

Medical Sociology  
Sociology 585/685, CRN# 44607/44608, F 09:00-11:50, 265 Cramer Hall  
Winter 2022 Syllabus

**INSTRUCTOR**

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Office Hours: By appt.  
(Zoom Meeting ID: 364 484 3601)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is intended to provide an in-depth introduction to the major conceptual frameworks of medical sociology and empirical research examining social factors that influence individuals' health and illness. This course will cover sociological perspectives of health and illness; distributions of health and illness by social factors including sex/gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status; issues related to an aging society; life course approaches to the study of health; and the health care system. Although this course will include a combination of lecture and discussion, my hope is that much of the learning will take place through guided class discussions based on the readings.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To introduce major classic and contemporary works in medical sociology,
2. To understand how social factors create and shape health inequalities,
3. To foster intellectual discussion and exchanges among colleagues about the connections between medical sociology, the broader disciplinary concerns of sociology, and the pragmatic concerns of health issues, and
4. To improve students' skills at reading, critiquing, integrating sociological theory and research, and writing an academic paper.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK**

There is no required textbook for this course. Readings are listed under the course topics. Most of them are available full text online through Google Scholar and/or at JSTOR. I will provide access to the ones that are not available before the class.

**COURSE WEBSITE**

Check your email and Canvas (<http://canvas.pdx.edu>) regularly for important announcements and additional readings.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CLASS**

I expect you to come to class prepared: complete the required readings before the class and bring discussion questions to the class. Doing so will help you get more out of class time. Final grades are determined by the following requirements:

## Grading Procedures

|   |      |
|---|------|
| 1. Class Participation and Topic Discussion | 20%  |
| 2. Paper Proposal                           | 10%  |
| 2. Four Short Reaction Papers               | 20%  |
| 3. Paper Presentation                       | 10%  |
| 4. Term Paper                               | 40%  |
| <hr/>                                       |      |
| Total                                       | 100% |

## Grading Scale

|    |           |    |          |    |          |    |          |   |       |
|----|-----------|----|----------|----|----------|----|----------|---|-------|
| A  | 94 – 100% | B+ | 86 – 89% | C+ | 76 – 79% | D+ | 66 – 69% | F | ≤ 59% |
| A- | 90 – 93%  | B  | 82 – 85% | C  | 72 – 75% | D  | 62 – 65% |   |       |
|    |           | B- | 80 – 81% | C- | 70 – 71% | D- | 60 – 61% |   |       |

**Class Participation and Topic Discussion** (20% of grade): Class attendance is mandatory, and I strongly encourage you to participate actively in the class discussion – ask questions, challenge what class members have said, make connections to material from other courses, and relate course material to your own developing research interests. We will all learn more, and have more fun, if you do. Throughout the term, you will lead discussion of the readings by summarizing the readings in terms of study purpose, data/methods, key findings, contributions to the literature.

**Paper Proposal** (10% of grade): The paper proposal should describe the focus of the term paper. The proposal (no more than 3 pages, with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins) should include a (tentative) title, the motivation of the study (one or two paragraphs), the purpose and the specific aims of the paper (one or two paragraphs), and the research questions and hypotheses (one paragraph) and the data and methods that you are going to use for the paper if you work on a research paper (two paragraphs). The paper proposal should also include at least three references (with full citations) to relevant scholarly research. I encourage you to discuss your topic with me before working on your paper proposal – preferably by the end of January.

**Four Short Reaction Papers** (20% of grade): Students are required to turn in four reaction papers out of five topics (beginning in Week 4 and ending in Week 8). Each paper should briefly summarize the readings by indicating the scientific factors motivating the study, the key gap(s) in knowledge being addressed, the research questions, data and methods, and major findings. It should also discuss the conceptual/methodological strengths and weaknesses of the study, how successful each paper has been in answering the research questions, and what future research directions might yield more effective answers. The reaction papers should be typed or computer processed and should be no more than 2 pages, with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. All of the reaction papers should be submitted through Canvas by Wednesday 11:59pm before each class period that the readings will be discussed.

**Term Paper** (50% of grade): There are three options for this assignment. a. An empirical research paper that develops a research question (or questions), analyzes relevant data, and provides an answer (or answers) to the question(s). b. A focused review of a specific topic area

that includes an annotated list of recommended readings, which should be with a qualifying examination style question that pertains to those readings, and the answer to that question. c. A research proposal that requires a clearly defined research question (or questions), a thorough literature review, and a methods section identifying where you will obtain the data, which variables are in that dataset that can be used, and what methods are appropriate to address your question(s). The term paper should be at least 12 pages but not exceed 30 pages in length with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. Please follow ASA or APA style guidelines.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

**Policy on Academic Dishonesty:** Students who violate PSU rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the university. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of PSU, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For more information on university policies check the web page (<http://www.pdx.edu/dos/conductcode#ProscribedPSU>). In the context of this course, the first incident of academic dishonesty (including unauthorized collaboration on course assignments) will result in a zero for the assignment. Any further future incidents will result in an F for the course. **Classroom Etiquette:** Be on time. Turn off cell phones. Be respectful when making a comment or responding to others' comments.

