A Web-based Model Built Environment + Public Health Course Curriculum

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Presentation Learning Objectives:

- Describe a model built environment and public health course curriculum for training an interdisciplinary workforce.
- Design a built environment and public health curriculum that fits the context of one's institution and audience.
From the silos to the center

- Growing evidence of the direct and indirect effects of the built environment on public health
- Public health and planning practitioners rarely interact
- Need to bring these professions together on common ground and in preparation of our next generation of professionals
Built Environment Institute II: “Teaching the Built Environment - Health Connection”

Environment Section Program; 2006 Nov 7; Boston, MA.

A Model Curriculum for a Course on the Built Environment and Public Health Training for an Interdisciplinary Workforce

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Abstract: Despite growing evidence of the direct and indirect effects of the built environment on public health, planners, who shape the built environment, and public health professionals, who protect the public’s health, rarely interact. Most public health professionals have little experience with urban planners, zoning boards, city councils, and others who make decisions about the built environment. Likewise, few planners understand the health implications of design, land use, or transportation decisions. One strategy for bridging this divide is the development of interdisciplinary courses in planning and public health that address the health implications of the built environment. Professional networking and Internet-based searches in 2007 led to the identification of six primarily graduate-level courses in the U.S. that address the links between the built environment and public health. Common content areas in most of the identified courses included planning and public health histories, health disparities, interdisciplinary approaches, air and water quality, physical activity, social capital, and mental health.

Instructors of these courses collaborated on course content, assignments, and evaluations to develop a model curriculum that follows an active learning-centered approach to course design. The proposed model curriculum is adaptable by both planning and public health departments to promote interdisciplinary learning. Results show that students gain planning and public health perspectives through this instruction, benefiting from active-learning opportunities. Faculty implementation of the proposed interdisciplinary model curriculum will help bridge the divide between the built environment and public health and enable both planners and public health professionals to value, create, and promote healthy environments.

Introduction

A century ago, planning and public health professionals worked together to protect the public’s health and prevent the spread of disease by developing zoning laws to influence the built environment. However, the disciplines soon diverged; public health followed a clinical model, and planning focused on policy development and physical form. These two fields are re-converging because many chronic diseases are associated with both the built environment and the individual behaviors that cumulatively lead to negative health outcomes. Traditionally, planning and public health are taught and practiced with little coordination. Most community-design and transportation-planning decisions are made by urban planners, zoning-board members, and city councilors—seldom by public health professionals. Most public health professionals have little contact with planning professionals, except in relatively narrow domains such as water- and sewer-infrastructure-review processes. The model of social determinants of health and environmental health promotion describes health and disease outcomes resulting from the built environment and social context as well as community-level factors. These include infant and child health, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, injuries and...
The aim of the course is to provide understanding of the interactions between the built environment and health, and skills to engage these issues as professional planners, public health practitioners and other related professionals.
In the early 1900s, planning and public health professionals worked together to protect public health and prevent the spread of disease by developing zoning laws to influence the built environment. However, the disciplines followed different paths with public health focusing on a clinical model, and planning on policy development and physical form. These two fields are re-connecting now as many chronic diseases are associated with the built environment and the individual behaviors that cumulatively lead to negative health outcomes.

On-line resource covers four broad topics over a fifteen-week semester

**Unit 1: Planning and Public Health Foundations**

**Unit 2: Natural and Built Environments**

**Unit 3: Vulnerable Populations and Health Disparities**

**Unit 4: Health Policy and Global Impacts**

**Final Learning and Reflection**

Additional website resources:
- Course Offerings and Joint Programs
- Readings
- Course Assignments
- Additional Resources
Designing Courses for Significant Learning

INITIAL DESIGN PHASE: Build Strong Primary Components
Step 1. Identify important situational factors
Step 2. Identify important learning goals
Step 3. Formulate appropriate feedback and assessment procedures
Step 4. Select effective teaching/learning activities
Step 5. Make sure the primary components are integrated

