



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Syllabus
GEOG 3702: Life & Death Geographies

Spring 2025
Lecture - 3 Credit Hours
2:20-3:40PM TuTh Smith Lab 1009

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Course Description

This course investigates how our **social, natural, and built environments influence people's health and wellbeing**, from birth to death. It is an introduction to issues in Health & Medical Geography, which is the study of the relationship between the environment and health using geographic approaches. We learn how to apply geographic theory and tools to important public health questions, such as: How do diverse cultural perspectives rooted in different places influence pregnancy and birth outcomes? Where are disease outbreaks and death clusters located, and why? Where are there shortages in health care services and which communities are most at-risk? How do the places where we live, work, and play affect our physical, emotional, social, environmental, and spiritual well-being? We examine a variety of topics over the lifecourse, including reproductive health, healthcare access, morbidity, disability, mental health, and mortality. By the end of the course, we will be able to critically assess the use of geographic data, methods, and frameworks to investigate public health issues.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the history of Health & Medical Geography and understand basic concepts and theories.
- Appreciate how geographic perspectives contribute to our understanding of health and wellbeing.
- Know how to generate geographic data and use geographic tools to explain health-related issues.
- Critically evaluate the use of geographic data and methods to investigate public health questions.

Goals & Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs)

This course is part of the Health & Wellbeing Theme in the General Education curriculum.

Goals & ELOs for All Themes

Goal 1: Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.

ELO 1.1 Engage in critical and logical thinking. *Students learn how health geographers theorize and conceptualize "space" and "place," and use these geographic frameworks to critically examine how social, natural, and built environments influence population health.*

ELO 1.2 Engage in an advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or ideas within this theme. *Through a combination of lectures, readings, and class discussions, students explore in-depth how cultural perspectives, social networks, social determinants of health, climate change, and land use are linked to population health outcomes across local, national, and global scales.*

Goal 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of- classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.

ELO 2.1 Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences. *Through class reflections and exams, students demonstrate their comprehension of the course materials, including identifying, describing, and synthesizing quantitative and qualitative methods in health geography and how they can be used to investigate spatial patterns and processes in public health.*

ELO 2.2 Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self- assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts. *Students complete experiential learning assignments where they are instructed to draw on both course content and their own personal knowledge and experiences to investigate important and challenging public health issues, including mental health.*

Goals & ELOs for the *Health & Wellbeing* Theme

GOAL 3: Students will explore and analyze health and wellbeing through attention to at least two dimensions of wellbeing (e.g., physical, emotional, social, environmental, and spiritual).

ELO 3.1 Explore and analyze health and wellbeing from theoretical, socio-economic, scientific, historical, cultural, technological, policy, and/or personal perspectives. *Students engage with theories of space and place in health geography, social determinants of health, environmental health, cultural perspectives, personal perspectives, policies that impact healthcare access and rates of morbidity and mortality, and five dimensions of wellbeing (physical, emotional, social, environmental, and spiritual).*

ELO 3.2 Identify, reflect on, or apply strategies for promoting health and well-being. *Students apply geographic approaches and identify and reflect on geographic conditions that enhance health-related issues such as healthcare access, walkability and mobility, and mental health.*

Required Texts

We will use journal articles and book chapters, all of which are available electronically through OSU's Library. The book chapters will come from the following books:

[Crooks, V.A., Andrews, G.J. & Pearce, J. \(eds.\) \(2018\). *Routledge Handbook of Health Geography*. First Edition. London, UK: Routledge.](#)

[Emch, M., Root, E.D. & Carrel, M. \(2017\). *Health and Medical Geography*. Fourth Edition. New York, NY: Guilford Press.](#)

Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following:

Item	Count	Points	Total (%)
Exercises	5	100	500 (50%)
Exams	2	200	400 (40%)
Class Reflections	5	20	100 (10%)
Grand Total			1000 (100%)

Grading scale:

A	93 – 100%
A-	90 – 92%
B+	87 – 89%
B	83 – 86%

B-	80 – 82%
C+	77 – 79%
C	73 – 76%
C-	70 – 72%
D+	67 – 69%
D	60 – 66%
E	Below 60%

General Expectations for Class

Students are expected to read the assigned readings before class, attend class, be attentive and ready to learn, pose pertinent questions and ideas, bring their unique perspectives, and be respectful of fellow classmates and the instructor.

