within each module’s instructions.

Textbook: Aschengrau and Seage (see “Getting Started”, above, for full citation)

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**Course Requirements**

As a student in EPID600, you are required to submit answers to: (a) **Case studies 01 and 15** and (b) **Examinations 1, 2, and 3**, according to the due dates listed in the schedule below. These assignments are take-home, open-book, and submissions are made through special EPID600 webforms linked in Sakai. **In addition, there is now a closed book final assessment for undergraduate students, which will take place at the time designated by the official examination schedule. The final assessment for undergraduate students requires their physical presence in the examination room, as per UNC policy.**

You are also requested to submit four evaluation forms: (a) anonymous TA evaluation; (b) peer evaluation #1, (c) peer evaluation #2, (d) anonymous course evaluation. Links to the TA and peer evaluations will be placed in Sakai. The anonymous course evaluation is conducted by the university; you will receive an email with the link to the webform. To thank you for your time and attention in submitting evaluations, you will receive points on your overall course grade for submitting peer evaluation #2 and the course evaluation.

As part of your work in lab you will submit answers to selected case study questions on behalf of your small group, as assigned at the time of the module.

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**Course Policies & Procedures**

**UNC email policy**

Per UNC email policy, all course-related communications will be sent via your official UNC email address as listed in Sakai. It is your responsibility to ensure that you receive and read, in a timely manner, all emails send by EPID600 to your UNC email address. “Broadcast” emails (those sent to the entire class) will be archived in Sakai, so that you can verify that you are receiving them. Individually-sent emails will not necessarily be archived in Sakai.

**Procedure for Appealing a Score on an Assignment**

If you feel you have received in incorrect score on an assignment, please raise the matter first with your TA by email and copy me. Please include the following information:

* Specify with full detail which questions and assignment (i.e., case study #, examination #)
* Include the question and your response to the assignment/question
* Include any feedback you have received so far
* Explain why you believe your response deserves more credit

**Late Work Policy**

Extensions will only be granted in cases of illness, family illness, or other extenuating circumstances. For examinations, please request an extension via the webform at www.unc.edu/epid600/students/request.cfm. The final assessment is governed by UNC policy for final examinations in undergraduate courses (www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/procedures1.html#final\_exams).

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**Evaluation**

**Graduate students:**

### Examination 1 35%

### Examination 2 35%

### Examination 3 20%Small group participation and case studies 10%

Graduate students have the option of submitting their answers to the case study questions marked with an asterisk. For each such case study demonstrating adequate effort one point on the final grade will be awarded and the weight for Examinations 1 and 2 reduced correspondingly.

**Grading Scale – graduate students**

**H**: Completion of course with a total score of 90% or greater

**P**: Completion of course with a total score of 65% - 89%

**L**:Completion of course with a total score of 50% - 65%

**F**: Students who achieve less than 50% in their course work will receive an F grade.

**Undergraduate students**

### Examination 1 30%

### Examination 2 30%

### Examination 3 20%

### Final assessment 10%Small group participation and case studies 10%

**Grading Scale – undergraduate students**

**A**: Completion of course with a total score of 90% or greater (90-91% = A-)

**B:** Completion of course with a total score of 75% - 89% (75-79 = B-, 85-89 = B+)

**C:** Completion of course with a total score of 60% - 74% (60-64 = C-, 70-74 = C+)

**D**:Completion of course with a total score of 50% - 59%

**F**: Students who achieve less than 50% in their course work will receive an F grade.

### For all students, case studies 1 and 15 must have been submitted for you to receive a grade. Students who do not submit all three examinations and take the final assessment will receive an F, unless they withdraw from the course before the withdrawal period ends. In exceptional circumstances a grade of IN (incomplete) or AB (absent from the final examination) may be given. Please read your program policies for grading and withdrawal policies or speak to your program registrar and be aware of the withdrawal periods.

