

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATICS

Spring 2026 | I 320M | CRN 28660

INSTRUCTOR

Stacy Jorgensen

Email: stacy.jorgensen@austin.utexas.edu or the messaging application through Canvas

Office: Gearing 312

Hours: MW, 2-3pm

PREREQUISITES

Credit for I 301 (Introduction to Informatics) and I 310M (Introduction to Health Informatics)

LOCATION

In person: MW 11:00am-12:30pm in SZB 4.508

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, you will gain a broad knowledge of how public health and the information systems may be used to achieve public health goals (i.e., prevent disease, promote health, and prolong life among the population as a whole). This course is divided into three parts: (1) overview of public health, (2) fundamentals of public health informatics, and (3) public health information systems.

This course is designed to be a rigorous and engaging undertaking that includes readings, lectures, interactive activities, and shared learning opportunities. Student engagement and participation will be a vital part of this course. The overall goal of this course is to help students become ethical and competent professionals who can leverage public health informatics to enhance public health outcomes.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Define public health and explain its difference from healthcare.
2. Identify public health information systems and explain its purpose.
3. Explain how public health information systems are used to achieve public health outcomes.
4. Explain how policies influence the implementation of public health information systems.
5. Design and create a dashboard based on open-access public health data.
6. Generate public health insights based on information derived from a public health dashboard.

COURSE RESOURCES

Textbook Resources

The primary textbook for this course is Public Health Informatics and Information Systems (3rd ed.). This book is available online at UT Libraries (downloadable as a whole or per chapter).

Other Readings

Other relevant material will be available in Canvas.

DEVICE REQUIREMENTS

While you will need a computer capable of accessing the Internet, opening PDF files, installing and running Tableau, and creating documents and presentation slides, much of the work we do in this class will be completed via pen and paper. Research shows that laptops in the classroom decrease engagement and can make learning harder. They are also extremely distracting for other students. To encourage participatory learning and minimize distractions, **the use of phone and computer technologies are not permitted during our lecture-based class time.** During lecture, only tablet-style devices that lay flat on the desktop and are used with a stylus for digital notetaking are permitted to be out during class time. Exceptions may be made for accommodations or specific situations discussed with the instructor in advance.

OFFICIAL UT EMAIL ADDRESSES

All students should have received their official UT email address, which has the format [eid][@my.utexas.edu](mailto:my.utexas.edu). This is your primary email for all University-related communication, including Canvas notifications. See [Using Your UT Official Student Email](#) for more information.

Please note UT Mail Google accounts are provided to students only as an additional resource and are not eligible to receive official University communications.

GRADING POLICY

Final grades will be assigned according to the traditional UT Austin grading scale:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	≥90.0%
B	80.0-89.9%
C	70.0-79.9%
D	60.0-69.9%
F	<60.0%

DROPPING AND Q-DROPS

If you realize you want to drop this course after the twelfth class day (Jan 28, 2026), you will need to execute a Q-drop before Apr 15, 2026. More information about Q-drops: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/vick/academic/adddrop/qdrop>

Important dates

- January 28, 2026: Last day to drop a class without permission
- April 15, 2026: Last day an undergraduate may: Q-drop a class; withdraw; change a class to pass/fail

EVALUATION

Your final course grade will reflect your effort to learn, understand, apply, assess, and interact with the material from the readings, assessments, and activities throughout the course. Half your grade will come from classroom activities; this is not a class that can be completed remotely.

Some assignments may be eligible for partial credit when completed late. The sooner the assignment is turned in after the due date, the greater the partial credit. Deadline extensions for full credit will be provided with a valid excuse, accommodation, or other reasonable explanation accepted by the course instructor. Items will be weighted as follows to determine final course percentages.

Assignment	Weighting
Attendance and in-class participation	50%
Public health dashboard – due Feb 27 by 11:59pm	15%
Individual public health data project	
Proposal – due March 13 by 11:59pm	5%
Presentation – due April 17 by 11:59pm	15%
Final report – due April 27 by 11:59pm	15%

Attendance and in-class participation

Active participation in the classroom facilitates learning. Just attending class is not enough, as learning does not occur simply by being present. We will use classroom assessment activities to gauge your learning during the semester. These activities may require you to discuss and interact with other students in the classroom, so they are not able to be completed outside the classroom.

