Course Syllabus: FPH 8990 Master’s Project (Winter 2020)

Wayne State University School of Medicine
Graduate Program in Public Health

Course Instructors: Deborah Ellis, PhD
Karen MacDonell, PhD

Contact information:
Deborah Ellis, PhD: dellis@med.wayne.edu
Telephone: 313-577-1055; Office hours by appointment

Karen MacDonell, PhD: kkolmodin@med.wayne.edu
Telephone: 313-577-6996; Office hours by appointment

Course Description
FPH 8990 Master’s Project is an independent, self-paced, scholarly integrated learning experience (ILE). As the MPH Program’s culminating experience, students will apply the knowledge and skills gained from classroom and field experiences to a scholarly project of their own design and execution that integrates the student’s chosen foundation and concentration competencies. Chosen competencies (minimum of three foundation and two concentration) are documented in a project proposal approved by the course directors prior to the start of the scholarly project. The course products are a written paper and an oral presentation. Required course forms such as the project proposal and other resources are on the MPH website: www.familymedicine.med.wayne.edu/mph\student resources\course information

Admission to FPH 8990 is by instructor permission only. Before registering for 8990, a student must meet with and obtain permission from one of the course directors to enroll. Prior to the meeting they must submit a brief paragraph to the course director summarizing the planned ILE which will be completed through 8990.

Course Objectives
The objective of the Master’s Project course is for the student to demonstrate mastery of self-selected foundation and concentration MPH Program competencies through an ILE. Master’s Projects may take a variety of directions, depending on student interest and career objectives. The required written paper and oral presentation will reflect the culmination, integration and application of the student’s public health knowledge.

Method of Instruction
FPH 8990 operates similarly to an independent directed study. After a Project idea is formulated, students must recruit a Project Advisor who will guide them in development and completion of the project. An exception is systematic literature review projects, which do not need a Project Advisor, as students work directly with an FPH 8990 Course Director to complete the project.
Required and Recommended Reading Materials

1) Required Reading (posted on the MPH Program website, under FPH 8990 course materials):

2) Recommended Text:

Timeline

After permission to take FPH 8990 is granted by a course director, the first step is submission of a Project Proposal, which described the planned project and how it will address the student’s chosen foundational and concentration competencies. The Project Proposal should be approved by a course director before the project is initiated. Following approval of the Project Proposal, most students finish the Project in 1-2 semesters. As the FPH 8990 course is similar to an independent study, the timeline for completion depends on the complexity of the Project along with student motivation. See also:
   - Appendix A for Master’s Project Checklist and Timeline
   - Appendix D for Important Dates and deadlines by semester

Types of Acceptable Master’s Project

The acceptable types of scholarly Projects are quite broad, and can include secondary analysis of existing data, collection and analysis of new data, evaluation of a community program, writing a grant proposal/study plan, or completing a systematic literature review. Every Project must include a statement or purpose, must involve a literature review, and must have public health relevance.

Examples of Project Types include but are not limited to the following:
   - **Secondary analysis of existing data**: These projects involve the use of publicly-available data, such as NHANES, BRFSS, SEER, state vital record data, etc., as well as data sets belonging to faculty members or other researchers. Scholarly questions that cannot be addressed using original data collection techniques (due to time or financial constraints) can often be addressed by analysis of previously collected data.
   - **Primary data collection**: Primary data collection may involve qualitative analyses, an approach used to study phenomena or experiences that are based on the interpretation of words and text, as opposed to numerical data in quantitative analysis. Qualitative data are collected by means of interviews, focus groups, or observational studies. Primary data collection may also involve survey research. Survey or questionnaire studies encompass measurement procedures that are based on questions posed to respondents. Survey research includes questionnaires administered by paper, in-person interview, telephone, or web-based data collection strategies.
   - **Needs assessment**: A needs assessment is a process used to determine priorities, make organizational improvements, or allocate resources. It involves determining the needs, or
gaps, between where the organization or community envisions itself in the future and its current state. This assessment is followed with a plan of action to address the needs (or closing the gaps) to bring the organization or community closer to its desired future state. A wide variety of data sources are may be used for a needs assessment.

- **Program evaluation**: Evaluation includes a heterogeneous assortment of methods for systematically assessing and improving programs. These techniques can include program surveillance, participant observation, key informant interviews, and/or focus groups to examine program outcomes and impacts.

- **Case study**: In the public health context, a case study is a form of ethnography or participant-observation research. A mixed method approach, including qualitative and quantitative strategies, is used to develop a comprehensive description of a program. Qualitatively, the researcher may talk with and observe people in the organization or program in order to describe how the program functions, including its mission and objectives, and job and role descriptions. Program challenges and limitations are important to describe as well. Quantitative summaries of the program’s efforts and outputs are also provided.

