

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear SBS Community,

I trust that you all enjoyed a productive and stimulating Fall 1 semester. As we settle into Fall 2, **please remember to get your flu shots** (I got mine at Rite-Aid the other day – it seemed like a good excuse to browse through the new Fall collection of Foster Grants reading glasses, +1.75, whilst waiting to get my shot).

We have an exciting line-up of pending new course offerings from the Department in the months ahead -- two new winter session courses from **Rima Rudd**, "Health Literacy: Measuring Accessibility of Health Information" and "Measures of The Health Literacy Environment"; a revamped course from **Mauricio Avendano Pabon**, "Social Policy and Health in International Perspective" which will also be offered in winter session having been previously taught in Fall 2013; and finally "The Psychology and Politics of Food" from **Christina Roberto** in Spring 1.

Don't forget to turn the clock back on November 1, and remember to get the blades sharpened on your ice-skates.  
Also – stay tuned for an invitation to our annual Holiday Party.

Best wishes,  
Ichiro



Alfredo Perez-Hidalgo, Rima Rudd, Rubim Rwakabuba and Kau'i Baumhofer

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### Upcoming events

**Oct 31:** Fall2 Add/Drop Deadline

**Nov 17:** Birthday Celebration  
12:30-1:30, Kresge 606

**Dec 4:** Spring 2015 Registration Opens

**Dec 8:** SM2 Quarterly meeting, 5:30—6:30, FXB G11

## Faculty Spotlight: Christina Roberto



**Do you have a strategy for selecting what to study? And if so, can you detail your argument for doing so?**

Most of my research is on obesity and government and institutional food policies. I also conduct some research on eating disorders. I do this work in my lab, which is called PEACH (the Psychology of Eating and Consumer Health ([www.peachlab.org](http://www.peachlab.org))). The guiding framework behind much of my work is something I call Strategic Science. Right now many policymakers are eager to implement policies to address obesity, but we lack evidence for many of the policy approaches. What's happening now is that many policies get introduced without evidence of their effectiveness or without evidence of how to best make them effective. Strategic Science is about generating rigorous evidence rapidly (when that's possible) and communicating it effectively, so it can inform policy discussions as they are happening. There are three parts to Strategic Science. The first is asking policy-relevant research questions. The second is co-creating these questions with people who are in a position to influence the policy debate and who know what data would be most informative (e.g., policymakers, advocates). The third is leveraging these research collaborations with policy

influencers to disseminate the findings rapidly and effectively. You can think of my lab as a scientific SWAT team: when a policy gets introduced we go get the data.

**If your life was like long-form television (ie Breaking Bad, Sopranos, Game of Thrones) what would have been last season's cliff hanger and what do you envision for this upcoming season?**

A few months ago California introduced a bill to place warning labels on sugary drinks. Although it was defeated in California, there is continued interest from policymakers in pursuing it. It's an interesting idea that is following the approach public health took with tobacco. However, we don't have any data on how this policy will influence consumers. At the end of last season, my lab was given funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to pursue Strategic Science on warning labels on sugary drinks. We have about six months to start generating an evidence base on this topic and we don't know what the outcome will be. Will these labels influence consumers? Is there a better way to design the label? Will the labels have unintended consequences? Stay tuned.

**You are at an advanced stage in your career; you have accomplished so much at such a young age. What about yourself do you ascribe to your success?**

In some ways it feels like I've been doing research for a long time. I've been trying to understand what people eat and why for over ten years now. At the same time, a lot feels new as I start this faculty position. As for some of the success I've had up to this point, I attribute it to three big factors. The first is having great mentors. The second is being passionate about what I am doing; I love my work. The third is working really, really hard. I have been given amazing opportunities throughout my life to learn, to do research, and to push myself. I have always been very conscious of that good fortune. My mother is a Cuban immigrant and it's always in the back of my mind that I have opportunities that

she didn't and so many others don't have. I try my best to make the most of those opportunities.

**What do you do to keep your spirits high in light of so much yet to be accomplished for the population's health?**

There is certainly a lot more we need to do to improve population health and to address obesity specifically. But this is an exciting time for the kind of work that I do. We are starting to see different policies to address obesity being implemented around the world. Rather than feeling overwhelmed by how much further we have to go, I try to focus on the progress we are making and I find motivation in other great successes we've had in public health such as tobacco control. I believe we can have a similar impact on diet and obesity and now is the time to act. On a personal level, academic research can be a tough business, especially in public health. We spend a lot of our time thinking about the world's problems and we do this in a field that constantly throws rejection at you. Grants don't get funded. Papers get rejected. Studies don't work out. I try to keep my spirits high by remembering that "failures" mean I'm learning, and I love learning. I feel very lucky to have found such a rewarding career. I get to study research questions I'm not only intellectually interested in, but that can have a meaningful,

positive impact on the world. There is also a lot to love about my day-to-day. I have the chance to interact with an incredible group of smart, talented, and hardworking colleagues and students. I get a lot of energy from the terrific students I work with in my lab. Our weekly lab meetings are easily one of my favorite hours during my week. I also really enjoy reading about food policy issues and teaching students about them. I'm especially excited to teach my first course at the School of Public Health in Spring 1 (on Mondays and Wednesdays at 1:30pm), which will be called the Psychology and Politics of Food.