### **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. Our 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) (<https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety>) for information.

### **Title IX Reporting Obligations:**

Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or sexual harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling

services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU's support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help> or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672. 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 all PSU faculty members and instructors **are required to report** information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I have to share the information with my supervisor, the University's Title IX Coordinator or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module [Creating a Safe Campus](#) in your D2L.

### **Classroom Requirements for All Students and Faculty Due to Covid-19**

The University has established rules and policies to make the return to the classroom as safe as possible. It is required for everyone to follow all the Return to Campus rules and policies. To participate in this class, PSU requires students to comply with the following.

#### **Masks Required at all Times in Classroom**

- [Wear a mask or face covering indoors](#) at all times. Your mask or face covering must be properly worn (fully covering nose and mouth and tight fitting). Mesh masks, face shields, or face covering that incorporates a valve designed to facilitate easy exhalation are not acceptable. **Because a mask must be worn in the classroom, there should be no eating or drinking in the classroom.** If you have a medical condition or a disability that prevents you from wearing a mask or cloth face covering, you must obtain an accommodation from the [Disability Resource Center \(DRC\)](#) to be exempt from this requirement.
- CDC, State, and County guidance does not limit class size for in-person instruction or require physical distancing.

#### **Vaccination**

- Be vaccinated against COVID-19 and submit a [COVID-19 Vaccine Requirement Form](#).
- Those students who previously requested a deferral, please contact the [Center for Student Health & Counseling \(SHAC\)](#) for help updating your attestation form.

#### **Health Check, Illness, Exposure or Positive Test for COVID-19**

- Complete the [required self-check for COVID-19 symptoms before coming to campus each day](#).
- If you are feeling sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to campus. Call SHAC to discuss your symptoms and situation (503.725.2800). They will advise you on testing, quarantine, and when you can return to campus.

- If you test positive for COVID-19, [report your result to SHAC](#) and do not come to campus. SHAC will advise you on quarantine, notification of close contacts and when you can return to campus.
- Please notify me, (i.e. your instructor), should you need to miss a class period for any of these reasons so that we can discuss strategies to support your learning during this time.
- If I become ill or need to quarantine during the term, either I or the department chair will notify you via PSU email about my absence and how course instruction will continue.

### **Failure to Comply with Any of these Rules**

As the instructor of this course, the University has given me the authority to require your compliance with these policies. If you do not comply with these requirements, I may ask you to leave the classroom or I may need to cancel the class session entirely.

In addition, failure to comply with these requirements may result in a referral to the Office of the Dean of Student Life to consider charges under PSU's Code of Conduct. A student found to have violated a university rule (or rules) through the due process of student conduct might face disciplinary and educational sanctions (or consequences). For a complete list of sanctions, see Section 14 of the [Student Code of Conduct & Responsibility](#).

### **Guidance May Change**

Please note that the University rules, policies, and guidance may change at any time at the direction of the CDC, State, or County requirements. Please review the University's main [COVID-19 Response](#) webpage and look for emails from the University on these topics.

## **Course Readings**

### Week 1: Course Introduction and Overview of Medical Sociology

- Bloom, Samuel W. 1986. "Institutional Trends in Medical Sociology." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 27:265-276.
- Cockerham, William C. and Graham Scambler. 2001. "Medical Sociology and Sociological Theory." Pp. 3-22 in *The Blackwell Companion to Medical Sociology*, edited by W.C. Cockerham. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

### Week 2: Medicalization and Social Control

- Zola, Irving Kenneth. 1972. "Medicine as an Institution of Social Control." *Sociological Review* 20:487-504.
- Conrad, Peter. 1992. "Medicalization and Social Control." *Annual Review of Sociology* 18:209-232. Conrad, Peter. 2005. "The Shifting Engines of Medicalization." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 46:3-14.

### Week 3: Social Construction of Health and Illness

- Brown, Phil. 1995. "Naming and Framing: The Social Construction of Diagnosis and Illness." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* (Extra Issue): 34-52.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth M. 1998. "Diagnosing Moral Disorder: The Discovery and Evolution of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome." *Social Science and Medicine* 47:2025-42.
- Link, Bruce G. and Jo C. Phelan. 2001. "Conceptualizing Stigma." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27:363-385.
- Conrad, Peter and Kristin K. Barker. 2010. "The Social Construction of Illness: Key Insights and Policy Implications." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51:S67-S79.