- **Policy Analysis**: Policy analysis is methodologically diverse using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including case studies, survey research, statistical analysis, and model building, among others. One common methodology is to define the problem and evaluation criteria, identify alternatives, evaluate, and recommend the best policy agenda.

- **Systematic Literature Review**: A systematic literature review is a systematic approach to identifying, selecting and summarizing existing research studies on a public health issue/topic. Students completing a systematic review should document the search methods, and identify those inclusion/exclusion criteria used to determine which studies were included in the literature review. Follow the PRISMA guidelines: [http://www.prisma-statement.org/](http://www.prisma-statement.org/) (click on “key document” in the upper right corner of the webpage, and use the flow diagram and checklist).

**IF A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW IS SELECTED, A PROJECT ADVISOR IS NOT NEEDED, AND ONLY THE COURSE DIRECTOR(S) WILL WORK WITH THE STUDENT TO DEVELOP AND WRITE THE PROPOSAL, EXECUTE THE PROJECT AND WRITE THE PAPER.**

- **Grant Proposal or Study Plan**: Study plans vary depending on the requirements of the funding source. Most study plans will include: a) Background (statement of the problem); b) Significance (how the proposed study will contribute to public health knowledge, or fill a gap); c) Preliminary studies or work to date; d) Detailed description of study methods; e) Timeline, plan of work and key personnel; and e) brief budget and potential funding sources.

**Notes on Acceptable Projects:**

- The Project proposal may grow out of interests or work initiated during Practicum, but it must be distinct from the Practicum.

- If a project is identified from the student’s current employment, it is permissible to develop a Master’s Project as long as it is distinct from work duties. Specifically, the Project **must be conducted outside of normal work responsibilities**.
III. Approval Process for MPH Master’s Project

Project Advisor(s)
Students are responsible identifying a Project Advisor who has relevant content expertise in the area addressed in the Project. They should consult with their Academic Advisor and/or the FPH 8990 course directors as needed to identify a suitable Project Advisor. The one exception is in the case of a systematic literature review in which only a Course Director is needed. The Academic Advisor, a practicum site representative, MPH program faculty, or someone from another appropriate research setting may serve as the Project Advisor.

- **External Project Advisors**
  - If the Project Advisor is external to the MPH faculty, then a “Letter of Understanding” is recommended. See: Appendix B for guidance on the Letter of Understanding.

Master’s Project Proposal Approval Process
The Project Proposal delineates the Project plan, and how the Project will address and integrate the student’s chosen public health competencies. After the Master’s Project Proposal is signed by the Project and Academic Advisors, it will be reviewed by a FPH 8990 Course Director, who may require additional changes. The project may not be initiated prior to proposal approval.

- IRB approval is required for all Projects that involve “human subjects research”. Consult with your project advisor and use Human Participant Research Determination Tool to determine if IRB approval is required. See http://research.wayne.edu/irb/forms-requirements-categories.php#HPR. (on WSU IRB forms webpage)
  - IRB approval requires submission of multiple forms distinct from the Project Proposal (see IRB website: http://irb.wayne.edu/)
  - Every student conducting Human Subjects research must submit documentation of study approval from the IRB
  - Indicate IRB approval # on the Proposal form or submit the Human Participant Research Tool if IRB approval was not required

Format and Preparation of the Master’s Project.
- See Appendix C for detailed on the format of the Project cover page, along with other requirements and expectations for the format and organization of the Project paper.

Evaluation and Grading:
The grade for the MPH Research Project will be assigned based on the following:

1) A **Summative Evaluation** is provided by the FPH 8990 Course Director who provides a grade based on the following considerations: title and abstract, quality of the literature review in the Introduction, appropriateness of project design, materials and data analysis approach in the Methods, appropriateness of Results, and quality of the Discussion section, including whether study limitations and public health relevance are addressed. Quality/ style of references and overall writing quality also contribute to the grade. (see Summative Evaluation Form on MPH Program website and grading rubric). The Summative Evaluation comprises 100% of the course grade.
2) **Oral Presentation**: Students are required to present their MPH Project findings during the Student Oral Presentation Days, scheduled each semester (see Appendix D for Presentation Dates). The Oral Presentation grading form is available on the MPH Program website. Presentations are graded as Pass/ Need to Repeat. Although the oral presentation does not receive a numeric grade, students must receive a passing grade on the oral to pass the course.

