

**Portland State University**  
**SOC 459: Sociology of Health and Medicine**  
**Online Course – Winter 2020**  
*Syllabus*

*INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:*

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Office: Cramer Hall 217C

Office Hours: Fridays 12:30-2:30pm and by appointment

*COURSE OVERVIEW*

This course will provide an introduction to central topics in the sociology of health and medicine. We will seek to understand illness, health, medicine, and health care by exploring multiple domains: the social contexts of health disparities; institutions that impact our understanding and experiences of health, illness, and health care; and the medicalization of health and illness. Some of the topics we will be covering will include: the impact of socioeconomic status on health; the roles of genes, the social environment, and the physical environment on health; how health and illness is framed in public discourse and in the institution of medicine; health policies; and health care reform.

*COURSE GOALS*

1. To provide students with an introduction to the social, economic, and political factors that shape health, illness, medicine, and health care.
2. To develop students' understanding of the social and cultural meanings associated with health and illness.

**Learning Outcomes**

While this course is a 400-level sociology course, I also recognize that for many of you this will be the first exposure to the sociology of health and medicine. Accordingly, part of the purpose of this course is to provide you with opportunities to read, critically analyze, and discuss academically relevant subject matter articles. This will not only provide you with subject matter knowledge but encourage your skills in reading academic articles. Additionally, this course is designed to provide you with the opportunity to continue to develop your confidence in the presentation of academic knowledge in a written and online format.

After this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the social gradient in health.
2. Identify and describe reasons for the unequal distribution of disease.
3. Critically evaluate society's response to illness.

*REQUIRED READINGS*

**Course Texts:**

- Conrad, Peter and Valerie Leiter, eds. 2018. *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers. 10<sup>th</sup> edition.
- Cockerham, William C. 2013. *Social Causes of Health and Disease, Second Ed.* Malden, MA: Polity Press.

**Cost Saving Note:**

The library has an ebook of the first text by Cockerham and I have requested that it be available via course reserves. Unfortunately, there is no Library copy of the Conrad and Leiter reader for me to put on reserve. However, while we are using the 10th edition, you are welcome to purchase/rent the much cheaper 9th edition. There are several chapters assigned from the 10th edition which do not appear in the 9th but they are all previously published articles available through the library. For your convenience, I've provided links to those assigned chapters which are not present in the 9th edition. Just please be sure to go by chapter *title* rather than chapter number. I have not seen earlier

editions of the book so I cannot speak to how well they would work for the course; however, I'm not opposed to you using an earlier edition if you feel confident that you can find any missing articles via google scholar or the library.

### **Additional Readings:**

Occasionally I will assign additional articles / excerpts available via D2L. It is your responsibility to be aware of new reading assignments posted via D2L. Please check D2L regularly to get the most current information. I will always give adequate warning to changes in the syllabus.

### *COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS*

#### **Online Upper Division Seminar Structure:**

This is a completely online course. In order to succeed, you must have reliable internet access which will allow you to navigate/search the web, use email, attach and upload documents, and download and save files. And although this is a fully online course, it is also designed as an upper division seminar. This means that the style and expectations may be different from other courses that you have taken. There will be a significant amount of both reading and writing in this course and thoughtful participation will be required every week. A 400-level course requires a high level of independent thinking, organization, and self-discipline. While these skills are essential for success in all upper division courses, they are even more critical in an online course. You are expected to interact with your community of students in this course - in other words, be an active participant not a passive learner. You will not do well in this course if you fall behind on your readings, or do not actively, thoughtfully, and respectfully participate in discussions and coursework.

#### **Background in Sociology:**

Although there is no pre-requirement for this class, I am assuming that you have a basic understanding of sociological thought. If you have never taken a sociology class before, you may need to spend some extra time with the readings and/or do some extra research to understand the material from a sociological perspective.

#### **Instructor Correspondence:**

I am available to answer questions via email, or by appointment (in office, by phone, or online chat). I will do my best to reply to emails (sent Monday – Friday) within 24 hours. I will not be checking email over the weekends. It is your responsibility to ensure that your important messages are sent in a timely manner. Because the D2L email can be challenging to work with, I request that you email me using my pdx.edu email address (elizabethew@pdx.edu).

**-- Do not send correspondence through D2L --**

### *COURSE ASSESSMENT & GRADING*

#### **Discussion Posts & Replies (50%)**

Each week there will be a discussion forum. You are expected to participate in 8 of them (you may choose which week you skip, or you may participate in all of them and your two lowest grades will be dropped at the end of the course). Your original discussion post should be a minimum of 400 words. Anything shorter makes it hard for people to find something to respond to. Additionally, each original post should include at least one referenced quote from the assigned readings (using quotation marks, author name and page number) that helps support your writing. The quote(s) should not be the bulk of the post – quotes should be used to support your ideas, not used in place of your own words. Your discussion grade for each week will be based on your original post as well as your replies to at least *two* of your classmates. Please find more detailed instructions under 'Content' on D2L. Your discussion participation (both original post as well as replies) for each forum is due by midnight on the Sunday of each week, however please observe the soft deadline of Wednesday for the original post.