Exercises

Students will have five exercises to complete over the course of the semester. The exercises provide an in-depth examination of concepts explored in class. A brief summary of the exercises are below:

1. Create an infographic on a disease system
2. Audit and analyze the walkability of a neighborhood
3. Evaluate geographic themes in digital health forum
4. Visit a natural environment and reflect on its influence on one's mental health
5. Map a health-related phenomenon

Each exercise will include a written summary (300-500 words) and/or assessment. Detailed instructions will be posted on Carmen. Deadlines for completing the exercises vary and will typically be 1-2 weeks from the time of posting.

Late submissions will be penalized, with 20% of the maximum possible score deducted every day the assignment is late. Weekend days are included. After five days, students will receive a zero for the assignment.

The exception to this rule is when assignments are due on Friday night. Students may have the weekend - until Sunday at 11:59PM - to submit their assignment without penalty. Starting on Monday, the late penalty will begin. In other words, if the assignment is submitted on Monday, it will receive a late penalty of 20%.

Exams

There is one midterm and one cumulative final exam. The exams will include multiple choice and short essay questions that cover content in the lecture, readings, and assignments. The exams will be administered using Canvas and Proctorio. The exams are open-note, but not open-computer: in other words, during your exam, you may not use your device for anything other than taking the exam, but you may refer to your physical

notes or a different device. You may not share your answers with anyone during or after the test. Students have a choice as to the location of where they will take the exam, including in the classroom. Paper exams are available upon request.

If you have accessibility needs, please discuss with the instructor well in advance of the scheduled exam.

Make-ups are only permitted for serious illness with verifiable written documentation and for certain emergencies. Arrangements must be made prior to the scheduled exam.

Our first exam is on **Tues, Feb 25** and you have one hour and 20 minutes to complete the exam. Our final exam is on **Wed, Apr 23** and you have one hour and 45 minutes to complete the exam. If you would like to take the exam in the classroom, it will take place at **2:00-3:45pm**. All students must be on Canvas and/or in the classroom at these times to take the exams.

Class Reflection or Activity

A class reflection is a reflection on in-class discussion. The days for class reflection will be chosen at random. In approximately 150 words, you are to identify, describe, and synthesize an important point or something you learned, as well as pose any questions you have. In class, you will get 15 minutes at the end of class to post your class reflection on Carmen. Occasionally, a class activity may replace a class reflection. Class reflections are due on Carmen at the end of class while the deadline for a class activity is variable.

There will be six total class reflections and the lowest one will be dropped. No late class reflections will be accepted. You cannot make up these points.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will not be taken in class and students are not graded on attendance. However, class reflections are to be submitted about in-class discussion at the end of class. The days for class reflections will be chosen at random. Therefore, it is important to attend class regularly and participate in discussion.

Use of AI Tools

All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use “unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship or on a course assignment” unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing” of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students — undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.

As an exception to the default prohibition on using AI tools for this course, you may use ChatGPT and similar tools for assistance with all assignments. You are not allowed to use word-for-word use. Instead, you are to paraphrase and/or substantively edit AI-generated content (at least 85% as a guideline) and cite your use of the tool. You must double-check the work generated by AI, which can be wrong. If you submit work that is incorrect or irrelevant, even if it was generated by AI, you will not receive credit for it. If you are not sure if a tool you wish to use is permitted for our course or you wish to use a tool for specific purpose you think does not violate the principles articulated here, please contact Professor Wong to discuss it first.

Email/Carmen

To contact the instructor and TA, please send your message via Carmen. Direct emails via Outlook are more likely to get lost in their inboxes. Your messages must be professional, otherwise you are unlikely to receive a response. You can expect email responses within 24 hours during normal business hours (i.e., Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm), but not outside of these hours.

In your message, include a meaningful subject line, a professional greeting, and a professional signature. Below is an example.