- Students are allotted a set time limit (approximately 15 minutes) for their oral presentation with slides, and follow-up questions (approximately 5 minutes). The talk should include: the background which suggested a need for the Project; the study objectives, and study questions; a summary of methods; a presentation of results; and a discussion that includes conclusions and a statement of public health relevance.

- **A minimum of a B grade** (83%-86%) is required for successful completion of the MPH Master’s Project. Project grades will follow the grading schedule used in the Wayne State University Graduate School and are as follows:
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Compliance with MPH Program Competencies**
The Master’s Project is the culminating experience of the MPH Program and therefore its objectives must be consistent with meeting the Program’s public health competencies. As part of the Project Proposal, students indicate how and to what extent completion of their Project will address and integrate foundation and concentration competencies in public health.
Table 1. Method of assessment of specific learning objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning objectives</th>
<th>Methods of assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Formulate a study question, or statement of purpose</td>
<td>• Course directors’ review and feedback on the Project proposal and paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Conduct a literature review on the topic of study in the project</td>
<td>• Course directors’ review and feedback on the Project proposal and paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop appropriate methods for conducting a project</td>
<td>• Course directors’ review and feedback on the Project proposal and paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Summarize or analyze data or findings</td>
<td>• Course directors’ review and feedback on the Project paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Interpret findings; make recommendations</td>
<td>• Course directors’ review and feedback on the Project paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Write a scholarly paper</td>
<td>• Course directors’ review and feedback on the Project paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Give an oral presentation of the project work and study findings</td>
<td>• Course directors’ review on oral presentation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See also:
- **Project Proposal Form** for Foundational and Concentration Competencies that may be accomplished through completion of FPH 8990.

**Originality of Work**: Academic work submitted by students is assumed to be their own creation. Students are expected to understand the meaning and types of plagiarism. Plagiarism is defined as:
- “Failure to use appropriate referencing when using the words or ideas of other persons”
- “Altering the language, paraphrasing, omitting, rearranging, or forming new combinations of words (patchwork plagiarism) in an attempt to make the thoughts of another appear as your own.”

For more information, review the educational module: “Learn what plagiarism is and how to avoid it” at: [http://www.lib.wayne.edu/services/instruction/research/mod6/](http://www.lib.wayne.edu/services/instruction/research/mod6/)

**Academic Dishonesty** -- All forms of academic misbehavior are prohibited at Wayne State University, as outlined in the MPH Student Handbook and the WSU Student Code of Conduct ([http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct-services.html](http://www.doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct-services.html)).

Students who commit or assist in committing dishonest acts (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) are subject to downgrading (failing grade on the test, paper, or other course-related activity, or for the entire course) and/or additional sanctions as described in the Student Code of Conduct.
- Fabrication: Intentional and unauthorized falsification of any information or citation. Examples include: (a) citation of information not taken from the source indicated; (b) listing sources in a bibliography not used in a research paper.
- Plagiarism: To take and use another’s words or ideas as one’s own. Examples include: (a) failure to use appropriate referencing when using the words or ideas of other persons; (b) altering the language, paraphrasing, omitting, rearranging, or forming new combinations of words in an attempt to make the thoughts of another appear as your own.
- Other forms of academic misbehavior include, but are not limited to: (a) unauthorized use of resources, (b) violating course rules as defined in the course syllabus or other written information provided to the student; (d) selling, buying or stealing all or part of
manuscript content (e) changing or altering a grade on a test or other academic grade records.

**Student Resources:** Students looking for support in preparing the written assignments for the class may contact the WSU Writing Center, located on the second floor of the Undergraduate Library. The Writing Center, can assist at all stages of writing. Their telephone number is 313 577-2544. Appointments and walk in assistance is available. Their web site is: http://www.clas.wayne.edu/unit-inner.asp?WebPageID=1330

**Student Accommodation:** "If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TTY: telecommunication device for the deaf; phone for hearing impaired students only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University."

Please refer to the SDS website for further information about students with disabilities and the services we provide for faculty and students: [http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/](http://studentdisability.wayne.edu/)

**Course Drops and Withdrawals:** In the first two weeks of the (full) term, students can drop this class and receive 100% tuition and course fee cancellation. After the end of the second week there is no tuition or fee cancellation. Students who wish to withdraw from the class can initiate a withdrawal request on Pipeline. You will receive a transcript notation of WP (passing), WF (failing), or WN (no graded work) at the time of withdrawal. No withdrawals can be initiated after the end of the tenth week. Students enrolled in the 10th week and beyond will receive a grade. Because withdrawing from courses may have negative academic and financial consequences, students considering course withdrawal should make sure they fully understand all the consequences before taking this step. More information on this can be found at: [http://reg.wayne.edu/pdf-policies/students.pdf](http://reg.wayne.edu/pdf-policies/students.pdf)
Appendix A
FPH 8990 Master’s Project Checklist and Sample Timeline
Prerequisites Prior to Registering for FPH 8990

_____ Complete all MPH foundation and concentration classes
_____ Meet with FPH 8990 Course Director for permission to register for FPH 8990, provided by one of the course Directors to MPH Office
_____ Identify Project Advisor for planned ILE in consultation with FPH 8990 Course Director and Academic Advisor, as well as other MPH faculty, if appropriate.