### **Reflections (30% total - 10% each)**

Over the course of the term each student will complete 3 reflection assignments. Two of the reflections will be in the form of academic papers and one will be an instructional presentation designed to teach the rest of the class about a topic from the assigned reading. The presentations will be spread out over the course and there is a link to a sign-up sheet where each student may choose the week in which they would like to complete the teach-a-topic presentation. More detailed instructions for the reflections are posted on D2L under 'Assignments'. Reflections are due by midnight on the Sunday of the week they are assigned.

- Reflection #1 – Week 3 – Due by Midnight on January 26<sup>th</sup>
  - May be about any material assigned between week 1 and week 3
- Reflection #2 – Week 6 – Due by Midnight on February 16<sup>th</sup>
  - May be about any material assigned between week 4 and week 6
- Reflection #3 – Week 9 – Due by Midnight on March 8<sup>th</sup>
  - May be about any material assigned between week 7 and week 9

### ***Written Reflections (20% total - 10% each)***

You are required to write two reflection papers. These will be one single spaced page (or two double spaced pages) in length and will be a more formal academic engagement with the course materials. While your discussion posts are a good place to start sorting out your ideas about the subject matter and engage in discourse over the topics with your classmates, your reflection papers are expected to be a more refined paper where you either work to synthesize the literature or construct a compelling argument about a relevant topic.

### ***Teach-A-Topic Reflection (10%)***

It is important to me that students have the opportunity to be active participants in the co-production of knowledge in my courses. I also believe that while academic papers are a valuable way for engaging with the materials, it is also important to engage through a more active and creative process. For the teach-a-topic reflection assignment you will create instructional content about a topic of your choice covered during the weeks prior to the reflection due date that you sign up for. The content may be audio, video or some combination and should be the kind of lesson used to teach students in an advanced class like this. Your presentation should be around 3-5 minutes and no more than 10.

### **Final Paper (20%)**

For your final exam you will participate in a peer review activity which will inform a re-write of one of your reflection papers from earlier in the term. Along with the revised paper you will also turn in a self-assessment outlining the improvements you made and the ways in which you expanded on or refined your work. All final materials will be due by Midnight of the Wednesday during exam week (3/18).

**Grading scheme:** A (94-100%), A- (90-93%), B+ (86-89%), B (83-85%), B- (80-82%), C+ (76-79%), C (73-75%), C- (70-72%), D+ (66-69%), D (63-65%), D- (60-62%), F ( $\leq 59\%$ ).

### **Academic Integrity**

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. Cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. The University describes academic dishonesty in the Student Code of Conduct as “the act of knowingly or intentionally seeking to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or participation in such acts. This includes, but is not limited to: (a) cheating, (b) fraud, (c) plagiarism, such as word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer's ideas; (d) The buying or selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers; (e) Performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons; (f) Unauthorized disclosure or receipt of academic information; (g) Falsification of research data; and (h) Unauthorized collaboration.” Students who are caught breaking the student code of conduct will be reported to the Office of Student Affairs and receive a zero on any relevant assignments.

## Defining plagiarism

- According to the MLA Handbook, plagiarism is “using another person’s ideas, information or expressions without acknowledging that person’s work.”
  - How to avoid plagiarizing
    - Rule #1: If you use another person’s ideas, you must cite your source (author last name and year)
    - Rule #2: If you use another person’s exact words, you must put those words in quotation marks as well as cite your source (author last name, year, and page number)
  - If any portion of your assignment includes plagiarized material, you will fail the assignment and you will be reported to the university. If in doubt, cite the source!

## Examples of plagiarism and appropriate citations (Used with permission from Dr. Wilkenson)

- Text from original source:  
Karen’s transgressive campiness is also manifest in her flagrant sexuality.
- Examples of plagiarism:
  - Karen’s transgressive campiness is also manifest in her flagrant sexuality. [copy and paste, no quotation marks, no citation]
  - In *Will and Grace*, Karen’s transgressive campiness is shown in her flagrant sexuality. [almost identical language, no citation]
- Examples of appropriate citation
  - Karen’s sexuality is subversive and campy (Cooper 2003) [paraphrased, with citation]
  - The character of Karen shows “transgressive campiness” (Cooper 2003:519). [phrase quoted, with citation]
  - Cooper stated, “Karen’s transgressive campiness is also manifest in her flagrant sexuality” (2003:519). [full quote with citation]
  - As one scholar observed, “Karen’s transgressive campiness is also manifest in her flagrant sexuality” (Cooper 2003:519). [full quote with citation]

## Support Services (Academic)

Students who would like assistance writing, formatting, or proofreading their written work should visit the PSU Writing Center. This is important for all written work. This is a free resource, though it does get busy towards the end of the quarter so it is important to make appointments early. Students may schedule regular appointments for assistance throughout the quarter. <http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/index.php> For additional support services and study skills assistance students may refer to the Skills Enhancement and Tutoring Center (SETC), also a free resource for all PSU students. <http://www.pdx.edu/tutoring/> Students who need assistance locating academic resources should consult the PSU Millar Library. If you are struggling specifically with this class, please contact either myself or the TA, either during office hours or via email.

