

Determinants of Health

EURO-3050 (4 credits)

Comparative Public Health

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course offers a structured comparison of key determinants of health in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Greece within the context of European public health and social welfare systems. Through a combination of readings, field visits, and applied learning experiences, students will examine how urban environments, migration, economic factors, social inclusion, and mental health systems shape health outcomes across different contexts. Students will critically assess how health equity varies across European cities and will present findings through comparative analysis and a final infographic project.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe how different determinants impact health outcomes in Europe.
2. Compare the social, economic, and environmental structures affecting health in Portugal, the Netherlands, and Greece.
3. Analyze the role of public health and social policies in promoting or hindering health equity.
4. Evaluate community and policy responses to social determinants of health challenges.
5. Synthesize findings into a visual communication format.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

Instructional Methods

SIT's philosophy of education is rooted in experiential learning model, which drives the design of this class. Each module allows for experience, reflection, and application. Experiences range from critical analyses of datasets to site visits and conversations with local experts. These experiences are framed by readings, multimedia texts, and class discussion. Reflection occurs throughout the learning process in various forms, such as verbal debriefs after learning

on location experiences to reflexive components in papers/projects. Through reflection, students are encouraged to become aware of their process of learning, to make sense of their experiences, and connect the learning acquired on the program with previous experiences and information. Application activities reinforce learning by practicing communication skills, experimenting with theories, and preparing to transfer learning to future contexts.

Required Texts

- Articles on Course Reserve

Assignments and Evaluation

1. Participation & Professional Engagement: 10%
2. Infographic Project (Proposal w/Outline, Draft, Final Submission): 35%
3. Comparative Case Study Report (Group Project): 40%
4. Group Presentation: 15%

Participation & Professional Engagement (10%)

Active involvement in discussions, excursions, group work, and class activities.

Infographic Project (35%)

An individual project visualizing comparative findings across Lisbon, Amsterdam, and Athens, focusing on one determinant. The project is divided into stages:

- Proposal with Outline (5%)
- Draft (10%)
- Final Draft (20%)

Comparative Case Study Report (40%)

Students work in groups to produce a structured, comparative case study (8-10 pages) examining one determinant of health across Lisbon, Amsterdam, and Athens.

Comparative Case Study Presentation (15%)

Groups will deliver a concise and engaging presentation summarizing their key findings and comparative insights from their Case Study Report.

Note on Attendance and Participation: Due to the nature of this experiential program, full participation in all classes and program activities is required. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the Program Director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, which may impact grades. Excessive, unexcused absences could result in program dismissal. Alternative work for absences will be expected.

Note on Late Assignments: IHP programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. It is critical that students

complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program. Extensions may be granted on a case-by-case basis with approval from the Program Director or other designated staff person. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. Students who do not submit their work within the extension period will receive a failing grade.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A	74-76%	C
90-93%	A-	70-73%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
84-86%	B	64-66%	D
80-83%	B-	below 64	F
77-79%	C+		

Program Expectations

In order to make the most of the opportunities presented in program, communicate respectfully, prepare for student success, and demonstrate best possible engagement, SIT has the following expectations of students:

- **Content Considerations:** The texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- **Learning Community:** Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across differences and consider other perspectives with respect.
- **Presence.** Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- **Engage.** Ask questions in class. Interact with the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.

- **Be Honest.** Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- **Store Your Work:** Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- **Personal Technology Use:** Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable, especially during a guest lecture or presentation from a peer. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- **Course Communication:** Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- **Recording Policy:** To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use. Documented academic accommodations may supersede this policy.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as

[Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

**Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

Note: This is a suggested sequence of modules and topics. Local faculty should appropriately adapt how these topics are taught and select local texts, case studies, guest speakers, and site visits that are relevant to the context and course themes.

LOCATION #1: LISBON, PORTUGAL (weeks 1-5)

Module #1: Determinants of Health Overview & Urban Environment and Health

Topics: Determinants of health; Housing inequity and urban stressors

Readings:

- European Commission. (2018). *Addressing health inequalities in the European Union: Concepts, action, state of play*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2875/00647>
- World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. (2016). *Urban green spaces and health: A review of evidence*. WHO Regional Office for Europe. https://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/321971/Urban-green-spaces-and-health-review-evidence.pdf
- Lapão, L. (2024). Digital health spaces in the city of Lisbon: The role of digitalization in linking boundaryless hospitals and smart health cities. *European Journal of Public Health*, 34(Supplement_3), ckae144.089. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckae144.089>

Learning on Location: visit Lisbon Green Infrastructure Project

Module #2: Migration and Health Equity

Topics: Health access for people with migrant backgrounds

Readings:

- World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. (2022). Portugal: Improving the access of migrants and refugees to healthcare during the pandemic. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789289058374>