Register for FPH 8990 (three credits total)

Example: First Semester Activities:

_____ Meet with Project Advisor (or Course Director if a systematic literature review) to discuss Project
_____ Conduct preliminary literature review on the project
_____ Write and revise Project Proposal in consultation with Project Advisor, who signs Proposal.
_____ Submit Project Proposal to Academic Advisor for approval, and then to the Course Director
_____ The Course Director reviews, approves and notifies student that the Project can begin.

Example: Second Semester Activities:

_____ Collect, collate and analyze data, or other conduct other relevant activities
_____ Write and revise paper with guidance from Project Advisor
_____ After approved by Project Advisor, send paper in a Word doc to the Project Course Director (see semester deadlines in the Important Dates (Appendix D).
_____ Apply for WSU graduation: deadline is the fourth Friday of each semester
_____ Schedule the Oral Presentation after the Course Director approves the final draft.
Appendix B (page 1 of 2)

Information for a “Letter of Understanding” (Sample content as needed)

When the Project Advisor is not a member of the MPH faculty, a “Letter of Understanding” is the mechanism for communicating about the Project, and for assuring the Project Advisor is informed about roles, responsibilities and issues related to data ownership and publication. The Letter of Understanding will be specific to each MPH Project, and is recommended as a vehicle for communication between students and external Advisors. The following elements are suggested for inclusion, as relevant:

- Statement of agreement by the Project Advisor to supervise the MPH Master’s Project.

- Statement of understanding that the MPH Project cannot proceed without ethics approval of the WSU Institutional Review Board, when the Project involves human participants.

- Statement that the Project Advisor will communicate with the Course Director about problems or delays affecting the Project.

- Statement about data ownership related to data and other materials (e.g. media, curricula, handbooks) created during the course of the MPH Master’s Project.

- Statement about authorship and author responsibilities for any manuscripts submitted for publication.

- In some cases, the Project Advisor will be asked to work with the MPH student and the Academic Advisor to develop a learning contract regarding the objectives of the MPH Project.

- The letter of understanding will contain the contact information of the Project Advisor, the Course Director and the student. The External Project Advisor and the student will sign the letter. The student must deliver a signed copy of the letter of understanding to the Course Director.

Note: The next page provides an example of a “Letter of Understanding”. Depending on the particular circumstances, other items may be appropriate to include in the “Letter of Understanding”.

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Letter of Understanding Example

This letter is an agreement between the Wayne State University Master of Public Health Student {student name} and {Agency}, as represented by {Agency representative}.

Purpose
This document serves to clarify data ownership, data usage/dissemination, authorship of final report of the Wayne State University Master of Public Health Project conducted by {student name}. The data for this study are provided by {agency} to {student} for the purpose of analysis and reporting for her/his Wayne State University Masters Project (course FPH 8990. The tentative project title is: {title}, and is subject to change.

Ownership
The owner of the study data is {agency}
The owner of the study’s statistical analysis is {student name}
The owner of the final report is {student name}.

Usage/Dissemination
The study report and findings may be disseminated via:
• Wayne State University student oral presentation.
• Wayne State University FPH 8990 course final report.
• {Agency} office reports and community publications.
• Professional conference presentations.

In the case of the submission of scholarly articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals, {student} will provide {Agency representative} the opportunity to review and approve the manuscript prior to submission. A period of 30 days to review/approve any such articles is suggested.

Authorship
{Student} will be first author on any journal articles or conference presentations that stem from this study.

Signatures
I, {Student}, agree to adhere to this agreement.

__________________________________________    ____________________________
Signature                      Date

I, ________________________________________, on behalf of {Agency}, agree to adhere to this agreement.

