

Haverford College  
 Department of Psychology  
 Spring 2017  
 Psychology 327

Course: Supersized Nation: Understanding and Managing America's Obesity Epidemic

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 (Please use both e-mail addresses when writing. The Penn address is preferable)

Day/Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays: 2:30-4:00 PM

Course Overview

This course will examine the multiple causes and consequences of obesity, at both an individual and societal level. Basic mechanisms of body weight regulation will first be considered, along with wide-scale changes in diet, eating habits, and physical activity that have contributed to our nation's epidemic of obesity. The benefits, challenges, and potential harms of weight reduction will be reviewed, as will specific therapies to help individuals lose weight (including diet, physical activity, behavior therapy, medication, and surgery). The alarming increases in child and adolescent obesity will be examined, in conjunction with efforts to prevent and treat these conditions. Two other disorders that affect primarily youth – anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa – will be briefly discussed (i.e., one class). The course will conclude with a consideration of innovative approaches, rooted in public health and social policy, which are needed to reverse the current epidemic of obesity that threatens the health of both individuals and our nation.

The course is appropriate for psychology majors (and other students) who are interested in clinical applications of psychology (and other health sciences) to the problem of obesity. Students should have taken introductory psychology and have a basic understanding of how randomized controlled trials are used to test the effectiveness of different interventions.

Texts

**Required:**

Brownell KD, Horgen KB. **Food Fight: The Inside Story of the Food Industry, America's Obesity Crisis, and What We Can Do About It.** New York: McGraw-Hill/Contemporary Books, 2004. (Students should purchase a copy of the book.)

Grilo CG. **Eating and Weight Disorders**. New York: Psychology Press, 2006.  
(Students do not need to purchase this book. A copy of the book will be on reserve at the library, and readings will be in the course pack.)

Kopelman PG, Caterson ID, Dietz WH. **Clinical Obesity in Adults and Children**; Third Edition. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. (Students should not purchase this book. A copy will be on reserve at the library, and readings will be in the course pack.)

A supplementary course pack of readings (and PDFs), consisting principally of journal articles, will be provided to students at no cost.

#### Useful Websites

[www.niddk.nih.gov/](http://www.niddk.nih.gov/)  
- WIN (Weight Information Network)  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob\\_home.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/ob_home.htm)  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/practgde.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/guidelines/obesity/practgde.htm)  
[www.yaleruddcenter.org/](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/)  
[www.med.upenn.edu/weight](http://www.med.upenn.edu/weight)

#### Course Requirements

This course will be taught principally as a seminar (with some Power Point presentations to underscore major points). Thus, its success will depend upon students' active class participation and leadership. During the semester, students will be asked to write 6 "reaction" papers of 600-750 words in which they respond to a topic provided (on 5 occasions) or to a topic of their choice (1 occasion). Reaction papers will account for 60% of the final grade. A term paper (10-15 pages, excluding references) on a topic of the student's choice will count for 40% of the final grade. An outline of the paper must be approved in advance.

Class readings listed below should be completed on the date that they appear. For example, students should read the articles by Dart et al and Runge before class on January 19<sup>th</sup> (and be prepared to discuss them in class on the 19<sup>th</sup>).

#### Class Schedule

Jan 17 "Overview of the Course and of the Obesity Epidemic: Part I"  
Obesity: definitions; epidemiology; health and economic consequences

#### **Readings:**

Articles by **Mitchell** et al and **Ogden** et al in course pack.

Jan 19 “Overview of the Course and of the Obesity Epidemic: Part II”

**Readings:**

**Dart** et al and **Runge** in course pack.

Jan 24 “The Biology of Body Weight Regulation: Part I”  
Energy expenditure and balance; body composition; control of food intake;  
genetic factors

**Readings:**

Article by **Dulloo** (pp 67-73; the remainder of the chapter is optional).

Article by **Faulconbridge** et al in course pack.

Jan 26 “The Biology of Body Weight Regulation: Part II”

**Readings:**

Article by **Farooqi** (pp. 82-83, 86-91; the remainder of the chapter is optional).

Articles by **Hill** et al, **Murtagh** et al, and **Stunkard** et al in course pack.

Jan 31 “Behavioral, Dietary, and Environmental Contributors to Obesity: Part I”  
Diet; sugar-sweetened beverages; portion size

**Readings:**

**Food Fight:** pp 3-19, 21-51, 161-78,179-97

Articles by **Ebbeling** et al, **Ludwig** et al, **Rolls** et al (2007), **de Ruyter** et al, and **Wansink** et al in course pack.

**Thought Paper Due (all students)**

Feb 2 “Behavioral, Dietary, and Environmental Contributors to Obesity: Part II”

**Readings:**

Articles by **Kaiser** et al and **Hu** et al in course pack

**Optional readings:** Articles by **Rolls** et al (2009) and **Bray** et al.

Feb 7 “Behavioral, Dietary, and Environmental Contributors to Obesity: Part III”  
Physical activity, culture, environment

**Readings:**

Articles by **Crespo** et al, **Epstein** et al, **Nelson** et al, **Robinson** et al,  
and **Sallis** et al in course pack.

