

MÁSTER UNIVERSITARIO EN SALUD PÚBLICA

Syllabus of the course:

Understanding global health inequalities: a transdisciplinary critical approach

Departamento de Ciencias Experimentales y de la Salud

**UNIVERSITAT POMPEU FABRA - UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE
BARCELONA**



DATOS DESCRIPTIVOS DE LA ASIGNATURA

Course: 2022-2023

Name of the course: Understanding Global Health Inequalities

Type of course: Optional

Number of credits: 3 ECTS

Trimester: Third

Professor: Joan Benach

Teaching Assistants: Julián Martínez-Herrera

PROFESSOR

Joan Benach (MD, PhD), is Director of the Health Inequalities Research Group- Employment Conditions Network (GREDS-EMCONET), Co-director of the Johns Hopkins-UPF Public Policy Center, and Professor of Sociology in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. His research interests include political and social determinants of health inequities, precarious employment and employment relations, the intersections between class, gender, migration, and geography, health policy analysis, and complex political and environmental problems of health equity. He has shown his leadership in many international research projects, being Co-chair of the Employment Conditions Knowledge Network of WHO's Commission on Social Determinants of Health, giving many presentations, conferences, and workshops, and collaborating with social movements, unions and governments around the world on the aforementioned subjects. Recently, he has coordinated the PRESME Report on precarious work and mental health commissioned by the Spanish Ministry of Labor and Social Economy.

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PRESENTATION

In the 21st century, humanity faces enormous challenges that can be characterized through emergent global crises such as are the climatic and ecological emergency, new pandemics, the crises of work and democracy, and the increase of global social and health inequalities, all of which are interrelated. To tackle these global inequalities, it is essential to accurately understand both the current limits of knowledge and the key processes generating social and environmental injustices in their association with science, technology, culture, and power. Through a transdisciplinary and critical scientific approach, both historical and political, this course examines the essential issues that make up current global health inequities and what are their possible solutions.

The themes discussed in this course are the following: Types of Research and Action, Systems Thinking and Embodiment (theme 1); Political Economy, Poverty and Development (theme 2); Capitalism, Power, and Neoliberal Globalization (theme 3); Socio-ecological Crisis and Climatic Emergency (theme 4); Work, Employment and Precarization (theme 5); Democracy, Policies and Community Action (theme 6).

OBJECTIVES

- Identify and critically analyze some of the limitations of mainstream public health research
- Review the pros and cons embedded in Political and Social Determinants of Health research identifying a complex 'system thinking' approach across a broad range of disciplines and tools
- Describe the usefulness of an integrated approach for the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of policies to reduce health inequities
- Understand some key issues on SDH (e.g., politics, complexity, intersectionality, precariousness, etc) under a transdisciplinary integrated research approach
- Unravel some complex conditions, processes, and pathways of embodying SDH
- Explore some of the potentials and uses of making SDH transdisciplinary integrated systemic research in the next decades.

COMPETENCIES TO ACHIEVE

GENERAL

Instrumental

- ☞ Ability to ask questions, assess information critically, synthesize information, and know how to assess priorities in global health inequalities.

Personal

- ☞ Promote the capacity for personal communication, public exposure and active participation in debates.

Systemic

- ☞ Capacity building to critically interpret the readings, and evaluate the range of issues associated with global health inequalities.

SPECIFIC

- ☞ Learn some of the limitations of mainstream health research
- ☞ Identify a transdisciplinary approach on global health inequities across a broad range of disciplines and tools
- ☞ Describe the usefulness of this approach to analyze, monitor and assess policies to reduce global health inequities
- ☞ Understand key broad structural issues on Global Health Equity under a transdisciplinary integrated research approach
- ☞ Explore some potentials uses and evolution of this approach for the next decades.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

High level of oral and written English skills.

High curiosity and motivation in research/policy related to transdisciplinary studies and global health inequities.

Reading of the required texts listed in the course syllabus.

