

# Sociology of Health and Health Care

Eastern Illinois University  
Soc 4820-001 3 Credit Hours Spring 2025

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

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

**Phone:** 217.581.3123

**Office Hours:** TTh 3:30-4:30, W 11:00 - 1:00, 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

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

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

- William C. Cockerham. 2017. *Medical Sociology*. 14<sup>th</sup> edition. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Select Articles Available on the Course D2L 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? Is there a U.S. health care crisis? If so, what is it? 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 issues 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 8 from 10:15 - 12:15.

(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 determinants of health, illness behavior, social stress, 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 available on the course D2L page.

(3). *Video Analysis Papers.* 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 analysis papers during this course. The specific purpose of these analyses is to assess your ability to apply information from videos to other relevant course material. Subsequently, these video analyses 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 analyses you *explicitly* connect the material in the video with other relevant course content. Approximately 6 to 8 videos will be shown throughout the semester so you may choose the *four* you want to analyze. This is not a “*best of*” assignment, you may only turn in four video analyses. The specific instructions are as follows:

- Your video analysis 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 analyses are to be typed, double spaced, and no more than two pages. Be sure to include the video title at the beginning of the analysis.
- *Video analyses will be turned in electronically through the “dropbox” on D2L and they are due by the beginning of the class period after the film is shown. Late video analyses 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 analyses, 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 available on the course D2L page.

### **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 Analyses.....12%

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

Exam #1.....20%  
Exam #2.....20%  
Exam #3.....20%  
Research Paper.....15%  
Video Analyses.....10%  
Book Review.....15%

### **Course Schedule:**

Jan. 14 - Jan. 16	General Introduction to the Course Ch. 1: Medical Sociology
Jan. 21 - Jan. 23	Ch. 2: Epidemiology <i>Reading:</i> Bruce Link and Jo Phelan. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." <i>Reading:</i> Jon Zelner, Ramya Naraheriseti, and Sarah Zelner. "Infectious Disease Epidemiology Needs to Develop a Sociological Imagination."
Jan. 28 - Jan. 30	Ch. 3: Social Demography of Health: Social Class
Feb. 4 - Feb. 6	Ch. 3: Social Demography of Health: Social Class (cont'd) Ch. 4: Social Demography of Health: Gender, Age, & Race <i>Reading:</i> David R. Williams and Michelle Sternthal. "Understanding Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions"
Feb. 11 - Feb. 13	Ch. 4: Social Demography of Health: Gender, Age, & Race (cont'd)
	<b>Exam #1 - Thursday, Feb. 13<sup>th</sup></b>
Feb. 18 - Feb. 20	Ch. 5: Social Stress and Health <i>Reading:</i> Peggy A. Thoits. "Stress and Health: Major Findings and Policy Implications."

Feb. 25 - Feb. 27	Ch. 5: Social Stress and Health (cont'd) Medicalization
Mar. 4 - Mar. 6	Medicalization (cont'd) Ch. 8: The Sick Role
Mar. 11 - Mar. 13	Ch. 9: Doctor-Patient Interaction <i>Reading:</i> B. Mitchell Peck and Sonya Conner. "Talking With Me or Talking at Me?" The Impact of Status Characteristics on Doctor-Patient Interaction."
Mar. 17 - Mar. 21	☺☺☺☺ <i>Spring Break</i> ☺☺☺☺
Mar. 25 - Mar. 27	Ch. 9: Doctor-Patient Interaction
<b>Exam #2 - Thursday, Mar. 27<sup>th</sup></b>	
Apr. 1 - Apr. 3	Ch. 10: Physicians
Apr. 8 - Apr. 10	Ch. 12: Nurses, Physician Assistants, Pharmacists, & Midwives Ch. 13: Complementary and Alternative Medicine
Apr. 15 - Apr. 17	Ch. 13: Complementary and Alternative Medicine (cont'd) Ch. 15: Health Care Reform and Health Policy in the U.S.
Apr. 22 - Apr. 24	Ch. 15: Health Care Reform and Health Policy in the U.S. (cont'd)
Apr. 29 - May 1	Ch. 16: Global Health Care

**Exam #3 – Thursday, May 8<sup>th</sup> – 10:15 - 12:15**

***Policies:***

*Attendance:* Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis. 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. Finally, for students with "borderline" final grades the Professor may consider a student's attendance record.

*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 24-hour period they are late and late video analysis papers will *not* be accepted. Plan ahead to ensure that you are able to meet the due dates for this course.

*Academic Support Center:* Students who could use additional help achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Academic Support Center <https://www.eiu.edu/academicsupportcenter/>. The Academic Support Center provides individual consultations, as well as assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. In addition, Academic Alerts may be utilized by faculty to help students who are

not making academic progress or are not attending classes regularly get connected with the Academic Support Center and other important resources. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 2230.

*Students with Disabilities:* If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Accessibility and Accommodations. Please stop my McAfee Gym, Room 1336, or call 217.581.6583 to make an appointment.

*Academic Integrity:* Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct <https://www.eiu.edu/deanofstudents/conductcode.php>. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students. <https://www.eiu.edu/deanofstudents/>. Furthermore, if you are found cheating or plagiarizing you will receive a zero for that assignment, exam, or quiz.

*Artificial Intelligence (AI):* All work submitted in this course must be your own. Students should not use advanced automated tools (i.e. artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, etc.) on assignments in this course.

*Audio/Video Recording:* The use of 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.

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