

Portland State University
SOC 459: Sociology of Health and Medicine

Instructor: Tina Burdsall, PhD

email: tdb@pdx.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 11-12 and by appointment

Office: Cramer Hall 217E

TA: Mari Rodriguez

Course Description

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.

Required Readings:

Cockerham, William C. 2021. Social Causes of Health and Disease, Third Ed. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Additional required readings will be made available on the Canvas site.

NOTE: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus as needed; you are responsible for keeping up with any changes. Please check D2L regularly to get the most current information. I will always give adequate warning to changes in the syllabus.

Objectives:

To provide students with an introduction to the social, economic, and political factors that shape health, illness, medicine, and health care.

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

Course format and expectations:

Although this is a fully online course, it is also designed as an upper division seminar course. 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.

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 availability

Both the TA and I are available to answer questions via email, or by appointment on the phone or by e-meeting. We try to respond to emails within 24-48 hours during the week. We will NOT be checking your emails over the weekends. It is your responsibility to ensure that your important messages are received in a timely manner - do not wait until just before an assignment is due and expect either of us to respond to you immediately.

A couple of added notes about emails:

- Please use your pdx.edu email and send to my pdx.edu email (tdb@pdx.edu)
- **I have multiple classes that I teach and I receive a lot of email. Please make sure that your subject line is clear, you include what class you are in, and include your full name. Without this information, I am unlikely to respond to your email.**
- If a week has gone by and I have not responded, please follow up again.

Course requirements and evaluation

Your final grade in this class will be based on how many points you earn. You will notice that there are a total of 120 points available, which means that there are 20 “extra credit” points built into the class.

	Total number of these assignments	Points per assignment	Total points available
Discussions and Replies	5	10	50
Reflection Papers	3	10	30
Class Assignment	1	10	10
Neighborhood Assignment	1	10	10
Final Reflection	1	20	20

Total points possible:
120

Final grades will be based on how many points you earn

Grade	Points	Grade	Points
A	92-100	C	72-77.9
A-	90-91.9	C-	70-71.9
B+	88-89.9	D+	68-69.9
B	82-87.9	D	62-67.9
B-	80-81.9	D-	60-61.9
C+	78-79.9	F	< 60

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Confidentiality

In respecting each other's experiences and creating a safer environment, students should maintain confidentiality at all times. Students' individual experiences regarding class may be discussed with friends and colleagues outside of class. However, students may not discuss other students' experiences, and must refrain from using any identifying information about their colleagues. As the instructor I reserve the right to break confidentiality if I am concerned about a student's mental or physical well-being. If you become concerned about another student, please contact me directly.

Recording Technology Notice

We may use technology for virtual meetings and recordings in this course. Our use of such technology is governed by FERPA, the Acceptable Use Policy and PSU's Student Code of Conduct. A record of all meetings and recordings is kept and stored by PSU, in accordance with the Acceptable Use Policy and FERPA. Your instructor will not share recordings of your class activities outside of course participants, which include your fellow students, TAs/GAs/Mentors, and any guest faculty or community based learning partners that we may engage with. **You may not share recordings outside of this course. Doing so may result in disciplinary action.**

Written work

All written work should be academic, proofread, and written at a college level. This includes proper spelling, complete sentences, and proper citations and references. It also means that what you write needs to be based on facts and appropriate sources. With the ability to use features like spell-check, and the availability of help from the writing center, academic quality of writing is expected. To be explicit: while organizations of thoughts, grammar, and spelling will be considered in grading all assignments, quality of thought and engagement with the material will be considered far more important. Documents that are turned in through Canvas should be prepared and submitted in a standard word processing format (.doc, .txt, .pdf. PLEASE DO NOT TURN IN .PAGES I cannot open them and therefore cannot grade them).

Due dates will be loosely enforced, depending on the particular assignment. Please contact me if you are going to be more than a day late on any assignment so that we can discuss what options will best meet all of our needs.

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. Kelly)

- 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]

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

As an instructor, my goal is to create classes that are inclusive to students with any form of disability. Below, you will find university language relating to students formally assessed as having a disability/disabilities. However, please know that I will do my best to meet the needs of those with self-assessed disabilities as the process of going through these official channels can be difficult and there are many reasons someone may choose not to officially disclose a disability. Remember, not all faculty accept self-assessed disabilities, so going through the official channel may still be helpful for your other classes. This is still (and always) a work in progress. If you have suggestions on ways to make the class more accessible, please come and talk to me.