**I don't mean to be gloomy, but imagine yourself in the twilight of your life; looking back, what do you hope to see as the impact you have made in public health?**

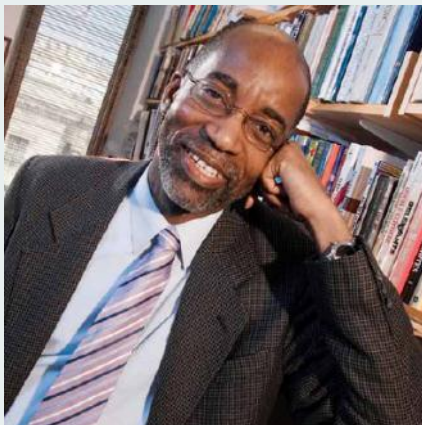
I hope by then we will have dramatically reduced the global burden of disease attributed to obesity and I hope that I will have made important contributions to that effort.

*Interview by Ben Kertman, SM '15,  
Photo: Whitney Waddell*

For more information on the PEACH Lab please visit: <http://www.peachlab.org/>

Follow Dr. Roberto on Twitter: [@RobertoCA](https://twitter.com/RobertoCA)

## Congratulations to David Williams



**David Williams** was listed as one of the World's Most Influential Scientific Minds in a report by Thomson Reuters ScienceWatch. Individuals on this list published multiple articles between 2002 and 2012 that ranked among the top one percent of the most cited in their field. David was ranked in two fields: Psychiatry/Psychology and Social Sciences, General. Congratulations, David!



## Research Spotlight

### Advancing Survivors' Knowledge (ASK) About Skin Cancer



Dermoscopic lens

Advancing Survivors' Knowledge (ASK) About Skin Cancer is a research study being led by SBS faculty and staff in collaboration with the Long-Term Follow-up Study (LTFU) at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Alan Geller is the Principal Investigator of the ASK study, a National Cancer Institute (NCI) funded initiative (2013-18). SBS staff **Robyn Keske** and **Jessica Davine** serve as Project Director and Project Manager and **Casey Daniel** is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow for the study. The ASK study's goal is to increase early detection of skin cancer among adult survivors of childhood cancer who previously received radiation therapy.

Treatment advances have increased childhood cancer survival rates greater than 80%, resulting in currently more than 420,000 long-term US survivors of childhood and adolescent cancer. Treatment advances have come at a huge cost as survivors are at increased risk for melanoma and at extremely high risk for basal cell carcinoma (BCC). New skin cancers among childhood cancer survivors more than tripled between 2001 and 2010; these survivors are diagnosed at an average age of 33, some 30 years earlier than in the non-radiation exposed population.

Early detection is crucial to reduce the morbidity caused by BCCs and the morbidity and mortality incurred due to melanoma. The extraordinarily *high rates of skin cancer and multiple recurrences in this young population point to the strong need to increase rates of skin self-examination and physician skin cancer examinations* and to ensure expedited follow-up care and treatment, especially among those who live where they have little access to dermatologists. The NCI and the Children's Oncology Group have issued recommendations for survivors to perform monthly skin self-exams and receive annual physician skin examinations, which have led to markedly improved outcomes in the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancers.

The ASK study will use a three-group comparative effectiveness design comparing: (1) *Patient activation and education (PAE)* including text messaging and web-based tutorials for a 12-month duration; (2) *PAE plus physician activation (PAE + MD)* adding physician activation/educational materials about survivors' increased skin cancer risk and conducting full-body skin exams; and (3) *PAE plus physician activation, plus teledermatology (PAE + MD +TD)* adding participant receipt of a dermoscopic lens to photograph suspect moles and lesions for review by the ASK study dermatologist. Participants will attach a dermoscopic lens to their smartphone which will provide high-power magnification of skin structures to allow for more rapid and accurate detection of potential skin cancers, including melanoma (see figure).

Results from this intervention will have important implications for childhood cancer survivors and other high-risk populations, including organ transplant recipients (> 225,000 recipients) and first-degree relatives of melanoma patients (>2 million Americans), who share strong deficits in skin self-examinations and physician examinations for skin cancer.