**Optional readings:** Articles by **Prentice** et al, **Keith** et al in course pack.

**Thought Paper Due (all students)**

Feb 9 “Behavioral, Dietary, and Environmental Contributors to Obesity: Part IV”

**Readings:**

**Food Fight:** pp 69-96; 97-127

Articles by **Craig** et al, pp 41-57; **Jones** et al in course pack: pp. 440-451.

Article by **Christakis** et al in course pack

Feb 14 “Obesity and Psycho-social Status: Part I”  
Obesity and stigmatization

**Readings:**

Articles by **Pearl** et al, **Phelan** et al, and **Puhl** et al (2001, 2015)  
in course pack.

Feb 16 “Obesity and Psycho-social Status: Part II”  
Obesity, depression, anxiety, and eating disorders

**Readings:**

Articles by **Berkowitz** et al, pp. 747-56; **Stunkard**, pp. 765-71 in course  
pack

Articles by **Fabricatore** et al, **Faith** et al, **Kubzansky** et al, and **Simon** et  
al in course pack.

**Optional readings:** **Jones-Corneille** et al in course pack.

Feb 21 “Obesity: A disease, psychiatric disorder, or lifestyle problem? Part I”  
Health complications of obesity; defining disease; addiction

**Readings**

AMA (2013), Davis et al, Heshka et al, Gearhardt et al, Marcus et al, Volcow et al (2005, 2007)

**Thought Paper Due (All Students)**

Feb 23 “Obesity: A disease, psychiatric disorder, or lifestyle problem? Part II”

**Readings**

Chao et al, Gearhardt et al, and Schulte et al (2016a, 2016b)

Feb 28 Losing Weight: Benefits, Challenges, and Potential Harms Part I  
Health and quality of life; weight regain; restrained (and disordered) eating

**Readings**

Campos et al, Foster et al, Fothergill et al, Polivy et al,  
and Wadden et al (1993, 2004)

Mar 2 Losing Weight: Benefits, Challenges, and Potential Harms Part II

**Readings**

Knowler et al, Rubin et al, and Wing et al,

**Thought Paper Due (choice #1)**

**Mar 7 and 9 Spring Break**

Mar 14 “Weight Management: Diet and Exercise Part I”  
Calories count; macronutrient composition; types of physical activity

Supplementary readings from course pack

Mar 16 “Weight Management: Diet and Exercise Part II”

Supplementary readings from course pack

- Mar 21 “Weight Management: Lifestyle Modification, Pharmacotherapy, and Surgery Part I”  
Behavior therapy; FDA-approved medications; surgery (gastric bypass)  
  
Supplementary readings from course pack  
  
**Thought Paper Due (all students)**
- Mar 23 “Weight Management: Lifestyle Modification, Pharmacotherapy, and Surgery Part II”  
  
Supplementary readings from course pack
- Mar 28 “Eating Disorders in Youth and Young Adults: Part I”  
Anorexia nervosa; bulimia nervosa; body image disturbance  
  
**Readings**  
  
Supplementary readings from course pack  
**Eating and Weight Disorders:** pp 1-17, 27-38, 41-53, 67-85, 95-118
- Mar 30 “Eating Disorders in Youth and Young Adults: Part II”  
  
**Thought Paper Due (choice #2)**
- Apr 4 “Obesity in Children and Adolescents: Part I”  
Diagnosis; causes; health and psychosocial consequences  
  
Supplementary readings from course pack
- Apr 6 “Obesity in Children and Adolescents: Part II”  
  
Supplementary readings from course pack
- Apr 11 “Prevention and Treatment of Obesity in Youth: Part I”  
School-based prevention efforts; lifestyle modification; medication; surgery  
  
Supplementary readings from course pack
- Apr 13 “Prevention and Treatment of Obesity in Youth: Part II”  
  
Supplementary readings from course pack  
  
**Thought Paper Due (all students)**

Apr 18 “Obesity Prevention: What’s Preventing the U.S. from Preventing Obesity?”  
Part I  
Multi-factorial problem; roles of academia, government, and industry

**Readings**

**Food Fight:** 199-239, 243-281

Apr 20 “Obesity Prevention: What’s Preventing the U.S. from Preventing Obesity?”  
Part II

Supplementary readings from course pack

Apr 25 “Obesity Prevention: New Directions in Public Health and Policy Part I”  
Public health vs medical model; food taxes and restrictions; nudges

**Readings**

Supplementary readings from course pack

**Food Fight:** 283-307, 313

Apr 27 “Obesity Prevention: New Directions in Public Health and Policy Part II”

Supplementary readings from course pack

TBD Term Paper Due (in class, April 27<sup>th</sup>)