INTERMEDIATE DESIGN PHASE: Assemble the Components into a Coherent Whole
Step 6. Create a thematic structure for the course
Step 7. Select or create an instructional strategy
Step 8. Integrate the course structure and the instructional strategy to create a holistic scheme of learning activities

FINAL DESIGN PHASE: Finish Important Remaining Tasks
Step 9. Develop the grading system
Step 10. De-Bug possible problems
Step 11. Write the course syllabus
Step 12. Plan an evaluation of the course and of your teaching

Author of:
Creating Significant Learning Experiences:
An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses
(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003)
BE+PH Course Learning Goals

1. **Understand** public health and planning history, evolution and significant movements to the present, and historical and current theories on the relationship between the built environment and public health.

2. **Identify** contemporary features of the built environment such as patterns of development, parks, public works projects, houses, and transportation systems that reflect past efforts to influence health, and use methods developed by architects, urban planners, public health professionals, sociologists and anthropologists to address current health impacts of the built environment.

3. **Learn about oneself and the context** in which others operate to better integrate that understanding when evaluating differing built environments, socioeconomic positions, social and cultural backgrounds, and health status.

4. **Adopt new feelings**, interests or values based on issues addressed throughout the semester.

5. **Develop skills** to identify studies and engage communities, critique methods and findings, and apply lessons from planning and public health research to current and future problems.

6. **Integrate** current evidence regarding the impacts of the built environment on health with information and perspectives from other courses and/or personal experiences.
Table 3. Selected Learning Objectives and Assignments in Six Built Environment and Public Health Courses, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objectives</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Neighborhood Case Study (BU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>To illustrate how building practices are influenced and to evaluate the effectiveness and sustainability of design innovations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour a local neighborhood and answer essay questions concerning the community’s urban revitalization plan, using analytic techniques presented in class.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Campus and Neighborhood Walkability (EU/GT) |
| To assess the walkability of residential and campus settings as part of physical activity environment at home or school |
| Assignment |
| Using existing or newly-developed instruments, collect field data on two or more settings either in a residential or campus environment. Gain data collection experience and reflect on daily settings and their walkability, including sidewalks, barriers, traffic, destinations, and presence of others. |

| Service Learning Group Project (UT, Austin and UVa) |
| To become familiar with community organizations and their process to improve the welfare of communities. |
| Assignment |
| Semester-long work with a group of service providers, such as assisting hurricane evacuees in Austin, TX or developing a resource book for an urban farm. |

| Activity Diary (UT) |
| To increase awareness of how choices, constraints, and design affect movement patterns and physical activity. |
| Assignment |
| Week-long travel diary of pedometer readings and travel patterns with critique of how built environment influenced travel. |

| Transit Use (EU/GT) |
| To understand opportunities and barriers for alternative transportation systems relying on mass transit |
| Assignment |
| Follow a round-trip circuit of 8–10 segments on bus, heavy rail, walk, and trolley while monitoring waiting times, ridership numbers, wayfinding, and relative safety. |

| Newspaper Op-Ed or Radio Perspective (UCB and UVa) |
| To write persuasively about contemporary social issues, integrate information and ideas, and present ideas in a succinct, clear way in a public forum. |
| Assignment |
| Oral “perspective” or Op-Ed on the built environment and health related to policy and ethics of popular interest. Read aloud and distributed to the class for discussion and critique. Submit for broadcast or publication. |

| Debates (UIC) |
| To gain appreciation for contemporary issues related to topics presented in class. |
| Assignment |
| Students debate on a topic assigned at beginning of semester. Students present pro and con positions followed by 2-minute rebuttals each. |

| Policy Memos (UT and EU/GT) |
| To construct critical arguments and present succinct positions to educate decision-makers. |
| Assignment |
| Two policy memos on built environment issues directed to decision makers at the local and state levels. |

| Photovoice Report (UVa) |
| To collect community perspectives on the feasibility of built environment approaches to remedy social capital and mental health disparities or other topics. |
| Assignment |
| Recommendations developed through in-class Photovoice exercise. Evaluate feasibility of recommendations based on reflections and assigned readings. |

| Healthy Communities Portfolio (UVa) |
| To engage students in reflective thinking about their learning over the semester. |
| Assignment |
| Portfolio representing the evolution of the student’s thinking about healthy communities over the course of the term, with narrative discussing lessons and future applications of the work. |

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Teaching & Learning Activities:
Build from simple to more complex

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Assessment Techniques:
Align Exams, Final Papers with how practitioners will be assessed in the field.