The ASK study aims to begin recruiting by the end of 2014. For more information, visit <http://youtu.be/WhDHGzTRSI0> to view a brief video about ASK and hear from Alan about why he believes this study is so important.





## Student Government Rep: **Alina Schnake-Mahl**

Dear SBS Community,

I'm excited to be your SBS student representative for this year! My name is Alina Schnake-Mahl and I'm a second year masters student in the Department. I was born and raised in Berkeley, CA and continue to have a ridiculous amount of Bay area pride. I went to Brandeis University outside of Boston for undergrad, and then returned home for a few years to work in Oakland at Kaiser Permanente before coming to HSPH. Outside of school you'll probably find me drinking coffee, playing soccer/doing yoga, or cooking fancy meals from my CSA.

I look forward to working with my fellow students to communicate our needs, hopes, and ideas with the Department faculty and student government to enhance our experience while at HSPH. I'm open to any and all ideas so please get in contact with me ([Alinasmahl@mail.harvard.edu](mailto:Alinasmahl@mail.harvard.edu))! or let me know if you just want to chat about SBS and its place within the school. I'm hoping to plan some events that bring together all the SBS students - masters 1st & 2nd years, MPHers and doc students.

I look forward to meeting those of you I haven't met, and further getting to know everyone else.

Best,

Alina Schnake-Mahl

## Community-Building at Landmark: **Ester Villalonga-Olives and Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald**

Meet your new Landmark liaisons, Ester and Claudia! They are here to build community and welcome new SBS postdocs, researchers and students who are based at Landmark.

An informal lunch is scheduled for November 6 which is open to all SBS folks based at Landmark. More details to come.



Ester Villalonga-Olives, Claudia Trudel-Fitzgerald

## 9th Teikyo-HSPH Symposium



Photo: Emily Cuccarese

On September 4th, The Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences hosted over 65 guests and speakers at the 9th annual Teikyo-HSPH Symposium, held at the Harvard Medical School's Joseph B. Martin Conference Center. This year's focus was on "Training the Next Generation of Public Health Leaders."

Through a series of talks and panel discussions, speakers including HSPH Dean, Julio Frenk, Alkanski Professor of Physics and Applied Physics at Harvard, Eric Mazur and Fred Fort Flowers and Daniel Fort Flowers Professor of Mechanical Engineering MIT's first director of digital learning, Sanjay Sarma shared innovations in education ranging from leadership training, massive open online courses (MOOCs) and "flipped" classrooms. The Teikyo-Harvard Program, established in 1993, links Teikyo University in partnership with the Harvard School of Public Health. The collaboration seeks to advance the study of biomedical sciences and health in Japan, the United States, and the world.



## Book Launch - Social Epidemiology, 2nd edition

On September 12th, we celebrated a successful book launch for *Social Epidemiology, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Nearly 100 attendees enjoyed a one-hour discussion which featured commentary by each of the three authors, Lisa F. Berkman, PhD, Ichiro Kawachi, MD, PhD, and M. Maria Glymour, PhD and an insightful look at the book's impact on the fields of sociology and epidemiology by our two guest discussants, Jason Beckfield, PhD and Michelle Williams, ScD. A wine and cheese reception and book signing followed.



Nancy Krieger, Jason Beckfield, Maria Glymour, Lisa Berkman, Ichiro Kawachi, Laura Kubzansky, and Michelle Williams



## Public Health and the Arts

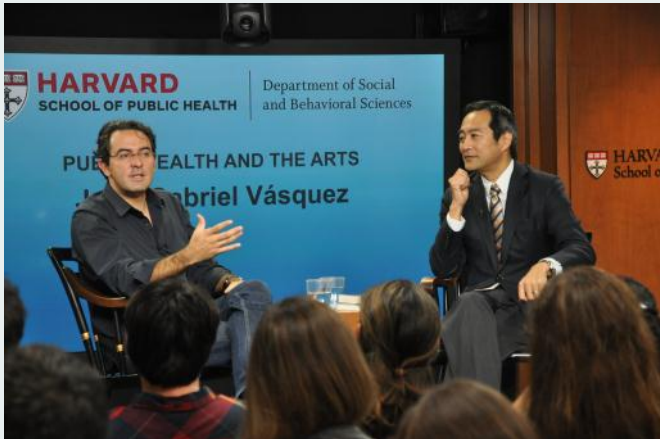
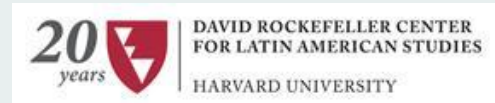


Photo: Whitney Waddell

health. Juan Gabriel Vásquez was born in Bogotá, Colombia in 1973. His books include *The Sound of Things Falling* (*El ruido de las cosas al caer*), *The Informers* (*Los informantes*), and *The Secret History of Costaguana* (*Historia secreta de Costaguana*). The event was co-sponsored by the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. Watch the video here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1aynSgRdb0&feature=youtu.be>

