

Updated March 3, 2025

Elijah J. Watson, MA

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EDUCATION

PhD in Anthropology, Northwestern University (expected 2026)

- NIH F31 Fellow & NSF Graduate Research Fellow
- Certificate in Society, Biology, and Health
- *Committee*: Chris Kuzawa (Co-chair, biological anthropology, epidemiology); Sera Young (Co-chair, biocultural medical anthropology, global health); Lucia Petito (biostatistics, causal inference, epidemiology); Thomas McDade (biological anthropology); Julia Behrman (sociology, demography)

MPH in Epidemiology, Northwestern University (expected 2026)

- *Thesis*: Racialized economic segregation in Chicago and COVID-19 antibody prevalence before the 2020 vaccine rollout: An application of Bayesian multilevel regression and poststratification

MA in Anthropology, Northwestern University (2023)

BA in Anthropology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2019)

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-reviewed manuscript

1. Li, C., R Stebbins, G Noppert, C Carney, C Liu, A Sapp, **EJ Watson**, A Aiello. (2024). Peripheral Immune Function and Alzheimer's Disease: A Living Systematic Review and Critical Appraisal. *Molecular Psychiatry*. ([link](#))
2. Butler, M., B Smart, **EJ Watson**, S Narla, L Keenan-Devlin. (2023). Breastfeeding durations differ at the intersection of race/ethnicity and educational attainment in a nationally representative sample from the US. *Journal of Human Lactation*. ([link](#))
3. Manus, M. B., **Watson, EJ.**, Kuthyar, S., Carba, D., Belarmino, N. M., McDade, T. W., Kuzawa, C. W., & Amato, K. R. (2023). Prenatal household size and composition are associated with infant fecal bacterial diversity in Cebu, Philippines. *American Journal of Biological Anthropology*. ([link](#))
4. Thompson AL, Nicholas KM, **Watson EJ**, Terán E, Bentley ME. Water, food, and the dual burden of disease in Galápagos, Ecuador. (2019). *American Journal of Human Biology*. ([link](#))

Manuscripts under review

Elijah Watson, Delaney Glass, Lucia Petito. "Toward New Directions in Human Biology: A Roadmap for Causal Inference with Observational Data." Revise & Resubmit. *American Journal of Human Biology*.

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Working papers

Elijah Watson, Thomas McDade, Michael Kobor, Calen Ryan, Nanette Lee, Linda Adair, Christopher Kuzawa. “Evaluating epigenetic clocks as biomarkers of aging among middle-aged women in the Cebu, Philippines.”

Elijah Watson. “It’s Biomedical Standard Time Somewhere: Can Epigenetic Clock Algorithms Reveal Local Biologies?”

In-progress dissertation papers:

- Effects of housing damage from Typhoon Ruping (1990) at age 7 on epigenetic aging assessed in early adulthood (age 21) and midlife (age 40): Evidence from the Cebu Longitudinal Health and Nutrition Survey (CLHNS) in the Philippines
- Effects of housing damage from Typhoon Odette (2021) on household water insecurity and epigenetic aging two years later (2023) in Cebu, Philippines (CLHNS)
- Effects of schooling on the risk of intimate partner violence among women in the Philippines: Quasi-experimental evidence from the Demographic & Health Surveys and an educational policy reform

PRESENTATIONS, PUBLISHED ABSTRACTS, AND LECTURES

Oral presentations

1. **EJ Watson**, Delaney Glass, Lucia Petito. “Toward New Directions in Human Biology: A Roadmap for Causal Inference with Observational Data.” Human Biology Association. Baltimore, MD. April 2025.
2. **EJ Watson**. “It’s Biomedical Standard Time somewhere: Unsettling the framing of epigenetic aging as a causal mechanism linking social and environmental exposures to health.” EpiCause 2024: Causality in Epidemiology’ meeting at the Institute of Philosophy and Scientific Method. Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Austria. May 2024.
3. **EJ Watson**, TW McDade, CP Ryan, NR Lee, JL MacIsaac, K Dever, P Atashzay, MS Kobor, CW Kuzawa. “Evaluating the convergent and predictive validity of epigenetic age acceleration measured from common epigenetic clocks in Cebu, Philippines.” Human Biology Association. Los Angeles, CA. April 2024.
4. **Watson, EJ**, HJ Bethancourt, A Nickow, SL Young. “Water insecurity experiences and psychological distress among impoverished Ghanaian households.” UNC Water & Health Conference. Chapel Hill, NC (virtual). October 2021.

Poster presentations

1. **Watson, EJ**, LC Petito, TW McDade, SL Young, CW Kuzawa. “Intergenerational educational attainment and mental health in young adulthood among a Filipino birth cohort.” Society for Epidemiologic Research. Portland, OR. June 2023.

