

GEOG 303 - HEALTH GEOGRAPHY

Winter 2024

Course meeting and location

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:35-9:55
Macdonald Engineering Building, room 280

Instructor

Professor Mylène Riva (elle/she/her)
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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 10:00-11:00 am or by appointment

Teaching assistants

TBD

Course prerequisite

One of the following: GEOG 201, GEOG 203, GEOG 210, GEOG 216, GEOG 217, ENVR 201; or permission of the instructor.

Course description

GEOG 303 is an introduction to the subdiscipline of Health Geography, which considers health and its determinants from a spatial perspective. We will see that health and risk factors for health result from the interaction between individual characteristics and conditions of the social, built and natural environment. This course is guided by the understanding that “sustainable development cannot be achieved without a healthy population, and the health of a population cannot be maintained without healthy environments” (von Schirnding, 2002). In this course, we consider that everyone is deserving of a healthy and dignified life in healthy and vibrant communities. However, we acknowledge that layers of oppression have led to systematic inequalities which, in turn, create health inequalities in our communities. Climate change has exacerbated many of these inequalities, further compounding the health and well-being of many, especially in underprivileged communities and households. To help grasp concepts and challenges in the field of health geography, the sustainable development goals will be used as a framework to guide many of the course content.

Course content

The first section of the course provides an historical overview of health and health geography, with an emphasis on the social determinants of health, the social gradient and health inequalities. Then the course explores in detail two place-based determinants of health: housing and neighborhoods. A final section will specifically examine some of the health risks associated with climate change. The course will conclude with time for case study presentation by students (see below for a detailed breakdown of topics). Most of the examples seen in the course content will draw on experiences from Canada and other high income countries. However, discussions about health inequalities in other geographies will also be explored and are welcomed during class discussions. Across the various topics, we will also see how a range of methods can be used to understand how place and health are related.

Proposed course schedule

Dates		Description
Jan 4		Introducing GEOG 303 Health Geography
Jan 9		Health geography: evolution of the subdiscipline
Jan 11	Introducing health geography, health, and some of the social determinant of health	Health and the social determinants of health
Jan 16		Health, climate change, and the SDGs
Jan 18		Racism and discrimination
Jan 23		Social support and social capital
		In-class working session
Jan 25		Housing and health: Introduction
Jan 30		Housing and health: Energy poverty
Feb 1	Housing and health	Housing and Indigenous People's health
Feb 6		Housing insecurity and homelessness
Feb 8		In-class working session
Feb 13		Neighbourhoods and health: Introduction
Feb 15		Transportation and health
Feb 20	Neighborhoods and health	Neighborhood change and gentrification
Feb 22		Food environments and food insecurity I
Feb 27		Food environments and food insecurity II
Feb 29		In-class working session
Mar 5-7		READING WEEK
Mar 19		Climate change and health I
Mar 21		Climate change and health II
Mar 26	Climate change and health	Climate change, health, and responses (health care, emergency services)
Mar 28		In-class working session
Apr 2		Catch-up & end of course debrief and reflection
Apr 4	Conclusion to the course	Mock Poster Presentations
Apr 9		Mock Poster Presentations

Learning outcomes

The aim of this course is to understand how health is shaped by a range of factors that go beyond individual-level characteristics. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Assess the complex interconnection between health and environment;
2. Identify and explain how select sustainable development goals relate to health and well-being;
3. Reconcile and reflect different ways of knowing and doing in health geography;
4. Communicate complex concepts in plain language.

Approach to teaching GEOG 303 Health Geography

As the instructor of this course, I strive to foster a classroom that encourages curiosity, critical thinking, discussion and collaboration. I have shaped the class to include a range of topics, interactive conversations, pedagogical activities that promote learning, and in-class sessions to work on assignments with classmates. Students will also benefit from the teaching of guest lecturers.

The assignments for this course will be a mix of individual and group work and will touch on affective, intellectual, and creative skills to lead you to a deeper understanding of the course material. You will be working with a team on a specific case study throughout the semester to allow you to explore a topic

in health geography in depth and visualise the complexities of these issues. By working in teams on the case studies, I hope that you will challenge each other and learn collaboratively.

Some topics in class will be sensitive: we will talk (and view documentaries) about mental health and suicide, racism and discrimination, and social inequities. These topics have been included in the course because they directly relate to the learning outcomes.

As the instructor, I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and with the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.

Required course material

Readings, or links to readings, will be posted on myCourses and Perusall. The readings and lectures are complementary: neither is a substitute for the other. You are responsible for keeping up to date with the readings. Material from both the readings and lectures will be covered in the assignments. We will also post (non-required) supplemental resources for certain topics, such as documentaries, podcasts, and newspaper articles.

