“Just living is not enough... one must have sunshine, freedom, and a little flower.”
Hans Christian Andersen

Course Description

Cross-culturally and for centuries, humans have recognized the important connection between their geography (both built and natural environments) and their health and wellbeing.

This course explores how human-environment relations (a core concept in human geography) influence our mental, emotional, and physical health. The overarching theme is that the places where we live, work and play, and how we relate to them, are entwined with our health and wellbeing in often profound and surprising ways.

This course draws on current geographic research in the areas of (cultural) health geography, emotional geographies, therapeutic landscapes, sacred spaces, and the geography of mental health and wellbeing. It also draws on research in cognate areas of scholarship including: architecture and design, cultural studies, indigenous studies, environmental psychology, and health sociology.
Course Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Define fundamental concepts such as: wellbeing, place, location, and landscape
- Identify linkages between environmental/climate change and human health and wellbeing
- Share a greater awareness of cross-cultural concepts of landscape as therapeutic / salutogenic.
- Explain the significance of contact with nature/exposure to the natural environment for wellbeing
- Explain the importance of urban/building design to human physical and mental health
- Share an increased awareness of mental health and wellness issues within the university/academy
- Appreciate the interplay between the built environment, social processes, and individual experience of wellbeing
- Draw on improved skills in critical thinking, independent research, and in oral and written communication

Course Texts


Course Evaluation

- Participation (5%)
  - Contribution to class discussion
  - Attendance
- Journal Article Reviews (3x 15%)
  - Critical review of a research journal article in a relevant area of geographic studies of wellbeing, or in a cognate field, e.g., environmental psychology, architecture etc.,
    - Detailed instructions will be made available in class and posted to UMLearn
  - Reviews are due to the UMLearn Dropbox by 5pm on:
    - February 10, 2017
    - March 10, 2017
    - April 6, 2017
Articles may form part of the research for the course research paper
Students are encouraged to select their own article, with approval from the instructor

- Research Paper (35%)
  - 10-15 page research paper
  - Minimum 7 academic references
  - Topic to be chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor — must be directly related to a course topic/theme

- Oral Presentation (15%)
  - 10-15 minute oral presentation
  - Presentation is to share with/teach the class about your research paper
  - Creativity welcome!
  - Presentations will occur during the last week of classes
Course Topics

1. Introduction: Health, Wellbeing… and Geography?

2. Therapeutic / Salutogenic Environments

3. Emotional Geographies of Health and Mental Health

4. Climate, Weather, Climate Change, and Human Wellbeing

5. Contact with / Exposure to Nature and Human Health across the Lifespan – Or - The Healing Effect of Plants and Animals
6. Sacred Spaces of Health and Wellbeing

7. Indigenous Knowledge, Environment, and Wellbeing
   a. GUEST INSTRUCTOR

8. If You Build It … They Will Heal – Health, Wellness and Architecture


10. Consumption/Economy/Society Influences on Wellbeing

11. Mental Health and Wellness in the Academy
12. Reflecting on Space, Place and Wellbeing

13. Student Research Presentations

“There is pleasure in the pathless woods, there is rapture in the lonely shore, there is society where none intrudes, by the deep sea, and music in its roar; I love not Man the less, but Nature more.”

*Lord Byron*