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a. Abbreviations in column 1 correspond to universities listed in Table 1.
b. Photovoice is an approach developed by Caroline Wang (1994) to enable economically and politically disenfranchised populations to express themselves with greater voice. Photovoice is a method where
### A Structured Sequence for the Content of a Course

A structured sequence for the content of a course is designed to help students assimilate new information effectively. It involves a step-by-step approach to learning, where each topic builds upon the previous one. Here's a breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>15</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Topic 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Topic 5</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For each new topic, students need an introduction to the topic (white box) and then opportunities to apply and use the concepts and ideas in assignments (shaded parts of the columns).

**Course Assignments**
As each new topic is introduced and studied, assignments and projects can become more complex, dealing with more interactions among topics.
Table 4. Learning Activities in Proposed 15 Week Built Environment and Public Health Model Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
<th>Session Topics</th>
<th>Supplemental Readings</th>
<th>Suggested Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Unit 1: Planning and Public Health Foundations**  
(2 weeks) | **Foundational Knowledge:** Understand public health and planning history, evolution and significant movements to present, and historical and current theories on the relationship between the built environment and public health. | Planning History  
Public Health History  
Interdisciplinary Applications | Dannenberg (2003)  
Northridge (2003)  
Peterson (1979)  
Malizia (2005) | (1) Local Neighborhood Case Study  
(2) Campus and Neighborhood Walkability |
| **Unit 2: Natural and Built Environment**  
(6 weeks) | **Application:** Identify contemporary features of the built environment such as patterns of development, parks, public works projects, houses, and transportation systems, and use methods developed by sociologists, anthropologists, public health leaders, urban planners and architects to address chronic illnesses and impacts of the built environment. | Land Use and Transportation  
Planning Design Approaches  
Health Impact Assessments  
Environmental Impact Assessments  
Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality  
Water Quality  
Evans (2003)  
Friedman (2001)  
Twiss (2003)  
Dannenberg (2008)  
CDC (2002)  
Pucher (2003)  
Lucy (2003) | (1) Service Learning Group Project  
(2) Activity Diary  
(3) Transit Use |
| **Unit 3: Vulnerable Populations and Health Disparities**  
(3 weeks) | **Human Dimensions:** Learn about oneself and the context in which others operate to better integrate that understanding when evaluating differing built-environments, socioeconomic positions, social and cultural backgrounds, and health status.  
**Caring:** Adopt new feelings, interests or values based on issues addressed throughout the semester. | Vulnerable Populations (the poor, children, women, elderly, disabled, and minorities) and Health Disparities  
Mental Health  
Social Capital  
Environmental Justice | McMillan (2005)  
ICMA (2003)  
Evans (2003)  
CDC (2000)  
Leyden (2003) | (1) Newspaper Op-Ed or Radio Perspective  
(2) Debates |
| **Unit 4: Health Policy and Global Impacts**  
(3 weeks) | **Learning-How-to-Learn:** Develop skills to identify studies and engage communities, critique methods and findings, and apply lessons from planning and public health research to current and future problems. | Health Policy  
Sustainable Planning and Global Warming  
Healthy Housing | Librett (2003)  
McMichael (2000)  
Saegert (2003)  
Younger (2008) | (1) Policy Memos  
(2) Photovoice Report |
| **Final**  
(1 week) | **Integration:** Integrate current evidence regarding the impacts of the built environment on health with information and perspectives from other courses and/or personal experiences. | Final Portfolio | Healthy Communities Portfolio |
Built Environment + Public Health Course Curriculum reSourse

