

2024-9-NFS301 Nutrition Literacy: Sorting Science From Snake Oil

Course Description: The course will help students learn to recognize the strengths and limitations of various nutrition research methods, find reliable nutrition information on the Internet and develop systematic thinking skills to critically evaluate the quality of nutrition information in both the scientific literature and popular media. *Prerequisite:* NFS284H1

Learning Objectives:

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

- recognize the strengths and limitations of various nutrition research methods
- find reliable nutrition information on the Internet
- critically evaluate the quality of nutrition information in both the scientific literature and popular media

Instructor:

Dr. Laura Chiavaroli

Email: laura.chiavaroli@utoronto.ca

Office: Naylor 231, C. David Naylor Building, 6 Queen's Park Cres.

Office Hours: Fridays 1-3 pm September 6 - November 29, 2024.

Exceptions include Sep 13 (none), Sep 20 (12-2pm), Nov 1 (none), Nov 15 (none), Nov 22 (none).

Additional office hours or modifications should they arise will be posted on Quercus.

Please **post questions on the Discussion board on Quercus**.

Only email Dr. Chiavaroli for personal reasons.

Course time, website, and notifications:

Students meet **in-person** on **Fridays: 9:10 AM to noon** for lecture.

Course website: available on Quercus

Notifications: Announcements are posted on the course website and it is the student's responsibility to read these regularly and to regularly check the course website for new content, upcoming due dates, and the release of grades. It is strongly recommended that students **leave their Quercus notifications on**, to be automatically advised of important course information.

Textbook: There is no required textbook for this course.

Course Schedule:

| Week | Date | Topic | Before next class |
|------|---|---|--|
| 1 | Sept 6 | Review of Syllabus; Nutrition Research: PICOS & Quality Appraisal Tools Introduction to Observational studies; <i>Discussion of Concept Quiz</i> | Complete pre-class quiz for <i>Sim et al 2018</i> : due online Sept 12 at 9 AM See Reading List Below for link to paper |
| 2 | Sept 13 | Observational Studies 1: <i>Sim et al 2018</i> Nutrition in the Media: Fact Checking Nutrition in the Media: Headlines and Clickbait Guest Speaker: Meaghan Kavanagh, MSc, PhD(c) Concept Quiz will be available from Sep 13 at 1 pm until Sep 27, 9am. No time limit, but one attempt only. | Complete pre-class quiz for <i>Cespedes et al 2016</i> : due online Sept 19 at 9 AM. See Reading List Below for link to paper |
| 3 | Sept 20 | Observational Study 2: <i>Cespedes et al 2016</i> Confounding, Effect Modification, Mediation Quality Appraisal Tool for Observational Studies | |
| 4 | Sep 27 | Systematic Review of Observational Studies Quality Appraisal Tool for Systematic Reviews How to search PubMed Concept Quiz Due | Complete pre-class quiz for <i>Mirrahimi et al 2012</i> : due online Oct 3 at 9 AM See Reading List Below for link to paper |
| 5 | Oct 4 | Systematic Review of Observational Studies: <i>Mirrahimi et al 2012</i> Nutrition in the Media: How Nutrition Studies are reported; Evaluating Health-related Websites Quality appraisal tool for health-related websites Quality appraisal tool for popular media articles <i>Discussion of Media Article Assignment</i> | |
| 6 | Oct 11 | Introduction to RCTs | Complete pre-class quiz for <i>Jenkins et al 2011</i> : due online Oct 17 at 9 AM See Reading List Below for link to paper |
| 7 | Oct 18 | Randomized Controlled Trial: Discussion of <i>Jenkins et al 2011</i> Nutrition in the Media: University Press Releases | |
| 8 | Oct 25 | TERM TEST 1 -Open book- Rooms EX 310 and EX 320 : On course content from Sept 6 to Oct 4 inclusive | |
| 9 | Nov 1 Nov 4- last day to drop | NO CLASS – FALL READING WEEK | Complete pre-class quiz for <i>Li et al 2012</i> : due online Nov 7 at 9 AM See Reading List Below for link to paper |

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| 10 | Nov 8 | Paper 7: Systematic Review of RCTs: Discussion of <i>Li et al 2012</i> When scientists get it wrong: PREDIMED retraction Media Article Due | |
| 11 | Nov 15 | TERM TEST 2 – Open Book – Room EX100 : On course content from Oct 11, Oct 18, Nov 1 | |
| 12 | Nov 22 | Canada’s Food Guide 2019 Guest Speaker: Jo-Anna Baxter, PhD | |
| 13 | Nov 29 | Non-Nutritive Sweeteners: Observational Studies vs RCTs Guest Speaker: Dr. John Sievenpiper, MD, PhD | |