Course evaluation and grading policy

Students will be evaluated through different assignment types to allow exercising different skills and communication strategies. There will be a mixed of individual and team assignments. All assignments are to be uploaded on myCourses by 5 PM of the due date. There will be no exams. A detailed description of each assignment and expectations will be presented in class and posted on myCourses. Over the course of the semester, students will be working on a larger project based on a *case study* in health geography. Case studies will be presented during the first weeks of class and detailed information will be posted on myCourses. They will focus on topics related to class, such as energy poverty, flooding, food insecurity, homelessness, transportation, and access to health care.

Assignments	Learning outcome	Due date (tentative)	Assignment type	Weight
Perusall readings	2	Throughout	Individual & collaborative	5%
Reflection pieces (3)	4	January 30 February 29 April 2	Individual	10%
Annotated bibliography	2 & 3	February 13	Individual	30%
Case study				
System mapping and presentation	1 & 2	April 3	Team	25%
Integrative essay: SDGs and health	2 & 3	April 12	Team	25%
Peer-review assignment of the integrative essay and presentation	All	April 12	Individual & Team	5%

Perusall: To engage students with course readings and encourage learning with peers, we will be using Perusall, an online platform to annotate readings. Students will be assigned to a random group of six to eight students. Required readings for the class will be uploaded weekly to Perusall. Students will be responsible to engage with the weekly readings along with their peers. For each required reading, students will need to *write at least one comment or question* and *respond to at least one of their peer's comments or questions*. More information on Perusall will be presented in class.

Reflection pieces: Three pieces of reflection (of 300-500 words) will be written and submitted at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. These short pieces will serve to describe how the various topics covered in class, the different ways of knowing and doing health geography, conflicted and/or complimented each other, were inspiring and/or challenging. Each piece will be written to answer a specific question, and will be graded for quality of reflection and participation:

1. What do you know about health geography and some of the topics that will be covered this semester? What values are you bringing to this course?
2. Think about some of the topic(s) we saw in class that was most interesting to you. What inspired you? What challenged you?
3. Compare and contrast the knowledge you had about health geography before the course with what you know now. What have you learned with this course? How have your values evolved through this course? For you, what are the most important concepts and insights from this course? In what ways, if any, does this knowledge change previous perceptions you had about the topics covered?

Annotated bibliography: Students will produce an annotated bibliography of empirical papers related to their case study. A session in class will teach students how to search for scientific literature and on how to write an annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography will contain six articles. Two of these can be the same as other team's members, but four must be unique and not the same as team members.

Integrative essay: Students will produce a 1500 words essay on the way through which different SDGs relate to their case study, integrating elements of each annotated bibliography. Students will have the opportunity to work on their essay in class and receive feedback from their peers before submitting.

System mapping and presentation: Create a system map that shows the interconnectedness between the case study, geographical considerations, social determinants of health, and health outcomes. Students will create a 'poster' of the concept map to present in class during a mock poster presentation (posters to be presented as a slide) during the two last sessions of the course.

Peer-review assessment: In-class peer-review session of the integrative essay and of the concept map. This will be preceded by an in-class workshop on 'What is good feedback?'

Late policy

Please advise the instructor **in advance** of an assignment due date to make suitable arrangements and provide supporting documentation. **There will be no arrangements nor exceptions if students do not inform the instructor ahead of a due date.** Assignments will be assessed as late at 10% per day (including weekends).

Assessment and re-assessment policy

The University [Student Assessment Policy](http://www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment) exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads. All students and instructors are encouraged to review this Policy, which addresses multiple aspects and methods of student assessment, e.g. the timing of evaluation due dates and weighting of final examinations. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the evaluation scheme in a course is subject to change, provided there is timely communications to the students regarding the change. Information on university and department policies concerning student (re)assessment can be found at www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment.

Course etiquette and standards

The University is committed to maintaining teaching and learning spaces that are respectful and inclusive for all. To this end, offensive, aggressive, violent, or harmful language arising in contexts such as the following may be cause for disciplinary action:

- myCourses discussion fora
- discussions in class
- (if applicable) Zoom sessions, including Username (use only your legal or preferred name), virtual backgrounds, “chat” boxes, whiteboard annotations, breakout rooms

Mutual respect is expected at all times amongst instructors, TAs, support staff and students at McGill University. Students are referred to [the Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) for McGill’s policies on Code of Conduct.

Academic integrity / Intégrité académique

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [McGill’s guide to academic honesty for more information](#)).

(Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003). L’Université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le guide pour l’honnêteté académique de McGill).

Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with text matching software within MyCourses.

Language of submission / Langue de soumission

In accord with McGill University’s [Charter of Students’ Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009). Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).

Copyright

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McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

L’Université McGill est sur un emplacement qui a longtemps servi de lieu de rencontre et d’échange entre les peuples autochtones, y compris les nations Haudenosaunee et Anishinabeg. Nous reconnaissons et remercions les divers peuples autochtones dont les pas ont marqué ce territoire sur lequel les peuples du monde entier se réunissent maintenant.