METHODOLOGY

Work plan for the course:

Type of activity	Duration	%
Seminars and Practice in the classroom	22	29,2%
Work group out the classroom	13	17,3%
Reading and individual work out the classroom	40	53,3%
Total	75	100%

EVALUATION

Students will be evaluated based on their attendance (a maximum of one class loss is permitted) and their class participation (50%) and the completion of a final paper (50%) three weeks after the end of the course. The final paper will be related to the course's subject matter and might be written individually or in groups of two and must meet the following requirements: **maximum** 2,500 words (12 point font).

SCHEDULE

(3er Trimester)

Schedule	Subject	Professor	Place
Session 1:			
May 11 (15-19.30h)	Types of Research and Action. Systems Thinking and Embodiment	Joan Benach	61.109
Session 2:			
May 18 (15-19.30h)	Poverty, Inequalities, Development, and Social Justice	Joan Benach	61.109
Session 3:			
May 25 (15-19.30h)	Capitalism, Power, and Neoliberal Globalization	Joan Benach	61.109
Session 4:			
June 1 (15-19.30h)	Socioecological Crisis and Climate Emergency	Joan Benach	61.109
Session 5:			
June 8 (15-19.30h)	Work, Employment and Precarization	Joan Benach	61.109
Session 6:			
June 13 (17.30-19.30h)	Democracy, Policies and Community Action	Joan Benach	61.109

PROGRAM OUTLINE, READINGS, AND MATERIALS

Course Professor Joan Benach	
Session 1.	Session title Types of Research and Action. Systems Thinking and Embodiment
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reviewing types of scientific approaches in public health research Approaches and examples Social Determinants of Health: a critique ➤ Introducing complexity and systems thinking Understanding the bio-psycho-social interplay between biology and environment
Place	Online
Required readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Levins R, Lopez C. Toward an ecosocial view of health. <i>Int J Health Serv.</i> 1999;29(2):261-93. ➤ Susser E. Eco-epidemiology: thinking outside the black box. <i>Epidemiology.</i> 2004;15(5):519-20. ➤ Diez Roux AV. Complex systems thinking and current impasses in health disparities research. <i>Am J Public Health.</i> 2011;101(9):1627-34. ➤ Carey G, Crammond B. Systems change for the social determinants of health. <i>BMC Public Health</i> 2015;15,662.doi.org/10.1186/s12889-015-1979-8
Recommended readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bhakuni H, Abimbola S. Epistemic injustice in academic global health. <i>Lancet</i> 2021;9:e1465-70. ➤ Krieger N, Smith GD. The tale wagged by the DAG: broadening the scope of causal inference and explanation for epidemiology. <i>Int J Epidemiol.</i> 2016 Sep 30. pii: dyw114 ➤ Luke DA, Stamatakis KA. Systems science methods in public health: dynamics, networks, and agents. <i>Annu Rev Public Health.</i> 2012;33:357-76. ➤ Muntaner C. Invited commentary: On the future of social epidemiology--a case for scientific realism. <i>Am J Epidemiol.</i> 2013;178(6):852-7. ➤ Grant MJ, Booth A. A typology of reviews: an analysis of 14 review types and associated methodologies. <i>Health Info Libr J.</i> 2009;26(2):91-108. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-1842.2009.00848.x.
Student's work	➤ To participate in classroom discussions supplemented by background or assigned readings.
Material	➤ Presentation