**Letters of Recommendation**

Should you need a letter of recommendation, please send an email to Vic with a subject line beginning “EPID600 recommendation request” and include the deadline for the recommendation and the other information he will need. An example EPID600 recommendation letter can be found at www.unc.edu/epid600/students/

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**UNC Honor Code**

The *Honor Code* and the *Campus Code*, embodying the ideals of academic honesty, integrity, and responsible citizenship, have for over 100 years governed the performance of all academic work and student conduct at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Acceptance by a student of enrollment in the University presupposes a commitment to the principles embodied in these codes and a respect for this most significant University tradition. Your participation in this course comes with our expectation that your work will be completed in full observance of the *Honor Code*. Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable, because any breach in academic integrity strikes destructively at the University's life and work. If you have any questions about your or our responsibility under the Honor System, please visit the Honor System website (honor.unc.edu) and/or consult with someone in the Office of the Student Attorney General, the Office of the Dean of Students, and/or the EPID600 instructors.

EPID600 fully supports the Honor System at Carolina. We ask you to help by (a) following the instructions that accompany assignments for graded work and (b) reporting possible infractions to the instructors. The Honor System is a precious resource that enables freer and more collegial interactions between students and faculty. We all benefit from its vitality.

Of the thousands of students who have taken EPID600, the vast majority have followed the instructions in respect to permitted collaboration. However, over the years we have had to refer some two dozen students to the Honor System, exposing them to possibly serious penalties (e.g., suspension, loss of financial aid). These instances typically involved students knowingly violating the rules for collaboration (see below), often because their thinking became clouded by anxiety. As a point of fact, the risk of failing EPID600 is much lower than the risk that one’s evading the *Honor Code* will be detected. EPID600 can be challenging, but if you have difficulty to the point where you would even imagine violating the *Honor Code*, **please** ask Vic for help. There are **always** better alternatives.

The rules for complying with the *Honor Code* in EPID600 are simple:

1. **You must** **not communicate about an examination with anyone other than a current EPID600 instructor until the instructor answers have been posted**. However, you may use textbooks, course lectures, case study instructor answers already posted in Sakai, publications, and material on public websites.
2. You may not have access to instructor answers to case studies (e.g., from prior semesters) before these answers have been provided by the current instructors.
3. Although the issue has almost never arisen in EPID600, follow guidelines about using the work of others, i.e., do not plagiarize (the Health Sciences Library has a tutorial on plagiarism and citing sources, [www.hsl.unc.edu/services/tutorials/PlagiarismTutorial/intro.html](http://www.hsl.unc.edu/services/tutorials/PlagiarismTutorial/intro.html)). Quotations, with proper citations, do not violate the Honor Code; however, extensive quotation does not demonstrate your understanding of the material.

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**Important UNC policies concerning use of online resources**

1.      By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the Acceptable Use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy (<http://help.unc.edu/1672>) on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette and privacy protection.

2.      As part of this course you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC Chapel Hill Information Security Policies ([http://its.unc.edu/ITS/about\_its/its\_policies/index.htm](https://sn2prd0302.outlook.com/owa/redir.aspx?C=DA7ccN6iQEChiHlg9gTapTBAq1H5Gc4IeQsdMdMAAJzFb9O3d4jglWFvYElZhTQs8pUQop5om4k.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fits.unc.edu%2fITS%2fabout_its%2fits_policies%2findex.htm)) when participating in online classes.

3.      When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC Chapel Hill, such as Google or Youtube, please note that the Terms and Conditions of these companies and not the University’s Terms and Conditions apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC Chapel Hill.

4.   When links to sites outside of the [unc.edu](https://sn2prd0302.outlook.com/owa/redir.aspx?C=DA7ccN6iQEChiHlg9gTapTBAq1H5Gc4IeQsdMdMAAJzFb9O3d4jglWFvYElZhTQs8pUQop5om4k.&URL=http%3a%2f%2func.edu) domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful   that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

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**Valuing, Recognizing, and Encouraging Diversity**

Promoting and valuing diversity in the classroom enriches learning and broadens everyone’s perspectives. Inclusion and tolerance can lead to respect for others and their opinions, which is valuable in itself and is critical to maximizing the learning that occurs in this course. Other peoples’ views may challenge our own closely held ideas and personal comfort zones. However, learning to understand and appreciate views different from our own can create a sense of community and promote excellence in the learning environment.