Subject: GEOG 3702 Exam 1 Question

Dear Dr. Wong,

I would like to review the answers to Exam 1, but I am unable to make it to your office hours because they conflict with work. Can we make an appointment to meet at another time this week? I am available on Mondays after 3pm.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,
First Name Last Name
Class of [Year of Graduation]
The Ohio State University

Zoom Honor Policy & Expectations

Zoom is available for students who cannot attend class in-person for emergency circumstances. Please message the TA and instructor before class, and they will provide the Zoom link. Students are otherwise expected to attend class in person. Students who use Zoom are expected to be active participants, either vocally or via chat. Students must also either have their video on or a photo of themselves when their video is off.

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Disability Services

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are isolating while waiting for a COVID-19 test result, please let me know immediately. Those testing positive for COVID-19 should refer to the [Safe and Healthy Buckeyes site](#) for resources. Beyond five days of the required COVID-19 isolation period, I may rely on Student Life Disability Services to establish further reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Religious Accommodations

It is Ohio State's policy to reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all students. The policy permits a student to be absent for up to three days each academic semester for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief.

Students planning to use religious beliefs or practices accommodations for course requirements must inform the instructor in writing no later than 14 days after the course begins. The instructor is then responsible for scheduling an alternative time and date for the course requirement, which may be before or after the original time and date of the course requirement. These alternative accommodations will remain confidential. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all course assignments are completed.

Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Sexual Misconduct/Relationship Violence

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu.

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Module/ Week	Date	Lecture Topics	Readings	Assignment Deadlines
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1	Jan 7	Course Introduction	N/A	
	Jan 9	Population Trends	United Nations (2022). “World Population Prospects 2022,” pp. 1-25.	
2	Jan 14	Overview of Health & Medical Geography	Emch et al. (2017). “Chapter 1: Introduction.” In <i>Health and Medical Geography</i> , pp. 1-28. Andrews & Moon (2005). “Space, Place, and the Evidence Base.” <i>Worldviews on Evidence-Based Nursing</i> , pp. 55-62.	
	Jan 16	Infographic Assignment	N/A	Exercise 1: Infographic (Due Jan 17)
3	Jan 21	Environmental Contexts: Accessing Built Environments, Measuring Walkability	Hamraie. (2018). “Mapping access.” <i>American Quarterly</i> , 70(3), 455-482. Hirsh & Winters. (2018). “Chapter 41: Walkability and physical activity.” In <i>Routledge Handbook of Health Geography</i> , pp. 288-296.	Exercise 1: Infographic Presentations (Due Jan 21)
	Jan 23	Environmental Exposures: Climate Change & Health	Kraishah et al. (2022). “Climate change and cardiovascular disease.” pp. 1-49. Emch et al. (2017). “Chapter 11: Environment & Health.” In <i>Health and Medical Geography</i> , pp. 371-403.	
4	Jan 28	Environmental Exposures Continued	N/A	

	Jan 30	Built Environment Assignment	N/A	Exercise 2, Part 1: Built Environment Audit (Due Jan 31)
5	Feb 4	Environmental Contexts: Social Influences on Health	<p>Pearson & Sadler. (2018). “Chapter 16: Health geography’s role in understanding social capital and its influence on health.” In <i>Routledge Handbook of Health Geography</i>, pp. 107-115.</p> <p>Guhlincozzi. (2022). “Making visible the Chicagoland suburban healthcare landscape of latina women.” <i>Social & Cultural Geography</i>.</p>	
	Feb 6	Neighborhoods & Health: Quantitative & Qualitative Methods	<p>Emch et al. 2017. “Chapter 9: Neighborhoods and Health.” In <i>Health and Medical Geography</i>, pp. 314-344.</p> <p>Kolak et al. (2020). “Quantification of Neighborhood-Level Social Determinants of Health in the Continental United States.” <i>JAMA Network Open</i>, 3(1), e1919928.</p> <p>Finlay et al. (2022). “My neighbourhood is fuzzy, not hard and fast.” <i>Urban Studies</i>, 60(1), 85-108.</p>	Exercise 2, Part 2: Built Environment Comparative Analysis (Due Feb 7)
6	Feb 11	Geographies of Birth: Cultural Perspectives on Pregnancy & Birth	<p>Sargent & Bascope. (1996). “Ways of Knowing about Birth in</p>	