Public health dashboard

Based on an open-access public health dataset provided to the class, you will construct a dashboard using Tableau. We will work on this during class time, and I will provide guidance as you construct your dashboard.

Individual project

Building on your experience of creating and presenting a dashboard using Tableau, this group project aims to provide you with skills on translating public health data into actionable public health insights. Instead of providing you with a dataset, your group will search for your own data. The data needs to be open-access and focuses on a public health issue. One of the outputs for the group project is a report (2,000-2,500 words) that describes the public health issue you are working on, the relevant dataset for that public health issue, the process of constructing your dashboard, and public health insights based on the results of your dashboard. The second output is a 15-20 minute presentation that summarizes your report.

COURSE CALENDAR

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics, and essential information will be on the course's Canvas website. Check Canvas regularly. Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of the changes with as much advance notice as possible.

Week/Day	Topic and readings	Due and Reminders	
Module 1: Overview of Public Health			
Week 1	Jan 12	Course welcome and orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit the course Canvas site • Review the course syllabus • Download book PDF
	Jan 14	Introduction to public health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the CDC's Introduction to Public Health before class
Week 2	Jan 19	<i>MLK, Jr Day - No classes</i>	
	Jan 21	What is public health?	
Week 3	Jan 26	Epidemiology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the CDC's Introduction to Epidemiology before class
	Jan 28	Epidemiology in government organizations	
Week 4	Feb 2	Public health surveillance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the CDC's Introduction to Public Health Surveillance before class
	Feb 4	Public health surveillance	
Module 2: Fundamentals of Public Health Informatics			
Week 5	Feb 9	Overview of public health informatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the CDC's Introduction to Public Health Informatics before class • Skim chapters 1, 2, 4 before class
	Feb 11	Introduction to Tableau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download and install a student license of Tableau before class
Week 6	Feb 16	Data in public health informatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapters 7, 17 before class
	Feb 18	Public health dashboard work in class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring your computer with Tableau installed to class
Week 7	Feb 23	Public health information standards, interoperability, and exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapters 8, 18 before class
	Feb 25	Public health dashboard work in class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health dashboard (Feb 27 at 11:59pm)
Week 8	Mar 2	Privacy and confidentiality of public health information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 9 before class
	Mar 4	Health systems security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 10 before class
Week 9	Mar 9	Project management in public health informatics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 13 before class
	Mar 11	Topic brainstorming in class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review project material on Canvas before class • Project proposal (Mar 13 by 11:59pm)
Week 10	Mar 16, 18	<i>Spring Break - No classes</i>	
Module 3: Public Health Information Systems			
Week 11	Mar 23	Public health laboratories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 15 before class
	Mar 25	Work on individual project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review comments on the proposal before class
Week 12	Mar 30	Disease control and prevention information systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 14 before class
	Apr 1	Work on individual project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring the work you have completed on your project so far
Week 13	Apr 6	Syndromic surveillance information systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read chapter 16 before class

Week/Day	Topic and readings	Due and Reminders
Week 13	Apr 8 Work on individual project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring the work you have completed on your project so far
Week 14	Apr 13 Public health information decision support systems and immunization support systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read chapter 20 before class
	Apr 15 Work on individual project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data project presentation file (Apr 17 by 11:59pm)
Week 15	Apr 20 Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Come prepared to present or listen
	Apr 22 Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Come prepared to present or listen
Week 16	Apr 27 Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Come prepared to present or listen Final project report (Apr 27 at 11:59pm)

There is no final exam for this course.

DISABILITY AND ACCESS

At The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), we respect and welcome students of all backgrounds, identities, and abilities, and we are committed to creating an effective learning environment for all students. UT Austin provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities upon request. For more information, contact Disability and Access (D&A) at 512-471-6259 (voice), 512-471-6441 (video phone) or visit them at <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/about/>. Students who use D&A services will be provided an accommodation letter, which should be reviewed with your professor. D&A accommodations are not applied retroactively. Please note that we respect your right to privacy and confidentiality. You are not obligated to share personal information with the professor or the grading team.

STUDENT EMERGENCY SERVICES

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to a crisis or an emergency, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency> or by calling 512-471-5017.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about university policies, see the [University Policies and Resources for Students Canvas](#) page, which provides a list of resources.