- Welcome
- Course Introduction & Design
- Unit 1: Planning and Public Health Foundations
- Unit 2: Natural and Built Environments
- Unit 3: Vulnerable Populations and Health Disparities
- Unit 4: Health Policy and Global Impacts
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- Course Offerings + Joint Degree Programs
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- Additional Resources
- Curriculum News + Comments
- Contact
Unit 1: Planning and Public Health Foundations

Learning Goal | Unit Topics | Suggested Readings | In- and Out-of-class Assignments

The first unit, Planning and Public Health Foundations, provides students with an overview of both fields, from their origins to the present. Emphasizing the first learning goal, foundational knowledge, this unit orients students to core values and histories of both fields and interdisciplinary connections. Two weeks are devoted to teaching this unit.

Learning Goal

Foundational Knowledge: Understand public health and planning history, evolution and significant movements to the present, and historical and current theories on the relationship between the built environment and public health.

Unit Topics

- Planning History
- Public Health History

Suggested Readings

**Books (select chapters)**


**Articles**


In- and Out-of-class Assignments

- Local neighborhood case study
- Campus and neighborhood walkability assessment
The second unit, Natural and Built Environments, provides students with instruction on important dimensions of the natural environment and the human impact on these systems through application of tools from planning to shape the built environment and from public health to address health. A highlight of this unit is a service learning group project where students apply lessons from environmental planning, transportation planning and environmental health to a local issue. Six weeks are devoted to teaching this unit.

**Learning Goal**

*Application.* Identify contemporary features of the built environment such as patterns of development, parks, public works projects, houses, and transportation systems that reflect past efforts to influence health, and use methods developed by architects, urban planners, public health professionals, sociologists and anthropologists to address current health impacts of the built environment.

**Unit Topics**

- Land Use and Transportation
- Planning Design Approaches
- Environmental Impact Assessments
- Health Impact Assessments
- Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality
- Water Quality
- Food Security

**Suggested Readings**

**Books (select chapters)**


**Articles**

- Friedman MS, Powell KE, Hutwagner L, Graham LM, Teague WG. Impact of changes in transportation and commuting behaviors during the 1996 summer Olympic Games in Atlanta on air quality and childhood asthma. JAMA2001;285(7):897-905.
Unit 3: Vulnerable Populations and Health Disparities

Learning Goals | Unit Topics | Suggested Readings | In- and Out-of-class Assignments

The third unit, Vulnerable Populations and Health Disparities, emphasizes a diversity of populations, their environments, and associated health issues. This unit allows students to understand the historical, socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of these groups, to speak persuasively about their human dimension, and to care about particular issues related to the natural and built environment from which to craft health prevention and intervention approaches. Three weeks are devoted to teaching this unit.

Learning Goals

Human Dimensions. Learn about oneself and the context in which others operate to better integrate that understanding when evaluating differing built environments, socioeconomic positions, social and cultural backgrounds, and health status.

Caring. Adopt new feelings, interests or values based on issues addressed throughout the semester.

Suggested Readings

Books (select chapters)


Articles


Unit 4: Health Policy and Global Impacts

Learning Goal | Unit Topics | Suggested Readings | In- and Out-of-class Assignments

The final unit, Health Policy and Global Impacts, emphasizes health policies, and the impacts of policies and practices on the health of the planet. Students gain greater awareness of the ethical considerations in decision-making, and an understanding of how these decisions influence systems socially and physically. Three weeks are devoted to teaching this unit.

Learning Goal

Learning How to Learn. Develop skills to identify studies and engage communities, critique methods and findings, and apply lessons from planning and public health research to current and future problems.

Unit Topics

• Health Policy
• Sustainable Planning and Global Warming
• Healthy Housing

Suggested Readings

Books (select chapters)

Articles

In- and Out-of-class Assignments

• Policy memos
• Photovoice report
Final Learning and Reflection

Learning Goal | Out-of-class Assignments

To complete the course, students submit a cumulative learning portfolio that highlights the final learning goal, integration of information with the student’s academic and personal experiences. This assignment reflects the evolution of the student’s thinking about the subject and the student’s view on the future of planning and public health disciplines. One week is devoted to completion of this task, which is framed to take the place of the final exam.

