Course Description

Human obesity is arguably the public health problem of the 21st Century. Current estimates place the number of obese individuals at over 600 million worldwide (World Health Organization, 2016). The goal of this course is to examine the multitude of factors that have led to this problem, with an emphasis on the precursors to adult obesity seen as early as infancy and childhood. As a seminar, we will depart from the traditional lecture-and-exam format, and instead endeavor to have all members of the class participate via informed discussion of the topics that have been selected for review. Regular attendance is therefore paramount, but to ensure “informed discussion,” assigned readings should be completed before class meetings, with questions prepared based on each reading to pose to the class.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly attendance and participation: From weeks 3 through 14, each student will prepare three (3) questions for class discussion based on your assigned reading, which will be turned in after being addressed in class. Your attendance (2 points) and questions (3 points) over 12 weeks will count for 60 points.

2. Powerpoint presentation: In the latter half of the semester, each student will identify a recent empirical study of relevance to the week’s topic and prepare and deliver a 10-minute P/P presentation. The appropriateness of the article (10 points), clarity of slides (10 points), coherence of presentation (15 points), and fielding of questions (5) will count for 40 points.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. document the increase in child obesity rates over the last 50 years;
2. cite the myriad factors that have contributed to this epidemic;
3. identify ways in which risk for child obesity may be reduced;
4. argue for the importance of early intervention in preventing obesity; and not incidentally,
5. identify the strengths and weaknesses of studies on obesity.
Class dates and topics

Week 1
Defining the problem/Health implications

Week 2
Obesogenic environment

Week 3
Microbiome

Week 4
Rapid infant weight gain

Week 5
Responsive feeding

Week 6
Introduction of solid foods
**Week 7**
Skipping breakfast

**Week 8**
Food insecurity

**Week 9**
Temperament

**Week 10**
Sleep

**Week 11**
Parenting style

**Week 12**
Fast food
Week 13
Sugar-sweetened beverages

Week 14
Sedentary behaviors