__________________________________________    ____________________________
Signature                      Date
Appendix C  (page 1 of 3)

{Example of Master’s Project Title page. Note that an electronic copy of the paper and the signed title page should be provided. Paper copies are not accepted}

TYPE YOUR PROJECT TITLE HERE
(CENTERED, ALL IN CAPS, SINGLE-SPACED IF MORE THAN ONE LINE)

by

TYPE YOUR NAME HERE (CENTERED ALL IN CAPS)

Submitted to the Department of
Family Medicine and Public Health Sciences
Wayne State University,
Detroit, Michigan

MPH Project
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of
MASTER of PUBLIC HEALTH
TYPE IN YEAR HERE

Approved by:
Project Advisor:  Type Project Advisor Name Here  Access Id:  Date:
(except for systematic
literature reviews)

FPH 8990 Course Director  Type Course Director Name Here  Access Id:  Date:
Appendix C  (page 2 of 3)

**Guidelines for Written Final Report of Master’s Project**

Papers are submitted electronically; paper copies are not accepted. All written Project reports must contain a title page with an abstract. The majority of papers will follow the *Introduction, Methods, Results And Discussion* (IMRAD) format below. Other formats can be used with permission of the course director for Projects for which the IMRAD format may not be appropriate, such as grant proposals or policy analyses. See Learning Objectives section and further detailed below in the section “Organization of the Written Project Report”.

**Order of Project Paper (see below for additional detail):**

1. Title page (see example on p. 12 with e-signature area)
2. Abstract and key words
3. Introduction
4. Methods
5. Results
6. Discussion
7. Acknowledgements
8. References (see below)
9. Figures and Tables with legends

- All text should be double-spaced and left justified.
- Recommended font sizes 11 or 12 in Arial, Helvetica, or Century Gothic fonts.
- The following margins are recommended 1 inch for all margins (top, bottom, left and right).
- Indent to show new paragraphs.
- Quotations < 4 lines should be double-spaced; quotations exceeding 4 lines should be single-spaced.
- Illustrations and tables should be placed on separate pages with appropriate legends and footnotes as needed. Captions/legends for tables and figures should be single-spaced. Figures and tables should follow references.

**Pagination:**

- *Preliminary pages:* Title page and abstract are *not* numbered.
- *Text:* Use Arabic numbers beginning with "1" on the first page of the text and continuing throughout the manuscript, including the appendices, reference material. The page numbers should be in the lower right corner.

**References:**

- The references should be cited and listed according to NLM style.
  - For examples of NLM style, consult the WSU library service or see [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/citingmedicine](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/citingmedicine) for further details.
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Length:
• Final reports should be 10-15 pages of text in length (double spaced). The following allocation of pages per section is recommended:
  o Abstract: Place on its own page (do not exceed 250 words) plus 3-4 key words not in the title.
  o Introduction: 2 – 3 pages
  o Methods: 3 – 4 pages
  o Results: 3 – 4 pages
  o Discussion: 2 – 4 pages
  o Tables & Figures: no more than 5 in total

Paper Outline Format
Most Master’s Project reports should be organized using the IMRAD format: Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion. Students are advised to use the following expanded IMRAD outline to plan their study, to write their study prospectus and to write their final report. The relative emphasis on each of the study components will vary depending on the specific study.

Resource: Bordage G. Considerations on preparing a paper for publication. Teaching & Learning in Medicine, 1989; 1, 47-52. This paper is on the MPH Program website (see Student Resources/Course Information: http://www.familymedicine.med.wayne.edu/mph/course-info.php
  ➢ Bordage provides detailed suggestions for each of the paper components, including the title, abstract, introduction, methods, discussion, references and other considerations.
Appendix D

FPH 8990 Master’s Project
Important Dates Fall 2019 –Spring/Summer 2020

Fall 2019
- Master’s Project Presentation Day: Tuesday, September 24, from 3:00-5:00 pm
  - Note: Presentations only for students not completing in SS 2019
- Register for graduation: no later than Friday, September 27
- Final paper (approved by Project Advisor) to Course Director: Friday, November 15
- Master’s Project Presentation Day: Tuesday, December 10 from 3:00-5:00 pm and Wednesday December 11th from 5-7:30 pm

Winter 2020
- Master’s Project Presentation Day: Tuesday, January 28 from 3:00-5:00 pm
  - Note: Presentations only for students not completing in Fall 2019
- Register for graduation: no later than Friday, February 7
- Final paper (approved by Project Advisor) to Course Director: Friday, March 27
- Master’s Project Presentation Day: Tuesday, April 21st, from 3:00-5:00 pm and Wednesday, April 22 from 5:00-7:30 pm

Spring/Summer 2020
- Master’s Project Presentation Day: Tuesday, May 26 from 3:00-5:00 pm
  - Note: Presentations only for students not completing in Winter 2020
- Register for Summer graduation: no later than Friday, June 5
- Final paper (approved by Research Advisor) to Course Director: Friday, July 10
- Master’s Project Presentation Day: Tuesday, July 28th from 3:00-5:00 pm