- Casquilho-Martins, I., & Ferreira, S. (2022). Migrants' health policies and access to health care in Portugal within the European framework. *Societies*, 12(2), 55. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc12020055>

Learning on Location: visit [Lisbon Project](#)

Module 3: Economic Determinants and Health Systems

Topics: Overview of Portugal's welfare state and post-economic crisis recovery

Readings:

- Campos-Matos, I., Russo, G., & Gonçalves, L. (2018). Shifting determinants of health inequalities in unstable times: Portugal as a case study. *European Journal of Public Health*, 28(1), 4–9. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckx080>
- Asensio, M. (2021). The political legitimacy of the healthcare system in Portugal: Insights from the European Social Survey. *Healthcare*, 9(2), 202. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9020202>

Learning on Location: Guest Speaker, economist on post-crisis health recovery

Assignments:

- Group Case Study Report: Portugal case studies should be well underway

Module 4: Social Inclusion and Vulnerable Populations

Topics: Social isolation and older adults

Readings:

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017). Preventing ageing unequally. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264279087-en>
- Tavares, J., Santinha, G., & Rocha, N. P. (2023). Unlocking the WHO's Age-Friendly Healthcare Principles: Portugal's Quest and Recommendations. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 20(22), 7039. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20227039>
- Lapão, L. V. (2024). Culture on prescription in Portugal: Cultural experiences promoting health in lonely people and older adults. *European Journal of Public Health*, 34 (Supplement_3), ckae144.167. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckae144.167>
- Tavares, A. I. (2022). Health and life satisfaction factors of Portuguese older adults. *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 99, 104600. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.archger.2021.104600>

Learning on Location: Visit a local senior center

Module 5: Mental Health and Well-being

Topics: Post-austerity mental health; mental health care access

Readings:

- Augusto, G. F. (2014). Mental health in Portugal in times of austerity. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 1(2), 109–110. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(14\)70315-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(14)70315-4)
- Cardoso, G. (2019). Improving access to integrated mental health services in community-based settings in Portugal. *European Journal of Public Health*, 29 (Supplement_4), ckz185.294. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckz185.294>

Learning on Location: Guest speaker from Lisbon Institute of Global Mental Health

Assignments: Infographic proposal with outline due

LOCATION #2: AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS (weeks 6–10)

Module 6: Urban Environment and Health

Topics: Urban Health

Readings:

- Galenkamp, H., Koopman, A. D. M., van der Zwan, J. E., van den Born, B.-J. H., Lok, A., Moll van Charante, E. P., Prins, M., Verhoeff, A. P., Zwinderman, A. H., & Stronks, K. (2024). The Healthy Life in an Urban Setting (HELIUS) study in Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Cohort update 2024 and key findings. *medRxiv*. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2024.07.16.24310494>

Learning on Location: Urban Health Walking Tour

Module 7: Migration and Health Equity

Topics: Health of Dutch residents of migrant backgrounds

Readings:

- Zemouri, C., Nait Kassi, A., Arrazola de Oñate, W., Çoban, G., & Kissi, A. (2024). Exploring discrimination and racism in healthcare: A qualitative phenomenology study of Dutch persons with migration backgrounds. *BMJ Open*, 14, e082481. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2023-082481>
- Blignaut-van Westrhenen, N., Mers, A., Gorman, R., van den Berg, L., Gómez Serradilla, L., Hesseling, M., van de Kamer, F., & Oolman, E. (2024). Healthcare access for undocumented migrants in Amsterdam. OpenResearch Amsterdam. https://openresearch.amsterdam/image/2024/5/23/final_end_report_um.pdf

Learning on Location: GGD Amsterdam and Migrant Health Services

Module 8: Economic Determinants

Topics: Economic determinant of health on individuals and neighborhoods

Readings:

- Dekker, L. H., Rijnks, R. H., & Mierau, J. O. (2021). The health potential of neighborhoods: A population-wide study in the Netherlands. *SSM - Population Health*, 15, 100867. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100867>
- Wouterse, B., Geisler, J., Bär, M., & van Doorslaer, E. (2023). Has COVID-19 increased inequality in mortality by income in the Netherlands? *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 77(4), 244–251. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2022-219845>

Learning on Location: Guest Speaker on Health Equity

Module 9: Social Inclusion and Vulnerable Populations

Topics: LGBTQ+ health disparities and services

Readings:

- Hughes, T. L., Bochicchio, L., Drabble, L., van Eeden-Moorefield, B., Klotzbaugh, R., van Bergen, D. D., & Kuyper, L. (2023). Health disparities in one of the world's most progressive countries: A scoping review of mental health and substance use among sexual and gender minority people in the Netherlands. *BMC Public Health*, 23, 2533. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17466-x>

