

University of Florida
College of Public Health & Health Professions Syllabus
PHC 7901 Epidemiology Literature Review and Critique (Journal Club)
1 Credit
Semester: Fall, 2023
Delivery Format: Online Synchronous
Monday: 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm (variable)

Instructor Name: Linda B. Cottler, PhD, MPH, FACE

Room Number: CTRB 4218

Phone Number: 352-294-5947

Email Address: lbcottler@ufl.edu

Office Hours: By appointment only

Teaching Assistants: N/A

Preferred Course Communications: Email Zoe Martusewicz (zoejo109@ufl.edu) to set up meeting time.

PURPOSE AND OUTCOME

Course Overview

The principal goals of this Epidemiology Literature Review and Critique are:

1. To evaluate published research to recognize current methods and concepts used in the field of epidemiology
2. To prepare students to perform peer-review and to think critically about research publications. In weekly class discussion sessions, students will review peer-reviewed, published research studies that demonstrate innovative or faulty epidemiologic content or methods. Feedback will be given by student peers and faculty.
- 3) To compose, submit and publish a critical review of a recent article in the student's area of focus

Course Objectives and/or Goals

As a result of this course, students will:

1. Learn "best practices" for reviewing and critiquing scientific articles in public health and medical research journals
2. Critically review scientific literature, analyze, and summarize strengths and weaknesses, and make recommendations for improvement
3. Critique articles recently published in medical and public health journals
4. Discuss broad issues in Epidemiologic methods and content
5. Become familiar with journals in our field, impact factors, how to choose a journal, and how reviewers are selected
6. Understand ethical issues in field methods and in the review process
7. Prepare for professional peer-review assignments
8. Compose and submit a letter to the editor

COURSE CONTENT

Week	Date	Time	Topic
1	August 28, 2023	5:00–7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction/Welcome • Course Overview • Scientific research and publishing • https://authorservices.wiley.com/Reviewers/journal-reviewers/what-is-peer-review/index.html • Read: What is Peer Review? How to Peer Review? • Becoming a Peer Reviewer • Read the articles shown in the syllabus • Metrics
2	September 4, 2023	NO CLASS -Labor Day Holiday	N/A
3	September 11, 2023	Class time 5:00–7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Write Letter to the Editor How to write a Letter to the Editor - Keith Siau, Emad El-Omar, 2020 (sagepub.com) • Ethical Guidelines Best Practice Guidelines on Publishing Ethics Wiley
4	September 18, 2023	Class time 5:00–7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review process from an editor’s perspective (LBC lecture from her perspective in Current Opinion in Psychiatry and Addiction) • Review a Journal Article Together
5	September 25, 2023	NO CLASS	N/A
6	October 2, 2023	NO CLASS	N/A
7	October 9, 2023	Class time 5:00–7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal article presentation and discussion of Letter to the Editor: • Students #1 and 2 and Instructor Feedback
8	October 16, 2023	Class time 5:00–7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal article presentation and discussion of Letter to the Editor: • Students # 3 and 4 and Instructor Feedback
9	October 23, 2023	Class time 5:00–7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal article presentation and discussion of Letter to the Editor: • Students #5 and 6 and Instructor Feedback
10	October 30, 2023	NO CLASS	N/A
11	November 6, 2023	Class time 5:00–7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students #7 and 8 and Instructor Feedback
12	November 13, 2023	NO CLASS	N/A
13	November 20, 2023	NO CLASS	N/A
14	November 27, 2023	Class time 5:00–7:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal article presentation and discussion of Letter to the Editor: • Students #9 and 10 and Instructor Feedback • Wrap Up and Evaluation
15	December 4, 2023	NO CLASS	N/A

Course Materials and Technology

Course information and grades will be available in Canvas.

Textbook

There is no required textbook for this course. Students will select articles for review and prepare for in-class discussion.

Additionally, several journal articles and web sites are assigned as supplements:

1. Bauer, L. (2015). 5 Tips for Journal Club First-Timers. NIH I am Intramural Blog.
<https://irp.nih.gov/blog/post/2015/03/5-tips-for-journal-club-first-timers>
2. Roediger III, H. L. (2007). Twelve tips for reviewers. APS Observer, 20(4).
<http://www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2007/june-july-07/twelve-tips-for-authors.htm>
3. Golub, R. M. (2008). Correspondence course: tips for getting a letter published in JAMA. JAMA, 300(1), 98-99.
<http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=182156>
4. Peh, W. C., & Ng, K. H. (2010). Writing a letter to the Editor. Singapore Med J, 51(7), 532-5.
<http://smj.sma.org.sg/5107/5107emw1.pdf>

Required Equipment

Computer with high-speed internet access and use of a supported browser. Please refer to the student computing requirements listed on the Online Student Resources page. This course is delivered entirely online using the University of Florida's e-Learning in Canvas Course Management System. To access this course, you will use your Gatorlink ID and password to login to the course (via Canvas).

