

# Course Syllabus

Visiting professor : Ichiro Kawachi

Course	Behavioral Science / Social Epidemiology		
Credit	1	Method of Teaching	Lecture
<p><b>Objective</b></p> <p>The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the major social variables -- social class, gender, poverty, income distribution, social networks/support, community cohesion, the psychosocial work environment and neighborhood contexts -- that affect population health.</p> <p>By the end of the course, students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the theories (mechanisms and pathways) through which education affects health, health behavior, and illness.</li> <li>• Describe the three theories linking income distribution to population health.</li> <li>• Identify community-level determinants of health, such as neighborhood assets (e.g. social capital) and deficits (e.g. concentrated disadvantage).</li> <li>• Compare and contrast compositional versus contextual influences of neighborhood environments on health.</li> <li>• Discuss the mechanisms and pathways by which neighborhood contexts influence population health.</li> <li>• Define and describe measurement approaches to assess social networks, social support, and social capital.</li> <li>• Describe the mechanisms through which social networks affect health outcomes.</li> <li>• Describe the demand/control model of job stress.</li> <li>• Understand the behavioral economics concepts of “scarcity” and the sadness trap, and describe how they influence behaviors.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Outline</b></p> <p>The course covers the theoretical underpinnings of each construct, their measurement, and empirical research linking each to population health status. Methods are introduced to operationalize each construct for the purposes of empirical application in epidemiologic research.</p>			
<p><b>Class Schedule (90 minutes each)</b></p> <p><u>Day 1 (January 16, 2026)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introduction to the social determinants of health (9:00-10:30)</li> <li>2. Socio-economic status, Measurement and causal evidence (10:45-12:15)</li> </ol> <p><u>Day 2 (January 17, 2026)</u></p>			

3. Income distribution and health (9:00-10:30)
4. Social networks, social support, and health (10:45-12:15)

**Day 3 (January 18, 2026)**

5. Neighborhood contexts and health (9:00-10:30)
6. Social capital, social cohesion and health (10:45-12:15)

**Day 4 (January 19, 2026)**

7. Psychosocial work environment and health (9:00-10:30)
8. Behavioral economics and public health (10:45-12:15)

**Examination (January 19, 2025):** (14:00-15:30)

*We may add seminars by Japanese teachers for each to assist students with difficulty in language/background knowledge*

**Text**

Berkman LF, Kawachi I & Glymour MM. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Social Epidemiology. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

**Related readings**

Kawachi I. “Inochi no Kakusa wa Tomerareruka”. Shogakukan 101 Shinsho, 2013 [in Japanese].

**Achievement evaluation**

1.5-hour in-class written examination consisting of three short-essay questions.

Please bring your own laptop with Internet access (free Wi-Fi is available) so that you can write and submit your answers online. If you prefer, a paper answer sheet will also be available as an alternative.

The exam is open book. Students may bring any materials, including lecture handouts and textbooks.