

# Sociology of Health and Health Care

Eastern Illinois University  
Soc 4820-001 Spring 2013

**Class:** MW 2:00-3:15

**Professor:** Darren Hendrickson, Ph.D.

**Phone:** 581-8364

**Office Hours:** MW 3:30-4:30, Th 12:00-2:00, or by appointment

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“The study of medical care and the treatment of illness in a society is a concern of the sociologist because the practice of medicine affects every aspect of complex societies.”

- Gary Albrecht

## ***Required Texts/Readings:***

- William C. Cockerham. 2010. *Medical Sociology*. 11<sup>th</sup> edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Select Articles Available on the Course Desire2Learn Page

## ***Course Description and Objectives:***

This course is designed to provide a conceptual and substantive overview of the sociology of health and health care, also known as medical sociology. The field of medical sociology is rather large and no single course could cover its entire breadth and depth. However, in this course we will examine some of the fundamental sociological issues surrounding health and illness. For example, we will address some of the following questions: What is health? How do race, class, and gender influence health and illness? Is stress hazardous to your health? What is the U.S. health care crisis? How is the health care system organized in other nations?

The specific objectives for this course are as follows:

- Develop an understanding of the contributions that sociology makes to knowledge about health and illness; and the ways in which the field of medicine illustrates sociological concepts and theories.
- Address the social distribution of health and illness.
- Develop a sociological understanding of both health lifestyles and the illness experience.
- Critically review the social organization of the health care system in the United States, as well as the health care systems in other developed and developing nations.

These objectives will be met through lectures, class discussions, readings, videos, writing assignments, and examinations.

Of course, issues of health and health care have been addressed by a wide range of scholars, politicians, and citizens. However, we will examine these issue from the sociological perspective. The sociological perspective draws our attention to how health, illness, and health care are shaped by social factors – culture, social structure, community, and social organizations.

## ***Readings:***

The reading assignments for each week are indicated below in the course schedule. You are expected to complete the assigned readings in advance of the respective class session so you will be prepared for lecture and discussion. In class we will deal with additional and occasionally different material than is found in the corresponding readings. Nonetheless, class lectures and discussion are designed to build off of and complement assigned readings.

## ***Course Requirements:***

(1). *Examinations.* There will be a total of three examinations in this course. Two of the exams are scheduled during the semester and will take place during the regular class time (see course schedule). The third exam will be administered during finals week on Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> from 8:00 - 10:00.

(2). *Sociology of Health Research Paper.* In this course you are required to write a research paper on a sociology of health and health care topic of your choice. We will be discussing and reading about a wide range of topics related to the sociology of health and health care (e.g. social demography of health, illness behavior, social epidemiology, health care policy) but as indicated in the course description no single course can completely cover the entire breadth of medical sociology. Subsequently, one of the primary objectives of this research paper is to provide you an opportunity to research and begin developing an in-depth sociological knowledge of a specific health/health care related topic that is of interest to you. Specific instructions for the research paper will be distributed in class at a later date.

(3). *Video Reviews.* In this course we are going to watch a number of different videos to illustrate the concepts, theories, and ideas that we are addressing. As a result, I am requiring you to write *four* video reviews during this course. The specific purpose of these reviews is to assess your ability to apply information from videos to other relevant course material. Subsequently, these video reviews require you to discuss, in writing, how the information presented in the video connects with other course material (i.e. readings & lectures). It is essential that in writing your video reviews you *explicitly* connect the material in the video with other relevant course content. Approximately 8 to 10 videos will be shown throughout the semester so you may choose the *four* you want to review. This is not a “*best of*” assignment, you may only turn in four video reviews. The specific instructions are as follows:

- Your video review should be more than a summary of what you watched, you are required to discuss how material presented in the video specifically connects to the material we are covering, or have covered, in the course. In other words, explicitly explore and discuss the links between the video and other course materials (i.e. readings & lectures)
- Video reviews are to be typed, double spaced, and no more than two pages. Be sure to include the video title at the beginning of the review.
- *Video reviews are due the class period after the video is shown. Late video reviews will not be accepted.*

(4). *Participation.* Students are expected to both raise and answer questions and remain active participants in this course. In this course I will pose many questions for discussion and everyone is expected to contribute to that discussion – this is learning. Participation, discussion, and questions are expected and required from all students.

**Course Requirements for Graduate Students:**

If you are taking this course for graduate credit, the course requirements are a bit different. You are responsible for all the requirements listed above (exams, research paper, video reviews, and participation). In addition to those requirements, graduate students are required to write a book review. You have your choice of reviewing one of the following books:

Fadiman, Anne. 1997. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down.* New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Skloot, Rebecca. 2010. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks.* New York, NY: Crown Publishers.

Copies of these books are available either at Booth Library or via the interlibrary loan system. If you are having difficulty obtaining a copy of the book you would like to review please see me so that we can arrange for you to get a copy. Specific details for the book review will be distributed in class.