If you decide that you wish to withdraw from the class, please keep these important dates in mind:  
<https://goo.gl/78ezPE>

## Other Support Services

If you find that you are struggling (whether it is to successfully pass your courses this term, experiencing barriers to education due to a disability, or just feeling stressed) there are many resources for you to connect with. I would recommend starting with the resources listed here: <https://my.pdx.edu/students/resources-across-campus> Food insecurity is a real issue for many students. If you are experiencing food insecurity, there are resources for you: <https://www.pdx.edu/student-access-center/> The PSU Food Pantry is open Monday - Friday from 12:30-2:30 in SMSU 047A. You can get 5 items daily. Harvest Share is at noon on the 2nd Monday of every month, outside Shattuck Hall in the Park Blocks.

### **Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities**

PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu), <https://www.pdx.edu/drc>.

- If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.
- Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.
- Please be aware that the accessible tables or chairs in the room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not useable.
- For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the Fire and Life Safety webpage(<https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety>) for information.

### **Title IX Reporting Obligations and other Mandatory Reporting**

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. We expect a culture of professionalism and mutual respect in our college and classes. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination as well as abuse of infants and children, people who are elderly or dependent, individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities, and residents of nursing homes and other health care facilities. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence, abuse to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals here: <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help>. For more information about Title IX, please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your D2L.

Week	Dates	Reading	To do:
<b>Introduction to perspectives in medical sociology</b>			
Week One	1/5 - 1/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WC Ch. 1 The Social Causation of Health</li> <li>• WC Ch. 2 Theorizing about Health and Disease</li> <li>• PC Introduction, pages 1-9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write and Introduction post</li> <li>• Discussion 1</li> </ul>
<b>The Unequal Social Distribution of Disease</b>			
Week Two	1/12 - 1/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WC Ch. 4 The Power of Class</li> <li>• WC Ch. 5 Class and Health</li> <li>• PC Ch. 3 Social Class, Susceptibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 2</li> <li>• Watch Unnatural Causes, Hour 1: In Sickness and In Wealth</li> </ul>
<b>The Unequal Social Distribution of Disease (Continued)</b>			
Week Three	1/19 - 1/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WC Ch. 6: Age, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity</li> <li>• PC Ch. 4: Racism and Health</li> <li>• PC Ch. 5: Sex, Gender, and Vulnerability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 3</li> <li>• Watch Unnatural Causes Hour 2: When the Bough Breaks &amp; Becoming American</li> <li>• Reflection #1</li> </ul>
<b>Living Conditions, Lifestyles, and Health</b>			
Week Four	1/26 - 2/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WC Ch. 3 Health Lifestyles</li> <li>• WC Ch. 7 Living Conditions and Neighborhood</li> <li>• PC Ch. 9 The Health Politics of Asthma</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 4</li> <li>• Watch Unnatural Causes Hour 3: Place Matters</li> </ul>
<b>Social and Cultural Meanings of Illness</b>			
Week Five	2/2 - 2/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC Ch. 11 Morality and Health</li> <li>• PC Ch. 12 Illness Meanings of AIDS</li> <li>• PC Ch. 13 Whose Deaths Matter?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 5</li> </ul>
<b>The Rise and Fall of the Dominance of Medicine</b>			
Week Six	2/9 - 2/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC Ch. 17 Professionalization, Monopoly...</li> <li>• PC Ch. 18 Notes on the Decline of Midwives</li> <li>• PC Ch. 19 The end of the Golden Age</li> <li>• PC Ch. 20 Countervailing Power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 6</li> <li>• Reflection #2</li> </ul>
<b>The Pharmaceutical Industry</b>			
Week Seven	2/16 - 2/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC Ch 23: From Lydia Pinkam to Queen Levitra</li> <li>• “The ‘Pinking’ of Viagra Culture” (article posted to D2L)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 7</li> <li>• Watch Orgasm Inc</li> </ul>
<b>Financing Medical Care</b>			
Week Eight	2/23 - 2/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC Ch. 25 Paying for Health Care</li> <li>• PC Ch. 26 The Origins of the Patient Protection PC</li> <li>• Ch. 27 The Debate over Health Care Rationing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 8</li> </ul>
<b>The Medicalization of American Society</b>			
Week Nine	3/1 - 3/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC Ch. 36 Medicine as an Institution of Social Control</li> <li>• PC Ch. 37 The Shifting Engines of Medicalization</li> <li>• PC Ch. 38 The Best Laid Plans?</li> <li>• PC Ch 39 C-Section Epidemic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 9</li> <li>• Reflection #3</li> </ul>
<b>Prevention, Movements, and Social Change</b>			
Week Ten	3/8 - 3/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC Ch 7 A Case for Refocusing Upstream</li> <li>• PC Ch. 42 Politicizing Health Care</li> <li>• PC Ch. 43 Embodied Health Movements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion 10</li> </ul>
Finals Week	3/15 - 3/21	<b>Final Exam due by Midnight on Wednesday 3/18</b>	