

The Shape We're In: Assignment ideas

This list is under construction. This is a beginning. We'll keep adding to it, suggesting specific examples, adding new suggested assignments. Got an idea to add? We'd love to hear it. Please send it to Nancy O'Hara Tompkins at ntompkins@hsc.wvu.edu.

- **Choose a story about an individual or individuals.**
 - Imagine this individual was your client. Develop a multi-step ideal treatment plan and explain why you chose the approaches you chose. Include physical health and mental health/health of the spirit.
 - Read about the research on the importance of friends in weight loss: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/13/magazine/13contagion-t.html?pagewanted=all>. Then read the controversy about it: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/09/health/09network.html>. Discuss the Mud River women stories (URLs) in the light of these stories.
 - Choose one of the stories about individuals from *The Shape We're In*. What services could have made it easier for this person to achieve his or her goals?
- **Read several stories about individuals.** then find an actual person in the community who has found a way to become more fit. Write that person's story. Include:
 - Information about their SES status (Weave it in gracefully)
 - Information about their community
 - An account of people or programs who helped them improve.
 - National / state context
- **Read several stories about promising community programs.** Find a promising/effective program in your community and write about it. You'll want to focus on at least one individual in that program, use their story to show how the program works. Include any information about the impact / success of the program. This can be before/after stats (blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, etc.) or accounts ' of how individuals' numbers have changed. Put it in context with national and state info/statistics. Draw stats from the first story, "This is a public health emergency" and others.
- **Write an editorial based on a story.** Look at the editorials included in the story. An editorial writer chooses material from a given story, then makes an argument for something that should happen, based on the information presented in the story and on other information of the writer's choice. Choose a story, decide what point, you want to make in your editorial, then

write a well-supported editorial, referring to the story, to at least one research study, and adding other information from other sources. Teachers: You may want students, as a group, to read a story and an editorial that was drawn from it and discuss in class before they try to write their own. There are several examples on this site.

- **Read “Fitness and Faith.”** (URL) Then listen to Pastor Stephen Willis (YOUTUBE URL) talk about the Biblical importance of taking care of the body God supplied. Choose a church and determine whether the church is taking any kind of steps to help members achieve better health. Interview the pastor about his or her philosophy on that subject, exploring the reasons the church does or does not involve itself in members’ physical health.
 - **Variation:** Find two churches, one that does take active steps to help members be more healthy and one that does not. Interview both pastors.
- **Multimedia:** Look at the videos developed by the WVU journalism students. Develop your own video.

Literature and policy assignments:

- **Policies and Environments.** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s strategy for reversing the childhood obesity epidemic focuses on changing policies and environments. After students read designated articles about WV childhood obesity, have them review the RWJF six policy priorities that evidence suggests will have the greatest and longest-lasting impact (<http://www.rwjf.org/en/about-rwjf/program-areas/childhood-obesity/strategy.html>). Ask students to connect a policy priority to a story about a community program and describe how the policy priority could have an impact.
- **Literature Review.** Many of the articles in *The Shape We’re In* can be paired with an assignment to review a particular aspect of the literature. Encourage students to use peer-reviewed, up-to-date literature. Topics could include active living in rural environments, family influences on healthy eating, and school-based interventions to promote healthy eating and physical activity.
- **Debate.** Many *Shape* articles provide an interesting, real-life basis for debating various sides of an issue, eg, school vs. family responsibility for childhood obesity; individual responsibility vs. societal responsibility for obesity; individual vs. community responsibility for diabetes control.
- **Theories, Constructs and Models of Behavior Change.** Many *Shape* stories can be used to illustrate various social/behavioral theories, constructs and models. Use the stories to illustrate relevant theories, constructs and models such as The Health Belief Model, Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Cognitive Theory, Stages of Change Theory, and the Socio-ecological Model.