Grading:

| Assignment | Due Date | Weight |
|-------------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Pre-class Quizzes | Sept 12, 19, Oct 3, 17, Nov 7 NOTE: QUIZZES ARE DUE Online at 9 AM THURSDAY BEFORE CLASS | 15 = (5 X 3%) |
| Concept Quiz | Sep 27 online at 9 AM | 15 |
| Term Test 1- Open book-short answer | Oct 25 | 25 |
| Media Article | Nov 8 online at 9 AM | 20 |
| Term Test 2-Open book-short answer | Nov 15 | 25 |
| TOTAL | | 100 |

Reading List:

| Pre-class quiz due online, THURSDAYS at 9 AM | Journal article |
|--|--|
| Thurs, Sept 12 | Sim M, Blekkenhorst LC, Lewis JR, et al. 2018. Vegetable and fruit intake and injurious falls risk in older women: a prospective cohort study. <i>Br J Nutr.</i> 120(8):925-934. https://journals-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/pdf/00071145/v120i0008/925_vafiaiowapcs.xml Supplementary files (if this link does not open directly to supplementary files, check for files tab upper left of screen): https://www-cambridge-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/core/journals/british-journal-of-nutrition/article/vegetable-and-fruit-intake-and-injurious-falls-risk-in-older-women-a-prospective-cohort- |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| | study/C935AD3C8549D3DF4A6DE1DCC5A7646A#fndtn-supplementary-materials |
| Thurs, Sept 19 | Cespedes EM, Hu FB, Tinker L, Rosner B, Redline S, Garcia L, Hingle M, Van Horn L, Howard BV, Levitan EB, Li W, Manson JE, Phillips LS, Rhee JJ, Waring ME, Neuhauser ML. 2016. Multiple Healthful Dietary Patterns and Type 2 Diabetes in the Women's Health Initiative. Am J Epidemiol. 183(7):622-33. https://journals-scholarsportal-info.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/pdf/00029262/v183i0007/622_mhdpatditwhi.xml |
| Thurs, Oct 3 | Mirrahimi A, de Souza RJ, Chiavaroli L, Sievenpiper JL, Beyene J, Hanley AJ, Augustin LS, Kendall CW, Jenkins DJ. 2012. Associations of glycemic index and load with coronary heart disease events: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective cohorts. J Am Heart Assoc. 1(5):e000752. https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1161/JAHA.112.000752 |
| Thurs, Oct 17 | Jenkins DJ, Jones PJ, Lamarche B, Kendall CW, Faulkner D, Cermakova L, Giguere I, Ramprasath V, de Souza R, Ireland C, Patel D, Srichaikul K, Abdulnour S, Bashyam B, Collier C, Hoshizaki S, Josse RG, Leiter LA, Connelly PW, Frohlich J. 2011. Effect of a dietary portfolio of cholesterol-lowering foods given at 2 levels of intensity of dietary advice on serum lipids in hyperlipidemia: a randomized controlled trial. JAMA. 306(8):831-9. doi:10.1001/jama.2011.1202. https://jamanetwork-com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/journals/jama/fullarticle/1104262 |
| Thurs, Nov 7 | Li SS, Blanco Mejia S, Lytvyn L, Stewart SE, Viguiliouk E, Ha V, de Souza RJ, Leiter LA, Kendall CWC, Jenkins DJA, Sievenpiper JL. 2017. Effect of Plant Protein on Blood Lipids: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. J Am Heart Assoc. 6(12). pii: e006659. doi:10.1161/JAHA.117.006659. https://doi-org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.1161/JAHA.117.006659 |

Important Course Policies:

Assignment Submissions:

The assignment in this course **require both an online submission AND a hard copy**. The hard copy is being requested so that TAs can read your assignments from paper – which is much easier than reading from a screen. All feedback to students, however, will be provided online, so the hard copy is not returned to students; instead it is shredded shortly after final marks are submitted. **Students should download their marked assignments and associated feedback, from Quercus, for their personal files, so they have a complete record of their assignment and its grading.**

POLICY UPDATE: Please see the last page of the syllabus which reflects how students should declare absences on ACORN. Such a declaration will be considered a compelling reason for assignment extensions and for adjustments for missed tests, as described below.

Late submission of assignments:

NO ASSIGNMENT WILL BE ACCEPTED after the due date and time for online submission except for compelling reasons such as illness, personal distress, family emergency or other unforeseen circumstance. Please contact Dr. C by e-mail (laura.chiavaroli@utoronto.ca) to request an extension, **prior to the due date**. A very brief explanation of why you are requesting an extension is required. This can be a written explanation from you or completion of the [Verification of Illness Form](#). All information is treated as confidential. Students dealing with intense or ongoing personal distress or chronic illness, who may need special and continuing accommodation, are advised to discuss their situation with their college registrar and consider contacting Accessibility Services (See item below for more info on Accessibility Services).