### Week 4: Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Sex/Gender

- Verbrugge, Lois M. 1989. "The Twain Meet: Empirical Explanations of Sex Differences in Health and Mortality." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 30:282-304.
- Simon, Robin and Leda Nath. 2004. "Gender and Emotion in the United States: Do Men and Women Differ in Self-Reports of Feelings and Expressive Behaviors?" *American Journal of Sociology* 109:1137-1176.
- Rieker, Patricia P., and Chloe E. Bird. 2005. "Rethinking Gender Differences in Health: Why We Need to Integrate Social and Biological Perspectives." *The Journals of Gerontology Series B: Psychological Sciences and Social Sciences* 60: S40-S47.
- Read, Jen'nan Ghazal and Bridget K. Gorman. 2010. "Gender and Health Inequality." *Annual Reviews of Sociology* 36:371-86.

### Week 5: Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Race/Ethnicity

- Williams, David R. and Chiquita Collins. 1995. "US Socioeconomic and Racial Differences in Health: Patterns and Explanations." *Annual Review of Sociology* 21:349-386.

- Williams, David R. 2018. "Stress and the Mental Health of Populations of Color: Advancing Our Understanding of Race-related Stressors." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 59(4): 466-85.
- Viruell-Fuentes, Edna A., Patricia Y. Miranda, and Sawsan Abdulrahim. 2012. "More than Culture: Structural Racism, Intersectionality Theory, and Immigrant Health." *Social Science & Medicine* 75:2099-2106.
- Phelan, Jo C. and Bruce G. Link. 2015. "Is Racism a Fundamental Cause of Inequalities in Health?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 41:311-33006.

#### Week 6: Social Distribution of Health and Illness: SES

- Mirowsky, John, Catherine E. Ross, and John Reynolds. 2000. "Links Between Social Status and Health Status." Pp. 47-67 in *Handbook of Medical Sociology* (5th Edition), edited by Chloe E. Bird, Peter Conrad and Allen M. Fremont. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hummer, Robert A. and Elaine M. Hernandez. 2013. "The Effect of Educational Attainment on Adult Mortality in the United States." *Population Bulletin* 68(1).
- Hendi, Arun S., Irma T. Elo, and Pekka Martikainen. 2021. "The Implications of Changing Education Distributions for Life Expectancy Gradients." *Social Science & Medicine* 272:113712.
- Link, Bruce G. 2000. "Evaluating the Fundamental Cause Explanation for Social Disparities in Health." Pp. 33-46 in *Handbook of Medical Sociology* (5th Edition), edited by Chloe E. Bird, Peter Conrad and Allen M. Fremont. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

#### Week 7: Social Relationships and Health

- Thoits, Peggy A. 2011. "Mechanisms Linking Social Ties and Support to Physical and Mental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52:145-161.
- Umberson, Debra, Robert Crosnoe, and Corinne Reczek. 2010. "Social Relationships and Health Behavior Across the Life Course." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36:139-157.
- Waite, Linda. 1995. "Does Marriage Matter?" *Demography* 32:483-507.
- Nomaguchi, Kei M. and Melissa A. Milkie. 2003. "Costs and Rewards of Children: The Effects of Becoming a Parent on Adults' Lives." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 65:356- 374.

#### Week 8: Aging, the Life Course and Health

- Ross, Catherine E. and Chia-Ling Wu. 1996. "Education, Age, and the Cumulative Advantage in Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 37:104-120.
- Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2006. "Sex Differences in the Effect of Education on Depression: Resource Multiplication or Resource Substitution?" *Social Science & Medicine* 63:1400-1413.
- Willson, Andrea E., Kimberly M. Shuey, and Glen J. Elder, Jr. 2007. "Cumulative Advantage Processes as Mechanisms of Inequality in Life-Course Health." *American Journal of Sociology* 112:1886-1924.

Ferraro, Kenneth F., Markus H. Schafer, and Lindsay R. Wilkinson. 2016. "Childhood Disadvantage and Health Problems in Middle and Later Life: Early Imprints on Physical Health?" *American Sociological Review* 81(1):107-33.

Week 9: Health Care System

Quadagno, Jill. 2010. "Institutions, Interest Groups, and Ideology: An Agenda for the Sociology of Health Care Reform." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51(2): 125-36.

Schoen, Cathy, Robin Osborn, David Squires, Michelle M. Doty, Roz Pierson and Sandra Applebaum. 2010. "How Health Insurance Design Affects Access to Care and Costs, by Income, in Eleven Countries." *Health Affairs* 29(12):2323-2334.

Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2000. "Does Medical Insurance Contribute to Socioeconomic Differentials in Health?" *The Milbank Quarterly* 78:291-321.

Chen, J., Vargas-Bustamante, A., Mortensen, K., & Ortega, A. N. (2016). Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care Access and Utilization Under the Affordable Care Act. *Medical care*, 54(2), 140–146.

Week 10: Paper presentations & Wrap up