Course
Professor Joan Benach

Session 2	Session title Poverty, Inequalities, Development, and Social Justice
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poverty and Inequalities Examples and measurement ➤ Development and social justice Historical processes, colonialism, capitalism Health equity
Place	Online
Required readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Muntaner C, Borrell C, Ng E, et al. Politics, welfare regimes, and population health: controversies and evidence. <i>Sociology of Health & Illness</i> 2011;33(6):946-964. ➤ Hickel J, Sullivan D, Zoomkawala H. Plunder in the Post-Colonial Era: Quantifying Drain from the Global South Through Unequal Exchange, 1960–2018. <i>New Political Economy</i>. 2021;1(18):1356-3467. ➤ Benatar S. Politics, Power, Poverty and Global health: Systems and Frames. <i>Int J Health Policy and Management</i> 2016;5(10):599-604. ➤ Lynch J. <i>Annu. Rev. Political Sci.</i> 2023. 26:18.1–18.22.
Recommended readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Lancet-University of Oslo Commission on Global Governance for Health. The political origins of health inequity: prospects for change. <i>Lancet</i> 2014;383:630-667. ➤ Ng E, Muntaner C. A Critical Approach to Macrosocial Determinants of Population Health: Engaging Scientific Realism and Incorporating Social Conflict. <i>Current Epidemiology Reports</i>. 2014;1(1):27-37. ➤ Sullivan D, Hickel J. Capitalism and extreme poverty: A global analysis of real wages, human height, and mortality since the long 16th century. <i>World Development</i> 2023. doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.106026 ➤ Gill S, Benatar S. Global Health Governance and Global Power: A Critical Commentary on the Lancet-University of Oslo Commission Report. <i>Int J Health Serv</i>, 2016;46(2);346-365.
Student's work	➤ To participate in classroom discussions supplemented by background or assigned readings.
Material	➤ Presentation

Course
Professor Joan Benach

Session 3	Session title
	Capitalism, Power, and Neoliberal Globalization
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Capitalism Evolution, features and consequences ✦ Globalization and neoliberalism Types of power Impacts on health and inequality ✦ Some debates and controversies
Place	Online
Required readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Madureira Lima J, Galea S. Corporate practices and health: a framework and mechanisms. <i>Globalization and Health</i> 2018;14(21):1-12. ✦ Stuckler D, Reeves A, Karanikolos M, McKee M. The health effects of the global financial crisis: can we reconcile the differing views? A network analysis of literature across disciplines. <i>Health Economics, Policy and Law</i>. 2015;10(01):83 - 99. ✦ Prins SJ, Bates LM, Keyes KM, Muntaner C. Anxious? Depressed? You might be suffering from capitalism: contradictory class locations and the prevalence of depression and anxiety in the USA. <i>Sociology of Health and Illness</i> 2015;37(8):1352-1372. ✦ Flynn MB. Global capitalism as a societal determinant of health: A conceptual framework. <i>Social Science & Medicine</i> 2021;268 doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113530.
Recommended readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Labonté R, Schreker T. Globalization and social determinants of health: Promoting health equity in global governance (parts 1, 2 and 3). <i>BMC</i> 2007. DOI: 10.1186/1744-8603-3-5; 10.1186/1744-8603-3-6; 10.1186/1744-8603-3-7. ✦ Navarro V. Neoliberalism as a class ideology; or, the political causes of the growth of inequalities. <i>Int J Health Services</i> 2007;37(1):47-62. ✦ Bacigalupe A, Vahid Shahidi F, Muntaner C, et al. Why is There so Much controversy regarding the population health impact of the Great Recession? Reflections on Three Case Studies. <i>Int J Health Services</i> 2016;46(1):5-35. ✦ Muntaner C, Chung H, Murphy K, Ng E. Barriers to knowledge production, knowledge translation, and urban health policy change: ideological, economic, and political considerations. <i>Journal of Urban Health</i>. 2012;89(6):915-24.
Student's work	✦ To participate in classroom discussions supplemented by background or assigned readings.
Material	✦ Presentation

