Course Description
This course spans two quarters course (winter/spring) and is required for and limited to first year doctoral students in the Department of Community Health Sciences. The course covers a broad range of behavioral and social theories and concepts that are used in community health sciences. The basic components of theory are examined first, emphasizing constructs and their operationalization, and relationships among constructs; examples of these elements are analyzed. Two prominent theoretical frameworks are then presented, the life course and the ecological framework, and examples of theories that apply these frameworks are analyzed.

Course Format: Seminar

Learning Objectives (CHS PhD Competencies)†
At the end of the 2-quarter sequence, a student should be able to:

1. Demonstrate the capacity to think abstractly and critically about community health issues. (2)
2. Explain the principles of scientific reasoning, including inductive and deductive processes and how they relate to theory-generating and theory-testing research. (2)
3. Identify the primary components of theory, including: the distinctions among theories, frameworks, and conceptual models; constructs and their indicators; and, hypothesized causal relationships among constructs. (2)
4. Explain and critique at least two major theories and one framework. (2)
5. Develop an integrative conceptual model drawing on these theories and frameworks (1, 2, 3)
6. Explain differences between theories at multiple levels of social organization (e.g., macro- and micro-levels) and the interconnections among biological, psychological, social, and political-economic domains. (2, 3)
7. Examine health issues from multiple theoretical perspectives & recognize how such perspectives may suggest different solutions to a given problem & inform theory-based interventions. (1, 2)
8. Write papers and make presentations that apply theory to health problems. (9)

† Relevant competencies: 1. Locate, identify, critically evaluate, & synthesize social, behavioral, and public health research literature. 2. Explain, critique, synthesize, and elaborate major social, behavioral, and public health theories about the social determinants of health and health behavior and apply these theories to an area of research. 3. Review and critique in-depth both foundational and cutting-edge work in the student’s specific research area, and identify avenues for new research and/or theoretical development. 9. Make comprehensible and articulate presentations at national and international professional conferences and to lay audiences.

Class participation
Students will take turns leading the discussion of readings four to five times during the quarter. Discussion leaders should highlight the major themes of the reading especially as they pertain to its conceptual development and pose two to three questions for discussion. Do not provide a lengthy summary. If the paper is an empirical study, the discussion should emphasize, as relevant, concepts and how they are measured; relationships among constructs and how these relationships are operationalized as associations; and the adequacy of the sample of the population. Important tables or figures should be discussed. In addition, the final assignment will be presented during the last class session.
Course Grading
Class participation, including leading discussions: 25%
Assignment #1: Constructs 15%
Assignment #2: Instruments 20%
Assignment #3: Comparing theories: 40%
All assignments are presented in class.

Students with Disabilities
If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform me and contact the Office for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible at A255 Murphy Hall, (310) 825-1501, (310) 206-6083 (telephone device for the deaf). Website: www.osd.ucla.edu. This information will be treated as confidential.

Statement of Academic Integrity
Please see UCLA Office Dean of Students: http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/integrity.html

Assignments
Format for all assignments: double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font. Use an in-text format for the references, for example: “This underutilization of mental health services is more pronounced among minority populations than non-Hispanic Whites (e.g., Alegría, Canino, Rios et al. 2002; Alegría, Chatterji, Wells et al. 2008).” or “A recent review by Thoits (2011) concludes that emotional but not instrumental social support …” Alphabetize references in a list at the end of the text. The title page should have your name, the number of the assignment, and your email address. Papers are due at 9AM on the due date. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day, e.g., an A becomes a B. Email it to the instructor at chs270a.ucla@gmail.com as a word document, not a pdf. DO NOT EXCEED THE PAGE LIMITS.

Assignment #1: Constructs (25%) DUE DATE 1/26.
The goal of this assignment is to evaluate how one specific construct has been defined in the scientific literature. Select a major construct (e.g. poverty, John Henryism, job strain) in your area of interest and find at least three and no more than five published definitions of it. If possible, locate the source of the original use of the construct. Fill in the following chart for each definition (chart page limit 2 pages).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct: ___________</th>
<th>Definition: Verbatim Quotation</th>
<th>Research area(s) in which it is used.</th>
<th>What is included in the definition?</th>
<th>What if anything is missing?</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Citation</th>
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</table>

Write a 4-5 page paper (exclusive of chart) that analyzes the content of your matrix and responds to the following:
1. Briefly explain why this is an important construct to investigate.
2. Critique the adequacy of each of the definitions used for the construct: what are their strengths and weaknesses, how well do they describe the boundaries of the construct in terms of what is excluded as well as what is included?
3. Considering all of the definitions, how well has the construct been described in the literature? What are the common themes and are there major gaps?
4. Which definition do you consider to be most theoretically meaningful and why? If none of the definitions are satisfactory, explain why you have arrived at that conclusion.
5. Present your own definition of the construct in 200 words or less.