Diversity includes consideration of (1) the variety of life experiences others have had, and (2) factors related to “diversity of presence,” including, among others, age, economic circumstances, ethnic identification, disability, gender, geographic origin, race, religion, sexual orientation, and social position.

***This class will follow principles of inclusion, respect, tolerance, and acceptance that support the values of diversity***.

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**Course Feedback and Evaluation**

There have been several major changes to this course in format, content and assignments. Although our flexibility is somewhat limited by the size of the class, we want your experience to be as productive and enjoyable as possible. Your feedback is welcome at any time as well as on the final (anonymous) course evaluation.

The Department of Epidemiology participates in the Carolina Course Evaluation System (CES), the University's online course evaluation tool, enabled at the end of each semester. Your responses will be anonymous, with feedback provided in the aggregate; open-ended comments will be shared with instructors, but not identified with individual students. Although most comments are not made public, if you do not wish your comments to be shared publicly, please state that in your comment. Your participation in CES is a course expectation, as providing constructive feedback is a professional expectation. Such feedback is critical to improving the quality of our courses, as well as providing input to the assessment of your instructors.

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**Words to the Wise**

* Please save a copy of your responses to all assignments before yousubmit them electronically and retain the copy or confirmation email. Although fortunately rare, webform submissions and/or emails are occasionally erased or otherwise lost.
* If you need help, please do not hesitate to ask your TA for assistance. Also, campus librarians are available to help you locate information for this course.
* Please don’t wait until the very end of a module to complete the case study. These assignments will take some time to complete.
* Should unforeseen events or life/work commitments occur during the semester which will impact your course work, please let your TA know as soon as possible. If an examination deadline is the issue, please submit the extension request form (see above).

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**Frequently asked questions**

**How can I contact my TA or the instructor?**

You will see your TA in lab most weeks of the semester. The TAs and the instructor can also be contacted by email (recommended) or by phone. Contact information can be found in the Staff Information area of Sakai or at directory.unc.edu. The following practices are appreciated for emails: begin the Subject line “EPID600,” begin “Dear \_\_\_\_ (and Vic)” (\_\_\_ is your TA’s name), sign with your first and last name, and send to your TA with a copy to Vic.

**What should I do if I have a question regarding the course content or an assignment?**

Please email your TA and copy Vic. If we cannot resolve your questions via e-mail, then we can communicate by telephone or in person.

**What should I do if something is wrong with my computer or Sakai?**

* If the problem is course specific:
	1. Email your TA.
	2. Email the Instructor. Begin the subject of the email with: EPID600 TECHNICAL HELP and your problem will be addressed as soon as possible.
* (ONLY) If you are experiencing a general computer problem:
1. Call 919-962-HELP 24 hours 7 days a week for help.
2. Be sure to also let your instructor or TA know you are having technical issues.

**Where can I look to find out my course grade?**

At the end of each semester, you may check your grades on <http://connectcarolina.unc.edu/>. Login to the site using your Onyen and password. Then, click the "Go" button next to grades for the semester you want to view. It may take up to three weeks after you have completed the course before grades will appear in Student Central. Your TA can tell you how to project your course grade.

**How do I go about dropping this course?**

From time to time, students find it necessary to drop this course. If you think you may need to drop, please communicate with the instructor about your situation and consult with the student services staff for your program about the procedure. Depending on when you chose to drop the course, you may or may not receive a full or partial refund of your tuition – or not be permitted to drop. Therefore, be sure to pay close attention to the official drop dates and tuition refund schedules on the Registrar’s website (registrar.unc.edu).

**What if it's too late to drop the course?**

Tell your TA and the instructor if you think you will not be able to finish the course on time.

**What if I am having a problem with my TA?**

If you have any concerns with the performance of your TA, please contact the instructor as soon as possible.



8/20/2012