**Grading Scale:**

100%-90%.....A  
 89%-80%.....B  
 79%-70%.....C  
 69%-60%.....D  
 59%-0%.....F

**Basis for Final Grade:**

Exam #1.....22%  
 Exam #2.....22%  
 Exam #3.....22%  
 Research Paper.....22%  
 Video Reviews.....12%

**Basis for Final Grade:  
 (Graduate Students)**

Exam #1.....20%  
 Exam #2.....20%  
 Exam #3.....20%  
 Research Paper.....20%  
 Video Reviews..... 5%  
 Book Review.....15%

**Course Schedule:**

Jan. 7 - Jan. 9	General Introduction to the Course Chapter 1: Medical Sociology
Jan. 14 - Jan. 16	Chapter 2: Epidemiology <i>Reading:</i> Bruce Link and Jo Phelan. “Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease.”
Jan. 23	Chapter 3: Social Demography of Health: Social Class
Jan. 28 - Jan. 30	Chapter 3: Social Demography of Health: Social Class (cont’d) Chapter 4: Social Demography of Health: Gender, Age, & Race
Feb. 4 - Feb. 6	Chapter 4: Social Demography of Health: Gender, Age, & Race (cont’d) <i>Reading:</i> David R. Williams and Michelle Sternthal. “Understanding Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions”

Feb. 11 - Feb. 13 Chapter 5: Social Stress and Health  
*Reading:* Peggy A. Thoits. "Stress and Health: Major Findings and Policy Implications."

**Exam #1 – Monday, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>**

Feb. 18 - Feb. 20 Chapter 5: Social Stress and Health (cont'd)  
Chapter 7: Illness Behavior

Feb. 25 - Feb. 27 Chapter 7: Illness Behavior (cont'd)  
*Reading:* Kristen K. Barker. "The Social Construction of Illness: Medicalization and Contested Illness."

Mar. 4 - Mar. 6 Chapter 8: The Sick Role  
Chapter 10: Healing Options

Mar. 11 - Mar. 15 ☺☺☺ *Spring Break* ☺☺☺

Mar. 18 - Mar. 20 Chapter 10: Healing Options (cont'd)

**Exam #2 – Wednesday, Mar. 20<sup>th</sup>**

Mar. 25 - Mar. 27 Chapter 9: Doctor-Patient Interaction  
Chapter 11: Physicians

Apr. 1 - Apr. 3 Chapter 11: Physicians (cont'd)  
Chapter 12: The Physician in a Changing Society  
*Reading:* Stefan Timmermans and Hyeyoung Oh. "The Continued Social Transformation of the Medical Profession."

Apr. 8 - Apr. 10 Chapter 13: Nurses, Physician Assistants, Pharmacists, and Midwives  
Chapter 15: Health Care Delivery and Social Policy in the U.S.

Apr. 15 - Apr. 17 Chapter 15: Health Care Delivery and Social Policy in the U.S. (cont'd)  
*Reading:* David Mechanic and Donna D. McAlpine. "Sociology of Health Care Reform: Building on Research and Analysis to Improve Health Care."

Apr. 22 - Apr. 24 Chapter 16: Global Health Care

**Exam #3 – Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> – 8:00 - 10:00**

***Policies:***

*Attendance:* Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis. Attendance will be taken on a regular basis, but it will not be used as part of your final grade determination. However, regular class attendance is strongly recommended. Much of the material presented during class time will be included on the examinations. You are responsible for any course

material that you miss if you are not in class, regardless of the reason for your absence. Most certainly your grade will suffer if you miss a number of classes.

*Late/Missed Assignments & Exams:* Assignments are to be turned in on time and examinations are to be taken when scheduled. If, for some reason, you are going to miss an examination or an assignment due date, please make every effort to notify me in advance. If you fail to notify me in advance that you are going to miss an examination, you will not be able to make-up that exam. Make-up exams and due date extensions will only be given with a legitimate excuse (e.g. medical reason, death of a family member) and may be somewhat different than the original exam. Late research papers will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade for every day they are late and late video reviews will *not* be accepted. Plan ahead to ensure that you are able to meet the due dates for this course.

*Cheating and Plagiarism:* Not allowed. If you are found cheating or plagiarizing you will receive a zero for that assignment, exam, or quiz and you will be immediately reported to the Office of Student Standards. See the University policy regarding academic integrity for details about plagiarism.

*Tape Recorders:* The use of tape recorders, or other recording devices, during class is not allowed. Exceptions will be made only under special circumstances.

*Cell Phones/Text Messaging:* If you have a cell phone please turn it off before coming to class. Furthermore, text messaging during class is not permitted or tolerated.

*Special Needs:* Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) to address any necessary academic accommodations. Adaptations of methods, materials, or testing can be made to provide for your equitable participation in class as long as I am aware of your needs before tests and assignments.

*Medical Emergency Statement:* For medical emergencies, go to the nearest phone and call 911. All faculty offices have telephones and during normal business hours (8-12 and 1-4:30), the Sociology Office (Blair 3170) is open. Be sure to state the floor and room number of the emergency to the 911 operator. If possible, someone should go to the central entrance of Blair Hall to direct EMS personnel to the medical emergency scene. If the medical emergency is on the second or third floor, someone else should hold the elevator on the first floor for EMS use.

*Tornado Statement:* In case of a tornado warning, proceed to the center of the hallway on the first floor, near the posted severe weather signs. Under no circumstances should you attempt to leave the building.

*Building Fire Statement:* In case of fire, activate the fire alarm and exit the building. When a fire alarm sounds, everyone must exit the building and cannot re-enter the building until allowed by the building coordinator or fire department official. Fire alarms are located at the north and south ends of the corridors just inside the fire doors. The closest exits for all classrooms in Blair are on the north and south ends of the building. Under no circumstance should the elevator be used. Group assembly areas for all classes in Blair are either on the patio area between Blair and Old Main or on the southeast corner of the North Quad. As you exit the building, continue moving well away from the exits so that you do not impede the egress of other students or the work of fire officials. Move a safe distance away from the building.

*Note: All material in this course syllabus, including exam dates, may be subject to change.*