Technical Support

For technical support for the materials posted in the course e-Learning site, activities, and assessments, please contact the course instructor, and make sure to copy the TAs on the emails.

For technical support for this class, please contact the UF Help Desk at:

- helpdesk@ufl.edu
- (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- <https://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>

Additional Academic Resources

- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- [Teaching Center](#): Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Student Complaints On-Campus: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.](#)
- On-Line Students Complaints: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.](#)

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Assignments

Each student will be required to complete four assignments:

1. Journal Article Discussion Leader (40%): Select an article, with instructor's approval, for the letter to the editor and discussion lead. The students will choose an article to demonstrate a specific study design (Cross-sectional design, Quasi- or Randomized designs, Reliability and Validity, Randomized Controlled Trial, Longitudinal designs, Case-Control designs) within a specific topic area/discipline of interest to the student. The article needs to be from a top tier journal (e.g., JAMA, New England Journal of Medicine, AJPH, Archives of XYZ or other high impact journal in the field) and a journal that accepts and publishes letters to the editor. Articles must be recent enough to be eligible for a letter to the editor. Please pay attention to the timeline for publishing letter to the editor, which differs from journal to journal. One week prior to leading the discussion, the student will send the article to be discussed to students and the instructor. The student who is leading will prepare a discussion of the journal article, in power point, along with a draft of their letter to the editor. The discussion will include at least one article-specific question or discussion point that addresses each section of the paper, including 1) the article title, authors, affiliations of the authors, 2) funding source for the work conducted, 3) abstract, 4) background, 5) methodology, 6) results and 7) discussion of the research regarding strengths and weaknesses noted by the authors. The student will begin the discussion with a brief overview of why they chose the paper, and then will lead the discussion using the discussion guide (see below). All students should contribute to the discussion, and the discussion leader may call on students for their input.

2. Letter to the Editor (40%): The letter to the editor will be written and shared during the discussion. Based upon feedback from other students and/or the instructor, the letter to the editor will be revised after the class discussion. Letters to the editor will be submitted to the journal before the end of the UF final exam period; proof of submission will be needed for assignment credit. It is expected that students will be first authors of their letters.

3. Letter to the Editor Review /Feedback (10%): Students will provide substantive and actionable feedback on each other's draft letters to the editor. This will occur each week that there is a journal article discussion. Feedback is due before the end of class that day.

4. Participation in Discussions and Activities (10%): Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class activities. Please refer to the grading rubric below for detailed tasks.

Study Analysis and Critique – Supplement: Important Considerations for Each Study Part

<p>Authors/Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If potential conflicts of interest exist, did they appear to influence the study's objective, methods, or conclusions? ▪ Was an appropriate scientific background and rationale provided? ▪ Is the stated objective or hypothesis consistent with the research question that needed to be addressed? 	<p>Methods (Continued)</p> <p>Data Handling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was it clear how many patients were in each analysis? Did the data handling method used significantly affect interpretation of study findings? ▪ Was the number of patients accounted for at each step of the study? Could the reasons for dropout affect the clinical usefulness of therapy?
<p>Methods</p> <p>Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is study design appropriate and optimal to fulfill objective/hypothesis? ▪ Was method used to assign patients to treatment groups appropriate and clearly described? ▪ Were all involved with study appropriately blinded? Was success of blinding determined? Was unblinding likely? <p>Patients/Subjects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were there any problems with how or from where patients were enrolled? ▪ Were the inclusion and exclusion criteria appropriate and representative of the population of interest? What additional criteria, if any, would have strengthened the study? ▪ How was sample size determined? Was the initial sample size adequate for each primary outcome measure? <p>Treatment Regimens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If an active control used, was it an appropriate selection? ▪ Were the study drug(s) and any active control(s) dosed and administered appropriately and in a comparable manner? ▪ Were the drug(s) administered for a sufficient duration? ▪ Were the different groups handled similarly except for treatments studied? <p>Outcome Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were primary and secondary outcome measures clearly defined? Were any methods needed to enhance their quality (e.g., training of investigators or patients, standardization among multicenter sites, etc.) and were these performed? ▪ Were outcome measures appropriate and optimal given the study objective? ▪ Was timing of outcome measurements appropriate and of adequate frequency and duration? 	<p>Statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were appropriate statistical tests used for all primary outcomes? Were secondary outcomes analyzed appropriately? ▪ Was power appropriate for all primary and secondary outcome analyses, considering dropouts? If subgroup analyses performed, was power sufficient? <p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were any significant differences apparent among groups at baseline that could influence study results? ▪ Were results reported for each measure described in Methods section? ▪ Were the measure(s) of variability used appropriate and sufficient? ▪ Were findings statistically and clinically significant? ▪ Was Type II error likely for non-statistically significant findings? ▪ Was compliance addressed and could this have influenced study results? ▪ Were there factors (e.g., study setting, diet, other confounding variables) besides the treatments used that could have affected the results observed? If so, were they accounted for or controlled for in the study? ▪ Were differences in adverse effects among groups statistically analyzed? <p>Discussion/Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were results interpreted appropriately by authors? ▪ Did authors adequately explain key study limitations and any discrepancies from other similar studies? ▪ Were authors' conclusions consistent with the results and study limitations and extrapolated appropriately? <p align="right">© 2005, 2006 West Virginia University School of Pharmacy (Abate MA, Blommel ML)</p>