Learning Goal

Integration. Integrate current evidence regarding the impacts of the built environment on health with information and perspectives from other courses and/or personal experiences.

Out-of-class Assignments

- Healthy communities portfolio

Welcome

Course Introduction & Design

Unit 1: Planning and Public Health Foundations

Unit 2: Natural and Built Environments

Unit 3: Vulnerable Populations and Health Disparities

Unit 4: Health Policy and Global Impacts

Final Learning and Reflection

Course Offerings + Joint Degree Programs

Readings

Course
Course Offerings and Joint Degree Programs

Tier 1. University Faculty with Built Environment and Health Interests

The degree to which ACSP Planning Programs engage the intersection of Planning and Public Health varies widely. These planning programs are divided into four tiers, following their order described above. Tier 1 includes Colleges and Universities whose faculty have a teaching and or research interest in built environment and health. Tier 2 includes planning programs that offer a course connecting planning and public health disciplinary topics and in most cases cross-listed between both school units. Tier 3 includes planning programs that offer such a course and opportunities for students to concentrate at this intersection and or earn a certificate upon completion of an approved curriculum. And, Tier 4 includes planning programs that offer items from Tiers 1, 2 and 3 in addition to an opportunity for students to earn a joint degree in planning and public health.

Below is a list of planning programs in each of these tiers with links to the respective school or department website, class descriptions and syllabi, and descriptions of their joint degree offerings if available electronically.

This list was generated in fall 2009 through a compilation of information available in the ACSP Guide to Planning Schools (14th Edition), the Planetizen Guide to Planning Schools and the webages of ACSP Planning Programs.

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Course
Introduction & Design
Unit 1: Planning and Public Health Foundations
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Course Offerings + Joint Degree Programs
Readings

Tier 1: University Faculty with Built Environment and Health Teaching and Research (more schools listed every day!)

- Arizona State University
- Ball State University
- California State University at Northridge
- Clemson University
- Eastern Washington University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Hunter college of the City University of New York
- Kansas State University
- New School for Management and Urban Policy
- Northern Arizona University
- Ohio State University
- San Diego State University
- San Francisco State University
- State University of New York at Albany
- State University of New York at Buffalo
- Tufts University
- University of British Columbia
- University of California at Los Angeles
- University of Cincinnati
- University of Florida
  - Christopher Coutts, Assistant Professor - Specializations: Community Health and Health Behavior
  - Rebecca Miles, Professor - Specializations: Community Health Planning
- University of Southern California
- University of Washington
Tier 2: Joint Classwork
- Boston University
- Cornell University
- Florida State University
- University of California at Irvine
- University of Colorado at Denver
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Louisville
- University of Minnesota
- University of Oregon
- University of Southern Maine
- University of Texas, Austin
- University of Virginia
- University of West Florida
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Tier 3: Certificate Programs
- Texas A&M University

Tier 4: Joint Degrees
- Columbia University
- Rutgers University
- University of Arizona
- University of California at Berkeley
- University of Iowa

University of Michigan
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Toronto

Header image by Dav Banks.
The Healthy Communities Seminar is an elective planning course that explores the interconnections between the fields of planning and public health. These fields emerged together with the common goal of preventing outbreaks of infectious disease. Since that time, the two disciplines have diverged in their focus; public health following a clinical model and planning focusing on urban design and physical form. However, as the intimate connections between the built environment and disease continue to be revealed, the planning and public health fields are reconnecting once again. This course begins with an evaluation of the respective histories of the planning and public health fields through to the present. Subsequent discussions include analysis of: (1) the natural environment (air, water, food), (2) manmade environment (sprawl, sidewalks, schools, parks, traffic and cul-de-sacs) and resultant physical activity and injury, (3) mental health and relationships (social capital, parish nursing, neighborhood context), (4) health disparities (children, elderly, minorities, environmental justice), and (5) health, policy and ethics (sustainable planning and consumption patterns, housing, social policy, EIAs and HIAs, individual rights versus population health).