			<p>Three Cultures.” <i>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</i>, 10(2), pp. 213-236.</p> <p>Syvertsen et al. (2021). “Conceptualizing stigma in contexts of pregnancy and opioid misuse: A qualitative study with women and healthcare providers in Ohio.” <i>Drug and Alcohol Dependence</i>, 222(1).</p>	
	Feb 13	Geographies of Birth: Reproductive Health	<p>Rosenthal & Lobel. (2020). “Gendered racism and the sexual and reproductive health of Black and Latina Women.” <i>Ethnicity & Health</i>, 25(3), 367-392.</p>	
7	Feb 18	Geographies of Birth: Maternal Health & Healthcare Access	<p>Hill et al. (2022). “Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health: Current Status and Efforts to Address Them.” <i>KFF</i>.</p>	
	Feb 20	Exam Review		
8	Feb 25	Midterm		
	Feb 27	Geographies of Birth: Infant Health	<p>Planey et al. (2022). “Spaces of Segregation and Health.” <i>Journal of Urban Health</i>, 99, pp. 469-481.</p>	
9	Mar 4	Geographies of Living: Infectious Diseases	<p>Keeler & Emch. (2018). “Chapter 7: Infectious-Disease Geography.” In <i>Routledge Handbook of Health Geography</i>, pp. 45-51.</p> <p>Desjardins et al. (2022). “Identifying and</p>	

			Visualizing Space-Time Clusters of Vector-Borne Diseases.” <i>Geospatial Technology for Human Well-Being and Health</i> , pp. 203–217.	
	Mar 6	Qualitative Methods Continued	N/A	Exercise 3: Online Forum (Due Mar 7)
10	Mar 10 & 13	Spring Break		
11	Mar 18	Geographies of Living: COVID-19	Adams et al. (2023) . “Normalizing the pandemic.” <i>Journal of Maps</i> , 19(1), 1-9.	
	Mar 20	Geographies of Living: Mental Illness/Wellbeing	Severson & Collins. (2018) . “Chapter 18: Well-being in health geography.” In <i>Routledge Handbook of Health Geography</i> , pp. 124-130. Winata & McLafferty. (2023) . “Therapeutic landscapes and networks in restricted lives.” <i>Wellbeing, Space and Society</i> , 5, 100163.	
12	Mar 25	No Class		
	Mar 27	No Class		
13	Apr 1	Geographies of Living: Mental Health	Windhorst & Williams. (2015) . “Natural places, post-secondary students, and mental health.” <i>Health & Place</i> , 34, 241-250.	
	Apr 3	Mental Health Continued	N/A	Exercise 4: Mental

				Health (Due Apr 4)
14	Apr 8	Geographies of Living: Chronic Illness & Disability	<p>Chouinard. (2018). “Chapter 25: Mapping Life on the Margins.” In <i>Routledge Handbook of Health Geography</i>, pp. 172-178.</p> <p>Chen-Newton. (2023). “Using technology to open up wilderness trails to people with disabilities.” <i>NPR</i>.</p>	
	Apr 10	Geographies of Mortality: Disease & Death	<p>Wong et al. (2023). “Spatial and racial covid-19 disparities in U.S. nursing homes.” <i>Social Science & Medicine</i>, 325, 115894.</p> <p>Perkins. (2023). “Artificial turf potentially linked to cancer deaths of six Phillies ball players.” <i>The Guardian</i>.</p>	
15	Apr 15	Geographies of Mortality: Cultural Perspectives on Death & Afterlife	<p>Watson-Jones et al. (2017). “Does the Body Survive Death? Cultural Variation in Beliefs About Life Everlasting.” <i>Cognitive Science</i>, 41, pp. 455-476.</p>	
	Apr 17	Final Exam Review		Exercise 5: Mapping Health (due Apr 18)
16	Apr 23	Final Exam, 2:00-3:45pm		