

SOC 4246 SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

University of Minnesota

Spring 2005

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:15-12:30

Hubert H. Humphrey Center, Room 15

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course, we begin with the idea that we cannot understand the topics of health and illness simply by looking at biological phenomena and medical knowledge, but, instead, we must also consider a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural forces. Sociologists of health and illness (also known as “medical sociologists”) use sociological perspectives and methods to understand topics such as: social meanings of illness; patterns in the distribution of health and illness; the ways people seek help for and manage their illnesses; the ways doctors, nurses, and patients interact with each other; the cultural, organizational, and economic functioning of various healthcare institutions; and social movements surrounding health, including the ways some deviant behaviors are “medicalized” while others are not. Why is it that poorer people are more likely than wealthier people to have health problems and shorter life expectancies? Why is it the case that, when faced with very similar circumstances, some people seek medical attention while others do not? What happens when these people come in contact with the medical system? As a society, how do our labels for “medical problems” change over time so that medical jurisdiction over a problem can expand or recede?

This course is designed to provide a broad overview of the field of medical sociology, and, to this end, we will address the topics listed above and others. Furthermore, we will explicitly address issues of cultural diversity by examining how people with different social characteristics (race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation) have systematically different health-related experiences and outcomes. Weekly class meetings will consist primarily of lectures, but will also include discussion, demonstrations, group activities, and video presentations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To provide students with a broad overview of the field of sociology of health and illness.
- To increase students’ awareness of cultural diversity by examining how issues such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation shape health and illness in contemporary U.S. society.
- To contextualize the course in ways that enable students to understand links between the subfield and sociology more generally.
- To highlight health policy implications of medical sociology, and to encourage students to consider policy implications in other areas of sociology.

MATERIALS:

There is one book required for this course, which is available at the Coffman bookstore and is also on reserve at Wilson library.

- Brown, Phil. 2003. *Perspectives in Medical Sociology, 3rd Edition*. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. Class participation and in-class assignments (100 points or 10% of total grade). The success of this class depends in part on your active and thoughtful participation. Class participation includes attending class, keeping up on assigned readings, contributing to class discussions, and participating effectively in small group activities or discussions.

To facilitate this process, I ask that you come to each class meeting having prepared one written discussion question based on the assigned readings and/or previous lecture material. Your question does not have to be typed, but it should be on a piece of paper that could be turned in or traded with a classmate (keeping a running log of questions on one sheet of paper is fine, as long as someone else reading the page can see which question is the most recent). By having prepared a question in advance, it is my hope that you will have given some thought to the material beforehand, and will be better prepared to engage in discussion of it, either with the whole class or in small group activities.

I will periodically collect these questions and assign points for them as part of your class participation grade. The number of points assigned to each question is contingent on the total number of times I collect them during the semester, but I anticipate doing so 5-7 times total. These assignments are not scheduled in advance, must be turned in during class, and cannot be made up if you are absent from class unless you have provided a documented excuse for your absence (see make-up exam policy for excused absences).

2. Exams (900 points or 90% of total grade).

There will be 4 exams in this class. Each exam will be a combination of identification, short answer, and essay questions. Exam #4 will have a cumulative dimension in that I will expect your essay answers to reflect an awareness of earlier material where appropriate, but will not explicitly cover material from the entire semester.

All materials covered in the assigned readings and during class meetings are eligible for inclusion in exams. If you know in advance that you will be absent for an exam, I urge you to make arrangements with me to take the exam in advance. Students who miss an exam without making prior arrangements with me must have a documented excuse (e.g., verified illness or family emergency) for missing class in order to receive a make-up exam. Make-up exams are generally different from in-class exams, both in the type and content of questions (e.g., more essays, fewer multiple choice questions).

GRADING:

There is a total of 1,000 points available in this course:

Exam #1 = 150 points (Thursday, February 3)

Exam #2 = 250 points (Thursday, March 3)

Exam #3 = 250 points (Thursday, April 7)

Exam #4 = 250 points (Thursday, May 5)

CLASS PARTICIPATION = 100 points

Please note that I reserve “A” grades for outstanding work that demonstrates mastery of course materials and creativity in engaging them. You can receive “B” grades by doing all of the work well, and “C” grades by adequately meeting all of the course requirements. I use the following grading scale, although I reserve the right to adjust it.