The Built Environment & Community Health Course is an interdisciplinary Public Health and Planning Health course that explores the connections between the built environment and community health. Faculty members from across the University with expertise in public health, medicine, urban planning, engineering, education and economics will lead sessions that address current built environment and community health topics in partnership with local community leaders. Discussion topics will include physical activity promotion, mobility, transportation safety, land use, school health, health disparities, mental health, and chronic disease prevention.
Texas A&M University
Department of Landscape Architecture & Urban Planning
Health Systems and Design Certificate Program

This interdisciplinary certification program was created by the colleges of Architecture and Medicine to promote research, innovation, and communication focusing on health facility planning and design. The program is available to students pursuing any graduate degree within the College of Architecture. Though the program emphasizes a cross-disciplinary perspective, it also ensures that students develop in-depth understanding and ability within the field of health systems design.

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The concurrent degree program with the UC Berkeley School of Public Health program meets the demand for health planners looking to broaden their skills, expertise, and areas of interest. Each program normally takes two years to complete, but through the concurrent degree program, time-to-degrees can be reduced to as little as three years (as experience and coursework overlap between the two departments). Such decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. At the conclusion of their studies, students receive both the M.C.P. and Master of Public Health degrees.

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Readings

Books | Articles and Proceedings

Textbooks commonly used in the courses are Urban Sprawl and Public Health by H Frumkin, L Frank and R. Jackson, Neighborhoods and Health by I Kawachi and L Berkman, and Integrating Planning and Public Health by M Morris, R Duncan, K Hannaford, et.al. In addition, instructors drew journal readings most frequently from the public health field (American Journal of Public Health, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Journal of Urban Health) and from planning related publications and organizations (Cities, Transportation Research Board). Public health journals were drawn on more than planning-related publications because public health journals have published the majority of research in this area and supported special issues on this topic; planning-related journals have begun to do so recently. These readings spanned a variety of topics from history of the two disciplines, transportation planning and safety to health care policy. The readings also included overview and commentary articles, theory papers and technical research reports.

Articles and Proceedings


Built Environment Institute II: "Teaching the Built Environment - Health Connection" APHA 134th Annual Meeting and Exposition: Public Health and Human Rights. Environment Section Program; 2006 Nov 7; Boston, MA.


Books

Built Environment + Public Health: Course Curriculum

Additional Resources

Web Resources | Organizations | Conferences | Videos | Other Teaching Resources by Topic

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Health
- National Association of County and City Health Officials. Land Use Planning, Local Public Health Agency Topics
- PolicyLink
- Prevention Institute
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Active Living Research. Tools & Resources
- University of Minnesota. Design for Health
- University of Virginia. Built Environment and Health Research Group

Conferences
- National Environmental Public Health Conference, October 26-28, 2009
- American Planning Association
- American Public Health Association
- New Partners for Smart Growth

Videos
- California Newsreel. UnNatural Causes: Is inequality making us sick?
  - This seven-part documentary series explores racial and socioeconomic inequalities in health. The episodes include:
    - In Sickness and In Wealth (56 minutes)
    - When the Bough Breaks (29 minutes)
    - Becoming American (29 minutes)
    - Bad Sugar (29 minutes)
    - Place Matters (29 minutes)
    - Collateral Damage (29 minutes)
    - Not Just a Paycheck (30 minutes)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Healthy places leading to healthy people: Community engagement improves health for all
  - This program will illustrate how the PACE-EH community
Leave A Comment

Please share your built environment and public health curriculum news and comments on this website with us through this Leave a Comment link. Consider posting powerpoints for different units, readings, assignments, and other resources or amendments to those items currently posted.

Contact

Contact / Credits

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Google: Built Environment and Health Curriculum

- or -

http://faculty.virginia.edu/nbotchwey/BuiltEnvironmentandHealthCurriculum.htm