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, <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 to discuss your accommodations
- 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. That said, if you find the classroom seating is not useable for any reason, feel free to use the accessible tables or chairs—you do not have to explain why and I will not ask any questions about your need to use those resources
- 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(r) 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 officially report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to the Office of Equity and Compliance, or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. Please be aware that as a faculty member and as a researcher associated with medical and Safety Net Health Plan institutions, 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, or abuse, confidentially to an employee who does not have this

reporting responsibility, you can let me know that you would like to be connected to a confidential advocate (I will not ask any questions) or 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.

Support Services

PSU offers specialized services to meet a variety of student needs, some of which are summarized here. If you need assistance or support of any kind, please send your Mentor or me an email.

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://www.pdx.edu/dmss/student-resources>

Writing and Academic Support:

Students who would like assistance writing, formatting, or proofreading their written work should make an online appointment with 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. . <https://library.pdx.edu/services/students/> Kimberly Willson (willsons@pdx.edu) is a librarian that has knowledge of the University Studies expectations and is a wonderful resource for you to get to know.

If you are struggling specifically with this class, please contact me via email, I am happy to help think through options needed for you to be successful in this class. As a college student, the expectation is that you will reach out to your professors when you need help – do not expect your professors to contact you if you miss an assignment or your grades are slipping.

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

Culturally Specific Resources:

There are a number of Cultural Resource Centers on campus that are available to all PSU students. For more information on the centers and what they offer: <https://www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers/>

A Note on Immigration status and DACA: PSU is a Sanctuary Campus which means that they will not consent to immigration enforcement on campus and will not disclose immigration status of students. My class is a “Sanctuary Class” where you and your families status, documented or not, will not be held against you. There are resources available for students (and immediate family members) who have questions or need support regarding immigration status: <https://www.pdx.edu/insidepsu/deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-daca-resources>

Mental Health

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://www.pdx.edu/student-life/support-services>

SHAC has partnered with My Student Success which connects students with free, confidential mental health and wellbeing support conveniently available 24/7 via the My SSP app, telephone and web: <https://www.pdx.edu/health-counseling/my-ssp>

Housing and Food Insecurity:

A good place to find a variety of resources is: <https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/student-homelessness-and-economic-crisis>

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/food-assistance>

If you are experiencing houselessness, facing eviction, or feel that you are being treated unfairly by your landlord, there are resources on campus and in the community. On campus, you can start by looking at the resources listed here for houselessness and other economic challenges: <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/student-homelessness-and-economic-crisis>

Student Legal Services is also available to help with landlord-tenant issues: <https://www.pdx.edu/sls>

Emergency Funds:

The university has some funds set aside for students who are facing financial challenges that may impact the ability to complete classes. If you are facing significant financial challenges the place to look for support is: <https://www.pdx.edu/student-access-center/>

At any point, if you need help finding resources (whether you can't find them or feel too overwhelmed to find them) you are welcome to talk to me. I may or may not be able to help you find resources, but I am willing to help connect you to people who may be able to.

Readings from book	Article or other Reading Assignments	Due This week
Week One		
Chpt 1: The Social Causation of Health and Disease	Phelan, Link and Tehranifar, 2010_Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities	Discussion and Reply
Week Two		
Chpt 2: Theorizing about Health and Disease	Cary and Crammond 2015_Systems Change for the Social Determinants of Health	Reflection Paper
Week Three		
Chpt 3: Health Lifestyles	Andersen 1995_Revisiting the Behavioral Model and Access to Medical Care	Discussion and Reply
Week Four		
Chpt 4: The Power of Class	TBD	Class Assignment
Week Five		
Chpt 5: Class and Health: Explaining the Relationship	watch Documentary "Unnatural Causes"	Reflection Paper
Week Six		
Chpt 6: Age	Riley 1999_Soc Research on Age	Discussion and Reply
Week Seven		
Chpt 7: Gender	Snow 2008_Sex, Gender, and Vulnerability	Reflection Paper
Week Eight		
Chpt 8: Race and Ethnicity	Pirdle 2020_Racial Capitalism and Covid	Discussion and Reply
Week Nine		
Chpt 9: Living Conditions and Neighborhood Disadvantage	Nacht et al 2022_Association Between Neighborhood Disadvantage and Pediatric Readmissions	Neighborhood Assignment
Week Ten		
Chpt 10: Health and Social Capital and Concluding Remarks	Thoits 2011_Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health	Discussion and Reply Final Reflection