Please note that poor time management, having several assignments due at the same time, having to study for term tests, etc. are generally NOT compelling reasons for an extension. Extensions, for such reasons, are granted only in rare situations. Students are expected to complete their assignments as best they can, hand them in on time, even if incomplete, and accept that they may not get as high a grade as they would like.

If you feel you have a compelling reason that cannot be easily documented or are uncertain if your reasons are compelling, you should ideally discuss this with Dr. C before the assignment due date. If this is not possible, then **FIRST**, hand-in as much of the assignment as you possibly can on the due date and **THEN** contact Dr. C to discuss your situation. All discussions are kept confidential.

Accessibility Services: If you are registered with Accessibility Services, extensions are provided in accordance with the terms of your letter of accommodation. [Accommodated Testing Services \(utoronto.ca\)](#)

Re-reads:

If you have concerns about your grading (term tests, assignment), a re-read can be requested. Re-read requests must be made **within 2-weeks** of receiving your graded test or assignment. Further instructions on re-read requests may be provided during the term; check Quercus.

Policy for missed term tests:

Except for compelling reasons such as those described in the policy regarding late assignments, all students will be given a grade of ZERO if they miss a term test. When compelling reasons are provided, a make-up test will be arranged. **Contact Dr. Chiavaroli as soon as possible, but NO LATER than 1 week after the missed test**, so that a make-up test can be arranged in a timely fashion.

Lecture material and intellectual property:

Lecture presentations and course materials are the intellectual property of the instructors. All students enrolled in NFS301 are permitted to use the material for personal study. The distribution, transmission, reproduction, or re-posting of the NFS301 course materials, in whole or part, is NOT permitted without the consent of the instructor.

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to conduct themselves with academic integrity. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations:

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>. For more information, also see <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai> and <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>.

Help with Academic Skills:

Academic Success Centre: The Academic Success Centre provides workshops, peer mentoring, and other resources to help all students improve their academic skills. Check out the available services at:

<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/academic-success/>

English Language Learning: Provides support to students for whom English is a second language. It also supports native speakers who would like to improve their language skills. Check out available services at:

<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>

Writing Centres: Writing Centres provide assistance with writing assignments for all students. Check out available services at: <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres>

Accessibility Needs:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have an acute or ongoing disability issue or accommodation need, you should register with Accessibility Services (AS) at the beginning of the academic year by visiting <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as/new-registration>. Without registration, you will not be able to verify your situation with your instructors, and instructors will not be advised about your accommodation needs. AS will assess your situation, develop an accommodation plan with you, and support you in requesting accommodation for your course work. Remember that the process of accommodation is private: AS will not share details of your needs or condition with any instructor, and your instructors will not reveal that you are registered with AS.

Policy for Verification of Illness (VOI) and Documented Absences for 2024-25:

Similar to last year, the University has once again announced that students will not require a [Verification of Illness \(VOI\)](#) form.

Absence Declaration:

Students may use the ACORN Absence Declaration Tool to declare an absence **once per academic term** (e.g., the fall term) for a maximum period of seven (7) consecutive calendar days. The seven-day declaration period can be retroactive for up to six (6) days in the past, or proactive, up to six (6) days in the future. The ACORN Absence Declaration Tool cannot be used to seek academic consideration for any matters that requires a petition such as missing a final exam or final assessment. For more information: [Absence Declaration - University Registrar's Office \(utoronto.ca\)](#)

Students who are absent from class for any reason (e.g., health condition (e.g., COVID) or injury, family emergency, bereavement) and who require consideration for missed academic work should report their absence through the online absence declaration (see screenshots below*). The declaration is available on [ACORN](#) under the [Profile and Settings menu](#). Please review the [ACORN how-to](#) for a step-by-step

guide on how to submit an Absence Declaration (see “How do I declare an absence?”). If for any reason you are unable to submit your declaration, reach out to your [College Registrar’s Office](#) to ask for their advice and help. ****Students should also advise their instructor of their absence and attach your receipt for the absence declaration. This will be sent to your U of T email address as well as to email addresses you provided in the declaration.**

Resources & supports:

If you or someone you know is in distress and there is an immediate risk, call 911.

The following includes supports available to students on all three campuses:

- [U of T St. George \(Downtown Toronto\)](#)
- [U of T Scarborough](#)
- [U of T Mississauga](#)

Additionally, students have access to [U of T My Student Support Program](#) (My SSP) | 1-844-451-9700 24/7. Outside of North America, call 001-416-380-6578.

Culturally-competent mental health and counseling services in 146 languages for all U of T students.

Further supports for students may be found on the [Mental Health Portal](#).

More information on resources available to support students is available at [UTogether - Preparing for a Safe Semester | University of Toronto \(utoronto.ca\)](#).