On October 1st, 40 guests joined Ichiro Kawachi in the HSPH Leadership Studio to listen to award-winning Colombian author, Juan Gabriel Vásquez discuss his books and the relationship between literature and public



## Announcements

Interested in how the built environment impacts our health? Want to meet others who share your interest? **The HSPH Healthy Communities Student Consortium's** mission is to promote healthier communities by reaching beyond traditional public health perspectives to explore how health challenges are dictated by place. To join, email [hsphealthycommunities@gmail.com](mailto:hsphealthycommunities@gmail.com)

Interested in health issues on the African continent? HSPH has a student organization for you! **Africa Health Forum** is open to all. To join AHF and receive announcements about exciting events and opportunities in your field of interest, contact Sarah at [shodin@mail.harvard.edu](mailto:shodin@mail.harvard.edu).

**Nancy Krieger and Pam Waterman** are starting up two newly-funded parallel projects with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Boston Public Health Commission to improve monitoring and mapping of health inequities.

**Vish Viswanath** was appointed to serve as a member of the CDC Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC), an advisory committee chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

**CORRECTION:** Because of an error in the Fall1 edition of the newsletter we wish to clarify that Laura Kubzansky is co-Director of the JPB Environmental Health Fellows Program (with Jack Spengler and Marc Weisskopf of EH) not Karestan Koenen as previously published.

**SBS 511 (Social Policy and Health in International Perspective)** taught by Mauricio Avendano Pabon will be offered during Winter Session (pending approval) from 1/8/15—1/15/15. By the end of this 2.5 credit course, students will be able to critically assess theories and evidence on how social policies and Welfare State institutions can influence health and health disparities.

**SBS 515 (Health Literacy: Measuring Accessibility of Health Information)** and **SBS 516 (Measures of The Health Literacy Environment)** taught by Rima Rudd will be offered during Winter Session (pending approval). Each course is 1.25 credits. **SBS 515** will meet on 1/5/15—1/7/15 and on 1/20/15. **SBS 516** will meet on 1/12/15—1/14/15 and 1/20/15. These courses will enable participants to identify and analyze literacy related barriers, build proficiency in task analysis, and use and apply available tools for materials and environmental assessment.

**WGH250 (Embodying Gender: Public Health, Biology, and the Body Politic)** taught by Nancy Krieger, will be offered during Winter Session from 1/14/15—1/23/15. The course is 2.5 credits and is capped at 16 students. Prerequisites include WGH211 or WGH210 or SBS506 or SBS507, or prior course with gender analysis to be approved by Dr. Krieger.

**The Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston** encourages graduate students to spend part of their careers in public service through a paid summer internship in state and local agencies in the Boston area. Fellows participate in weekly seminars with leading practitioners and scholars and receive a \$7000 stipend. Please email: [polly@rappaportinstitute.org](mailto:polly@rappaportinstitute.org)

**The Cancer Prevention Fellowship** is accepting predoctoral and postdoctoral applications. Applications from underrepresented minorities, women, and applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds are especially encouraged. U.S. citizenship or permanent residency required. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/cancer-prevention-fellowship/application/>

**The Yerby Postdoctoral Fellowship** is now accepting applications. The Program seeks highly qualified candidates with established research interests and a doctoral degree in public health-related fields. Applicants from groups historically underrepresented in U.S. health-related sciences are especially encouraged. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/faculty-affairs/yerby-postdoctoral-fellowship-program/application-materials/>

Join SBS alums and current students at the **2014 Schweitzer Leadership Conference on Saturday, November 8, from 8:00am - 6:00pm** at the Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel. Register: <http://schweitzerfellowship.givezooks.com/events/2014-albert-schweitzer-fellowship-leadership-conference>

**The Spirit of 1848 Caucus program** for the American Public Health Association 142<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting (APHA, Nov 15-19, 2014, in New Orleans, LA) may be seen at: <https://apha.confex.com/apha/142am/webprogram/SPT1848.html> -- and a flyer for the program can be downloaded from: <http://www.spiritof1848.org/apha%202014%20preview.html>. Several of the sessions include participants from SBS: Nancy Krieger, Allegra Gordon, and Rebekka Lee, with help in the background from Pam Waterman!

**Questions, suggestions, ideas? Email us: [sbs@hsph.harvard.edu](mailto:sbs@hsph.harvard.edu)**

Editors: Alfredo Perez-Hidalgo, Rubim Rwakabuba, Whitney Waddell

Layout and Design: Rubim Rwakabuba, Whitney Waddell

Contributing Writers: Jessica Davine, Ichiro Kawachi, Ben Kertman, Christina Roberto, Whitney Waddell