Course
Professor Joan Benach

Session 4	Session title
	Socioecological Crisis and Climate Emergency
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ The socio-ecological crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Origin and systemic evidence The climatic emergency and its dimensions Effects on public health and inequality ✦ Socioeconomic and political causes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degrowth and future scenarios Socio-environmental and political responses
Place	Online
Required readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Raworth K. A Doughnut for the Anthropocene: humanity's compass in the 21st century. <i>Lancet</i>, 2017: e48-e49. Available at: https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2542-5196%2817%2930028-1 ✦ Benach J, Rivera Díaz M, Muñoz NJ, et al. What the Puerto Rican hurricanes make visible: Chronicle of a public health disaster foretold. <i>Soc Sci Med</i>. 2019 Jun 12:112367. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112367. ✦ Hickel J. The sustainable development index: Measuring the ecological efficiency of human development in the Anthropocene. <i>Ecological Economics</i>, 2020;167, 106331,doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.05.011. ✦ Rockström J, Steffen W, Noone K et al. Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity. <i>Ecology and Society</i> 2009;14(2):32. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26268316.
Recommended readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Figueres C, Schellnhuber HJ, Whiteman G, et al. Three years to safeguard our climate. <i>Nature</i> 2017;546:593-595. ✦ The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on planetary health. Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch: report of The Rockefeller Foundation-Lancet Commission on planetary health. <i>Lancet</i> 2015; 386:1973-2028. ✦ Marí-Dell'Olmo M, Oliveras L, Estefanía Barón-Miras L, et al. Climate Change and Health in Urban Areas with a Mediterranean Climate: A Conceptual Framework with a Social and Climate Justice Approach. <i>Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health</i> 2022,19,12764. doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912764 ✦ Fanning AL, O'Neill DW, Hickel J, Roux N. The social shortfall and ecological overshoot of nations. <i>Nature Sustainability</i> 2021. doi.org/10.1038/s41893-021-00799-z ✦ Turner G. Is Global Collapse Imminent? An Updated Comparison of The Limits to Growth with Historical Data. Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute. Research Paper No. 4 August 2014.
Student's work	✦ To participate in classroom discussions supplemented by background or assigned readings.
Material	✦ Presentation

Course
Professor Joan Benach

Session 5	Session title
	Work, Employment and Precarization
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Global employment and Employment Conditions Concepts and definitions ✦ The global precarization of work Definitions and theories Effects and integration Key challenges for research and policy
Place	Online
Required readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Muntaner C, Sridharan S, Chung H, et al. EMCONET Network. The solution space: developing research and policy agendas to eliminate employment-related health inequalities. <i>Int J Health Serv.</i> 2010;40(2):309-14. ✦ Benach J, Vives A, Tarafa G, et al. What should we know about precarious employment and health in 2025? Framing the agenda for the next decade of research. <i>Int J Epidemiol</i> 2016; 1-7. doi: 10.1093/ije/dyv342 ✦ Rönblad T, Grönholm E, Jonsson J, et al. Precarious employment and mental health: a systematic review and meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. <i>Scand J Work Environ Health</i> 2019;45(5):429-443 ✦ Padrosa E, Vanroelen C, Muntaner C, Benach J, Julià M. Precarious employment and mental health across European welfare states: a gender perspective. <i>Int Arch Occup Environ Health</i> 2022;95:1463–1480.
Recommended readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Vives A, Amable M, Ferrer M, et al. Employment precariousness and poor mental health: evidence from Spain on a new social determinant of health. <i>J Environ Public Health.</i> 2013;2013:978656. doi: 10.1155/2013/978656 ✦ Afzal Z, Muntaner C, Chung H, et al. Complementarities or contradictions? Scoping the health dimensions of "flexicurity" labor market policies. <i>Int J Health Serv.</i> 2013;43(3):473-82. ✦ Benach J, Vives A, Amable M, et al. Precarious employment: understanding an emerging social determinant of health. <i>Annu Rev Public Health.</i> 2014;35:229-53. ✦ Kim TJ, von dem Knesebeck O. Is an insecure job better for health than having no job at all? A systematic review of studies investigating the health-related risks of both job insecurity and unemployment. <i>BMC Public Health</i> 2015;15:985 DOI 10.1186/s12889-015-2313-1. ✦ Artazcoz L, Benach J, Borrell C, et al. Unemployment and mental health: understanding the interactions among gender, family roles, and social class. <i>Am J Public Health</i>;2004;94(1):82-8.
Student's work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ To participate in classroom discussions supplemented by background or assigned readings.
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Presentation