970-1,000	A+	870-899	B+	770-799	C+	670-699	D+	599 and below	F
930-969	A	830-869	B	730-769	C	630-669	D		
900-929	A-	800-829	B-	700-729	C-	600-629	D-		

WHAT I EXPECT OF YOU:

1. *Make a sincere effort to learn the course material.* This includes completing assigned readings on time and bringing your reader to each class session. It also includes talking to me so that I can help you if you are struggling with the course. I respect that students have family and work responsibilities, but to do well in this class you'll need to do the work.

2. *Treat everyone in the class with respect.* This includes listening to others when they are speaking, sharing the floor with other students, giving consideration to opinions which differ from yours, and not disrupting other student's learning experiences or my teaching.

3. *Behave with common courtesy.* Arrive to class on time and, barring emergency, remain for the entire class period. Don't read the newspaper, chit-chat, or snooze during class. Please turn off cell phones, beepers, or any other electronic devices that may disrupt class. If you know you need to leave class early, it is less distracting for me if you let me know before class starts, and then choose a seat close to the exit.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT OF ME:

1. *Make a sincere effort to teach this course to the best of my ability.* This includes teaching in a way that is appropriate for your skills and abilities, and in a way that is as responsive to your needs as is feasible. It also means that I strive to keep this class updated and interesting so it will be engaging for all of us.

2. *Treat you with respect and impartiality.* This especially includes being prepared for class, returning your written work in a timely way, and assuring fair, impartial, and consistent grading on exams and assignments. It also means that I will be open to diverse perspectives expressed in class.

3. *Behave with common courtesy.* This especially includes being on time to class & office hours, finishing class on time, and responding to your emails and phone calls in a timely way. It also means that I will do my best to make myself available to you for appointments outside of office hours when necessary.

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES:

1. In this course, all exams and in-class assignments should be completed in class and therefore turned in directly to me. However, if you find yourself in the position of trying to turn something in at another time, please be aware that as a general policy *I do not accept assignments submitted electronically, by fax, or under my office door.* I do accept assignments submitted in class, to me personally, or to my mailbox in the Sociology Department main office (909 Social Sciences), where an administrative assistant should sign and date the assignment before it is turned in. (See "Requirements" section for late and make-up exam policies.)

2. I do not authorize class notes generated by note-taking services for this course.

3. Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities, so please notify me in the first week of classes if you have specific needs.

4. Scholastic misconduct, which includes cheating and plagiarism, will not be tolerated and will be dealt with according to University policy. Instances of cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for this course. (Please see attached page of University and Department policies.)

5. Incompletes are given only in the most extenuating of circumstances, and never in lieu of a failing grade. Legitimate reasons for incompletes include verified illnesses and family emergencies, which will require written documentation. (Please see attached page of University and Department policies.)

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

Please do all assigned readings prior to the class meeting for which they are assigned. Courses designated with “*” address the CLE cultural diversity theme.

I. THE SOCIAL & THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction to course

Overview of syllabus, course content & expectations

T Jan 18 Syllabus

Introduction to Medical Sociology

Overview of the scope of medical sociology; health differentials over time and across populations; why social characteristics matter for health

R Jan 20 1. McCally et al, “Poverty and Ill Health” *

Social Inequality, Health & Illness

Social epidemiology; race, gender, class, and occupational patterns in morbidity and mortality

T Jan 25 2. Williams, “Race, SES, and Health” *
3. Lorber, “Women get Sicker but Men Die Quicker” *

R Jan 27 8. Brown, “Popular Epidemiology and Toxic Waste Contamination: Lay and Professional Ways of Knowing”

Theoretical Perspectives/Methods

Durkheim’s suicide research; social conditions as fundamental causes of disease; social characteristics and variations in diagnoses

T Feb 1 4. Brown, “Naming and Framing”
7. Pearlin & Aneshensel, “Stress, Coping & Social Supports”

R Feb 3 **EXAM #1**

II. BEING ILL AND GETTING CARE: WHY IT DIFFERS ACCORDING TO SOCIAL & CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