Grading & Rubrics

Requirement	% of final grade
Discussion of Article	40% of final grade
Letter to the Editor	40% of final grade
Letter to the Editor Review/Feedback	10% of final grade
Class Participation	10% of final grade
Total	100% of final grade

Rubrics for Specific Assignments:

Rubric for Discussion Leader (20 pts)	Discussion of Article by Discussion Leader	Weight (%)
Knowledge and explanation of subject matter:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conveys <i>big picture</i> understanding • Presents the essential information • Can provide an accurate description of and respond to questions about facts, procedures, hypotheses, etc. 	15
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has reviewed the authors of the paper and their conflicts of interest, who funded the study • Leads a discussion about the central question addressed by the paper, <i>and</i> its significance • Can provide sufficient background needed to understand the results 	10
Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives information necessary to understand results • Can discuss experimental flow/approach if appropriate 	5
Summary/Conclusions/Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides students to reiterate key findings • Can discuss key findings in terms of relevance to past literature 	5
Overall organization of discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduces content/guides discussion in logical, easy-to-follow sequence • Keeps the discussion flowing by posing questions to students 	5
	Total	40

Rubric for Letter to the Editor (30 pts)	Elements of a strong letter	Weight (%)
Knowledge and explanation of subject matter:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conveys <i>big picture</i> understanding • presents the essential information • accurate description of facts, procedures, hypotheses, etc. 	20
Clarity of argument (strengths or weaknesses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduces content in logical, easy-to-follow sequence • emphasizes main points and repeats them 	10
Overall effectiveness of delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses epidemiological terms • proper English and grammar 	10
	TOTAL	40

Rubric for Participation (20 pts)	Responsibilities/tasks to complete	Weight (%)
Participation in discussions and activities	Contribute to class discussions and activities as detailed below	20% of the whole grade
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives feedback on Letter to the Editor 	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides substantive comments that further the class discussion of the article 	10
	TOTAL	20

Evaluation/Grading

This course will be graded satisfactory/unsatisfactory following the policies described here <http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=2&navoid=762#grades>.

All scores will be added up and those that fall below 80% will be considered U (unsatisfactory). It is possible to receive a grade of Incomplete (I) with instructor permission and at instructor discretion for unforeseen circumstances, but it must be requested by the student. Grades of I not completed within one year are converted to F or U.

Point system used (i.e., how do course points translate into letter grades).

Example:

Percentage Earned	Letter Grade
93-100	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
Below 60	E

Please be aware that a C- is not an acceptable grade for graduate students. The GPA for graduate students must be 3.0 based on 5000 level courses and above to graduate. A grade of C counts toward a graduate degree only if based on credits in courses numbered 5000 or higher that have been earned with a B+ or higher.

Letter Grade	Grade Points
A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.0
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.0
D-	0.67
E	0.0
WF	0.0
I	0.0
NG	0.0
S-U	0.0

Policy Related to Make up Exams or Other Work

Please note: Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the UF Computing help desk (<http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>) correspondence. You MUST e-mail me within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

Policy Related to Required Class Attendance

Please note all faculty are bound by the UF policy for excused absences.