Course
Professor Joan Benach

Session 6	Session title
	Democracy, Policies and Community Action
Contents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Framing scenarios of interventions ✦ Public health policies and political conflicts ✦ The search for democracy, sustainability and social justice ✦ Advances and limits of public health research and action: covid-19 case
Place	Online
Required readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Muntaner C. Democracy, authoritarianism, political conflict, and population health: a global, comparative, and historical approach. <i>Soc Sci Med.</i> 2013 Jun;86:107-12. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.03.004. Epub 2013 Mar 15. ✦ Benach J. We Must Take Advantage of This Pandemic to Make a Radical Social Change: The Coronavirus as a Global Health, Inequality, and Eco-Social Problem. <i>Int J Health Services</i> 2020. doi.org/10.1177/0020731420946594 ✦ Molina-Betancur JC, Martínez-Herrera E, Pericàs JM, Benach J. Coronavirus disease 2019 and slums in the Global South: lessons from Medellín (Colombia). <i>Global health Promotion</i>, 2020. doi.org/10.1177/1757975920962797. ✦ Schrecker T. “Stop, You’re Killing us!” An Alternative Take on Populism and Public Health”. <i>Int J Health Policy Manag</i> 2017, 6(11), 673–675.
Recommended readings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Wing S. Science for reducing health inequalities emerges from social justice movements. <i>New Solutions.</i> 2016;26(1):103-114. ✦ Freiler A, Muntaner C, Shankardass K, Mah CL, Molnar A, Renahy E, O'Campo P. Glossary for the implementation of Health in All Policies (HiAP). <i>J Epidem Community Health</i> 2013;67:1068-1072. doi:10.1136/jech-2013-202731 ✦ Corburn J, Curl S, Arredondo G. A Health-in-All Policies Approach Addresses many of Richmond, California's place-based hazards, stressors. <i>Health Affairs</i> 2014;33(11):1905-1913. ✦ Grandjean P. Implications of the precautionary principle for primary prevention and research. <i>Annu. Rev. Public Health</i> 2004. 25:199-223. ✦ Lenaway D, Halverson P, Sotnikov S, et al. Public health systems research: setting a national agenda. <i>Am J Public Health.</i> 2006;96(3):410-3. Epub 2006 Jan 31.
Student's work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ To participate in classroom discussions supplemented by background or assigned readings.
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Presentation

Bibliography

Social Epidemiology and Social Determinants of Health

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- Beattie A, Gott M, Jones L, Sidell M, eds. *Health & Wellbeing. A Reader*. London: McMillan press, 1993
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- Benach J, Muntaner C, and the EMCONET network. *Employment, work, and health inequalities: A global perspective*. Icaria: 2013. https://www.upf.edu/greds/emconet/pdf/Employmentweb_low.pdf
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- Susser M. *Causal thinking in health sciences*. NY: OUP, 1973.
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- Wilkinson R, Pickett K. *The Inner Level*. NY: Penguin Press, 2019.

Please, also check the recent March 2023 issue of the Milbank Quarterly “The Future of Population Health: Challenges & Opportunities”. Centennial Issue containing many articles on the Social Determinants of Health. Access: <https://www.milbank.org/quarterly/issues/pop-health-2023/> (It is open access until July 2023).

Complexity and Systems Thinking

- Capra F, Luisi PL. *The Systems View of Life. A Unifying Vision*. 2014.
- El-Sayed AM, Galea S. *Systems science and population health*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Gilbert SF, Epel D. *Ecological Developmental Biology: Integrating Epigenetics, Medicine, and Evolution*. Sunderland, MA: Sinauer Associates; 2009.
- Homer JB. *Structure, data, and compelling conclusions: notes from the field*. System Dynamics Review, 1997;3(2):293-309.
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History, Capitalism, and Political Economy

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- Labonté R, Ruckert A. Health Equity in a Globalizing Era. Past challenges, future prospects. Oxford OUP, 2019.
- Leon D, Walt G, eds. *Poverty, inequality and health—An international perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
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- Navarro V, Muntaner C (eds). *Political and Economic Determinants of Population Health and Well-Being: Controversies and Developments*. Baywood, 2004.
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Socioecological crisis and climate emergency

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- Zywert K, Quilley S (eds). *Health in the Anthropocene*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020.

Social Determinants of Health Inequalities, Intersectionalities, and Embodiment

- Amick III BC, Levine S, Tarlov AR, Chapman Walsh D, eds. *Society and Health*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Bartley M. *Health Inequality: an introduction to theories concepts and methods*. Cambridge: Polity press, 2004.
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