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2. **Watson, EJ**, AL Thompson. “A descriptive analysis of gender, migration status, and inflammation among adults living in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador in 2012.” Human Biology Association. Reno, NV (virtual). April 2023.
3. **Watson, EJ**, AK Johnson, C. Scott Smith, M Newcomb, R Saber, JM Schrock, DT Ryan, AR Demonbreun, B Mustanski, R D’Aquila, EM McNally, TW McDade. “Neighborhood racialized economic segregation and SARS-CoV-2 seropositivity among a Chicago adult community-based sample.” Society for Epidemiologic Research. Chicago, IL. June 2022.
4. **Watson, EJ**, ME Bentley, AL Thompson. “Social Predictors of Diet Quality in Galápagos, Ecuador.” Human Biology Association. Cleveland, OH. March 2019.

Lectures / Talks / Panels

1. “Statistical versus causal inference.” (Remote). Invited panelist for a round table discussion hosted by the Frontiers in Social Evolution (FINE) Seminar — October 2022.
2. “A primer on using directed acyclic graphs for causal inference.” Workshop presentation for Northwestern’s Evolutionary & Ecological Approaches to Health research group meeting — October 2022.

FELLOWSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS, & AWARDS

- **E.E. Hunt, Jr. Student Award for Outstanding Podium Presentation**, Human Biology Association — 2024
- **Tuition Scholarship**, Short course on causal inference, Department of Epidemiology, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health — 2022
- **Travel Award**, Interdisciplinary Association of Population Health Scientists — 2022
- **Society, Biology, and Health Cluster Fellow**, Northwestern University — 2021
- **National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship** — 2020
- **Honigmann Undergraduate Thesis Award**, UNC Dept. of Anthropology — 2019
- **Travel Award**, Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics — 2019 Conference to Increase Diversity in Mathematical Modeling & Public Health

GRANT SUPPORT

Awarded

- **F31 Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral Individual National Research Service Award (NRSA)**: “Socioeconomic status across the life course and epigenetic age acceleration in adulthood: Evidence from two generations of a Filipino birth cohort study” (National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Aging)
- **UNC Frances L. Phillips Travel Scholarship**: Awarded to support travel to the Galapagos Islands and South Africa for fieldwork and experiential learning to inform future research on food and water insecurity. June 2019 – December 2019 (\$9,500)

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- **UNC Undergraduate Research Consultant Team Grant:** Pilot study of food and water security on Isla Isabela, Galápagos (*collaboration with the Universidad San Francisco de Quito & UNC-USFQ Galápagos Science Center*) – 2019 (\$10,000)
- **UNC Gillian T. Cell Senior Thesis Research Grant** – 2018
- **UNC Summer Internship Grant** – Awarded to support research practicum and training in statistical programming at the Carolina Population Center.

RESEARCH POSITIONS & RELATED EXPERIENCE

UNC Center for Galápagos Studies / Galápagos Science Center

Field Research – Isabela Island, Galapagos, 6/2019–8/2019

Carolina Population Center, UNC-Chapel Hill

Research Intern, 5/2018–7/2018

UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, Department of Epidemiology

Research Assistant, 2/2018–5/2018

Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town, South Africa

Refugee/Migrant Employment Access Programme Intern, 8–12/2017

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor of Record – Northwestern University

- **“Climate Change and Sustainability in Health Care”** – Winter 2025
 - Elective seminar for first year medical students at the Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine
 - Lead seminar coordinator (in attendance at all sessions) and lecturer for 2 out of 5 sessions

Teaching Assistant – Northwestern University

- **“Intermediate Epidemiology”** – BIOSTAT 401 – Fall 2023
 - Taught by Dr. Amy Johnson and Dr. Andrew Naidech (MPH/MS course)
 - Lectured on “Causal Inference with Directed Acyclic Graphs”
- **“Introduction to Epidemiology”** – BIOSTAT 301 – Summer 2023
 - Taught by Peter Serrano, MPH (MPH/MS course)
- **“The Social Determinants of Health”** – Global Health 222 – Spring 2023
 - Taught by Dr. Charlayne Mitchell (undergraduate course)
- **“Introduction to Global Health”** – Public Health/Global Health 390 – Fall 2022
 - Taught by Dr. Bill Leonard (combined undergraduate/MPH course)

Workshop Instructor – Northwestern University

- **R for Social Data Science** – 6 week summer workshop attended by students and one faculty member in the Society, Biology, and Health graduate cluster program

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PUBLIC WRITING

“Opinion: Climate studies, National Institutes of Health Under Attack” — op-ed in the [Asheville Citizen Times](#) (2025)

OUTREACH

Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago / Northwestern Science in Society Program
Science Club Mentor, Pedersen-McCormick Boys & Girls Club (2023 – 2024)

SERVICE

Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine, Program in Public Health
Curriculum Committee (2025 – Present)

Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science
Student Committee, Webinar Co-Chair (2023 – Present)

MENTORSHIP

Silas Colombara, Undergraduate Research Mentee, Northwestern (2023 – Present)

MEMBERSHIPS

Population Association of America, Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science, Society for Epidemiologic Research, Human Biology Association

RESEARCH SKILLS

- Statistical analysis using R (advanced), Stata (proficient), SAS (basic)
- Quarto/RMarkdown
- Git/GitHub
- Ethnographic methods
- Qualitative interviewing and analysis