Please note that this assignment is not a review of the literature about your construct. It is a focused analysis of how well the construct has been articulated by the people who use it in their theories and research.
Assignment #2: Operationalization of Constructs (25%) IN-CLASS DUE DATE 2/2, WRITTEN DUE DATE 2/16
The goal of this assignment is to critically evaluate a self-report survey instrument designed to measure a construct, using the same construct used in Assignment #1. For this assignment, we will divide the class into groups of three people. Your team will compile a survey that includes measures of the different constructs. (If two or more people are working with the same construct, they should be in different groups.)

Locate a self-report measure that purports to assess the construct (do not use other methods of measuring the construct, such as direct observation or clinical assessment). Use the original citation if possible and compile a list of all of the items. Some measures have only a partial list of published items, and other instruments may require that you purchase them for use (which you do not have to do). However, you can usually find the entire set of items somewhere if you dig deep enough. If you can only find a couple of illustrative items, use a different measure. Find at least one article that evaluates the reliability and/or validity of the measure. If after scouring the literature you are unable to find a self-report measure because the construct is always measured in some other manner, discuss this with the instructor.

Compile your group’s instruments into one questionnaire. Complete the survey yourself and take notes based on the questions below for all constructs. Exchange notes within your group. In class, groups will administer their surveys to the other groups. After your peers complete the survey, groups will take turns asking each other the following questions.

A. What construct(s) does the instrument actually seem to measure?
B. To what extent do the items encompass the full content of the construct and only that construct?
C. Did particular items stand out, and if so, what made them noticeable?

Write a 5-page paper about your experience with this exercise for your construct. Include a verbatim quote of what the instrument is supposed to measure according to its developers. Compare and contrast that quote with the measure used to assess it. Do you think that the instrument does an adequate job of measuring the construct: If so, why, and if not, why not? Compare your evaluation of the instrument to the article(s) about its reliability and/or validity. Include your notes from when you completed the measure, your notes from the in-class exercise, and a copy of the measure (does not count toward page limit).

Assignment #3: Comparing and using theories (35%“ 10% presentation, 25% paper) PRESENTATION DUE 3/8 PAPER DUE 3/15
The goal of this assignment is to analyze and critique two major theories that have been applied to the same health problem. This will require some limited summary of the literature, but the majority of the paper should be your analysis of the theories. Page limit (text) is 12 pages.

1. Identify and briefly describe the health problem.
2. Identify two major theories that have been used to study this problem. Describe the main elements of the theory (e.g. all of the constructs, relations among constructs, assumptions).
3. Discuss how the theory has been applied to the health the problem, citing at least four but no more than six specific research applications (total for the two theories).
4. Discuss whether the literature is comprehensive in using the theory or selective (i.e. do people just name the theory, or do they apply the full theory or a few of elements from the theory?).
5. Critique the theories and their application to the problem. What assumptions do the theories make? How do they compare to one another? Do they pose competing or complementary hypotheses? Does one theory do a better job at explaining the health issue?
6. Based on your critique, address a limitation of each theory, explaining how you would expand the theory to address this problem. Provide a conceptual model that incorporates these additions and at least parts of the two theories.
## Schedule of Classes and Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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**ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE 9AM IN-CLASS DISCUSSION**
| 5 2/2 | **Relationships among Constructs**  
Basic structure of theory; relationships as cause-and-effect.  
| 7 2/16 | **Causal Inference**  
Meanings of cause-and-effect; inferring causality from observational data; causal mechanisms.  
| 8 2/23 | **Life Course Framework**  
Distinction between a framework and a theory; key principles of the life course perspective; relevance to health; applied to stress process theory. |
| 9 3/1 | **Ecological Frameworks**  
Key principles; relevance to health; applied to a theory. |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------|

| 10 3/8 | Student presentations  
**ASSIGNMENT 3 DUE 3/8 9AM** |