Illness Experiences & Help-seeking behavior

The effect of socioeconomic status on people’s choices about going to a doctor; role of social networks in help-seeking; role of social characteristics in decision-making and health experiences

T Feb 8 10. Zola, “Pathways to the Doctor”
11. Williams, “The Genesis of Chronic Illness: Narrative Reconstruction”

R Feb 10 12. Weitz, “Life with AIDS” *

Patient-Provider Interaction

Women's experiences in medical settings; providers' assessments of patient compliance; barriers to following medical recommendations

- T Feb 15 13. Zimmerman, "The Medical Management of Femininity"*
14. Freidson, "The Social Organization of Illness"

- R Feb 17 15. Lyman, "Infantilization: The Medical Model of Care"

Alternative Medicine

Healthcare outside of formal medical arenas; why some groups are more likely to engage in alternative medicine; self-care and the elderly

- T Feb 22 16. Dill et al., "The Meaning and Practice of Self-Care by Older Adults"*

- R Feb 24 17. Dundas Todd, "Western Reflections on Eastern Medicine"
18. Goldstein, "The Emergence of Alternative Medicine"

Medical Experiments & Social Control

History of medical experimentation; role of race, poverty & prisoners in medical experimentation

- T Mar 1 19. Jones, "The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment"*
20. Fox and Swazey, "Transplantation and the Medical Commons"

- R Mar 3 **EXAM #2**

III. THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM: HOW IT WORKS AND WHO IT EMPLOYS

The American healthcare industry

Types of healthcare service; the "Golden Age" of medicine; the managed care revolution; rates of uninsured in the U.S. and their implications; policy options

- T Mar 8 23. Birenbaum, "What is Managed Care?"
24. Gray, "The Evolution of Investor-Owned Hospital Companies"

- R Mar 10 25. Light, "The Origins and Rise of Managed Care"
26. Etheridge et al., "What is Driving Health System Change?"

Mar 15-17 SPRING BREAK

Institutional settings

History of modern hospitals & ambulatory care; decision-making in critical care settings

- T Mar 22 27. Rosenberg, "The Rise of the Modern Hospital"

- R Mar 24 28. Zussman, "The Patient in the Intensive Care Unit"

Health care providers

History of the medical profession; changing characteristics of medical providers; physician authority & the demise of house calls; medical education

T Mar 29 29. Starr, "The Growth of Medical Authority"*

R Mar 31 32. Chambliss, "Nurses' Role: Caring, Professionalism, and Subordination"

Health care providers

Emergence of new medical professions; nursing shortages; gender & informal caretaking; long-term care for elderly; clinical decision making

T Apr 5 ---

R Apr 7 EXAM #3

IV. MEDICALIZATION, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE: HOW CULTURAL DIFFERENCES SHAPE DEFINITIONS OF ILLNESS

Medicalization of Deviance, part 1

Definitions of illness and patients' social identities; historical changes in what counts as illness; social problems & the management of deviance

T Apr 12 5. Conrad, "Medicalization and Social Control"*

R Apr 14 Selection from Conrad and Schneider, *Medicalization of Deviance**
(to be distributed in class)

Medicalization of Deviance, part 2

Medicalization of pregnancy, menstruation & menopause; professional struggles over definitions of disease; control over women under medical model

T Apr 19 Selection from Davis-Floyd, *Birth as an American Rite of Passage**
(to be distributed in class)

R Apr 21 ---

Social Movements & Health, part 1

How health epidemics take shape and garner attention; the escalation of AIDS in the U.S.; comparisons with global AIDS crises

T Apr 26 33. Epstein, "Democracy, Expertise, and AIDS Treatment Activism"*
34. Avery, "Breathing Life into Ourselves: The Evolution of the National Black Women's Health Project"

R Apr 28 35. Phoenix, "Getting the Lead Out of the Community"

Social Movements & Health, part 2

Importance of inequality & poverty for health policy; role of healthcare in domestic politics; wrap-up & closing comments

T May 3 36. Himmelstein and Woolhandler, "A National Health Program for the United States: A Physician's Proposal"*

R May 5 **EXAM #4**

THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM FOR THIS COURSE.