Excused absences must be consistent with university policies in the Graduate Catalog (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/graduate/regulations/#text>). Additional information can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

STUDENT EXPECTATIONS, ROLES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT

Expectations Regarding Course Behavior

Cameras are expected to be on throughout class. You are expected to actively engage in the course throughout the semester. You must come to class prepared by completing all out-of-class assignments. This preparation gives you the knowledge or practice needed to engage in higher levels of learning during the online synchronous class sessions. If you are not prepared for the sessions, you may struggle to keep pace with the activities occurring, and it is unlikely that you will reach the higher learning goals of the course. Similarly, you are expected to actively participate in the online synchronous class. Your participation fosters a rich course experience for you and your peers that facilitates overall mastery of the course objectives.

Communication Guidelines

If the student has a question, they may ask with chat function, as long as it is respectful.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to act in accordance with the University of Florida policy on academic integrity. As a student at the University of Florida, you have committed yourself to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge:

“We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.”

You are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit 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.”

It is your individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. For additional information regarding Academic Integrity, please see Student Conduct and Honor Code or the Graduate Student Website for additional details:

<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>
<http://gradschool.ufl.edu/students/introduction.html>

Please remember cheating, lying, misrepresentation, or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable and inexcusable behavior.

Recording Within the Course:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Policy Related to Guests Attending Class:

Only registered students are permitted to attend class. However, we recognize that students who are caretakers may face occasional unexpected challenges creating attendance barriers. Therefore, by exception, a department chair or his or her designee (e.g., instructors) may grant a student permission to bring a guest(s) for a total of two class sessions per semester. This is two sessions total across all courses. No further extensions will be granted. Please note that guests are **not** permitted to attend either cadaver or wet labs. Students are responsible for course material regardless of attendance. For additional information, please review the Classroom Guests of Students policy in its entirety. Link to full policy: <https://phhp.ufl.edu/policy-classroom-guests-of-students/>

Online Faculty Course Evaluation Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you require classroom accommodation because of a disability, it is strongly recommended you register with the Dean of Students Office <http://www.dso.ufl.edu> within the first week of class or as soon as you believe you might be eligible for accommodations. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation of accommodations to you, which you must then give to me as the instructor of the course to receive accommodations. Please do this as

soon as possible after you receive the letter. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. The College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to assist students in their coursework.

Counseling and Student Health

Students sometimes experience stress from academic expectations and/or personal and interpersonal issues that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing issues that have the potential to or are already negatively affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and/or seek help through University resources available to you.

- The **Counseling and Wellness Center** 352-392-1575 offers a variety of support services such as psychological assessment and intervention and assistance for math and test anxiety. Visit their web site for more information: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu>. On line and in person assistance is available.
- **U Matter We Care** website: <http://www.umatter.ufl.edu/>. If you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, you can reach out for help through the You Matter We Care website, which is staffed by Dean of Students and Counseling Center personnel.
- The **Student Health Care Center** at Shands is a satellite clinic of the main Student Health Care Center located on Fletcher Drive on campus. Student Health at Shands offers a variety of clinical services. The clinic is located on the second floor of the Dental Tower in the Health Science Center. For more information, contact the clinic at 392-0627 or check out the web site at: <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>
- Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from: Alachua County Crisis Center: (352) 264-6789 <http://www.alachuacounty.us/DEPTS/CSS/CRISISCENTER/Pages/CrisisCenter.aspx>
- **University Police Department:** [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- **UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website.](#)

Do not wait until you reach a crisis to come in and talk with us. We have helped many students through stressful situations impacting their academic performance. You are not alone so do not be afraid to ask for assistance.

Inclusive Learning Environment

Public health and health professions are based on the belief in human dignity and on respect for the individual. As we share our personal beliefs inside or outside of the classroom, it is always with the understanding that we value and respect diversity of background, experience, and opinion, where every individual feels valued. We believe in, and promote, openness and tolerance of differences in ethnicity and culture, and we respect differing personal, spiritual, religious and political values. We further believe that celebrating such diversity enriches the quality of the educational experiences we provide our students and enhances our own personal and professional relationships. We embrace The University of Florida's Non-Discrimination Policy, which reads, "The University shall actively promote equal opportunity policies and practices conforming to laws against discrimination. The University is committed to non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act." If you have questions or concerns about your rights and responsibilities for inclusive learning environment, please see your instructor or refer to the Office of Multicultural & Diversity Affairs website: www.multicultural.ufl.edu