Learning on Location: LGBTQ+ Health NGO

Assignment: check-ins with groups to assess progress on Group Case Study Report

Module 10: Mental Health and Well-being

Topics: Mental health promotion strategies; urban mental health

Readings:

- Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. (2022). Action plan: Good mental health for all. Government of the Netherlands. <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2022/06/10/action-plan-good-mental-health-for-all>
- Beenackers, M. A., Kruize, H., Barsties, L., Acda, A., Bakker, I., Droomers, M., Kamphuis, C. B. M., Koomen, E., Nijkamp, J. E., Vaandrager, L., Völker, B., Luijben, G., & Ruijsbroek, A. (2024). Urban densification in the Netherlands and its impact on mental health: An expert-based causal loop diagram. *Health & Place*, 87, 103218. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2024.103218>
- Wiers, R. W., Urban Mental Health Researchers, Marroun, H. E., Bockting, C., & Krugers, H. (2025). Debate: Urban versus rural environments - which is better for mental health? The one good thing about a small town.... *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 10.1111/camh.12771. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12771>

Learning on Location: visit the Center for Urban Mental Health (UMH) at the University of Amsterdam

Assignments: Infographic draft due

LOCATION #3: ATHENS, GREECE (weeks 11–15)

Module 11: Urban Environment and Health

Topics: Infrastructure gaps; informal settlements; heat-related health concerns

Readings:

- Mentis, A.-F. A., & Papadopoulos, J. S. (2021). Near-collapse buildings and unsafe sidewalks as neglected urban & public health issue: A qualitative study. *Urban Science*, 5(2), 47. <https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci5020047>
- Giannaros, C., Economou, T., Parliari, D., Galanaki, E., Kotroni, V., Lagouvardos, K., & Matzarakis, A. (2024). A thermo-physiologically consistent approach for studying the heat-health nexus with hierarchical generalized additive modelling: Application in Athens urban area (Greece). *Urban Climate*, 58, 102206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.uclim.2024.102206>

Learning on Location: Informal Settlements Public Health Tour

Assignments: Comparative Case Study Group Drafting

Module 12: Migration and Health Equity

Topics: Refugee health challenges and system response

Readings:

- Fouskas, T. (2023). Sociological perspectives of migrant health disparities and access to healthcare services during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic: Voices of immigrant and refugee women in Greece. *International Journal of Non-Profit Sector Empowerment*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.12681/npse.32592>
- Psoinos, M. (2022). Migrants' health and well-being in the context of the Greek economic crisis: A narrative review. *International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare*, 15(1), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJHRH-01-2021-0007>
- World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. (2020). Greece: Assessing health systems capacity to manage large influx of refugees and migrants in an evolving context: Report of the joint Ministry of Health and WHO assessment implemented in

Greece from 27 November to 4 December 2019.

<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/337563>

Learning on Location: Visit NGO Refugee Health Clinic

Module 13: Economic Determinants and Health Systems

Topics: Health effects of austerity and crisis response

Readings:

- Tyrovolas, S., Koyanagi, A., El Bcheraoui, C., Jacob, L., Mikhailidis, D. P., Skoularigis, J., ... & Vos, T. (2018). The burden of disease in Greece, health loss, risk factors, and health financing, 2000–16: An analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet Public Health*, 3(8), e395–e406. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(18\)30130-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(18)30130-0)
- Pierrakos, G., Goula, A., & Latsou, D. (2023). Predictors of unmet healthcare needs during economic and health crisis in Greece. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(19), 6840. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20196840>

Learning on Location: Guest Lecture on Health Policy After Austerity

Module 14: Social Inclusion and Vulnerable Populations

Topics: Roma and economically marginalized populations

Readings:

- Petraki, I., Kalpourtzi, N., Terzidis, A., Gavana, M., Vantarakis, A., Rachiotis, G., Karakosta, A., Sypsa, V., Touloumi, G., & Hprolipsis Study Group. (2021). Living in Roma settlements in Greece: Self-perceived health status, chronic diseases and associated social determinants of health. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(16), 8403. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18168403>
- Andrioti, D., Kotrotsou, C., & Tsakatara, V. (2023). The medical social centres in support of Roma in Greece. *Diversity & Equality in Health and Care*, 20(2), 85–91. <https://doi.org/10.36648/2049-5471.20.2.309>

Learning on Location: visit to medical social center

Module 15: Mental Health and Well-being and Wrap up

Topics: Mental health reforms

Readings:

- Madianos M. G. (2020). The adventures of psychiatric reform in Greece: 1999-2019. BJPsych international, 17(2), 26–28. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bji.2019.30>

Assignments:

- Comparative Case Study Report and Presentation
- Infographic Project due