SOC 585/685: Medical Sociology
Portland State University
Course Information Sheet
Fall 2015

Section(s): 001; Tue 2:00 – 4:50pm; Rm. CH 265
Professor: Dr. Ginny Garcia-Alexander
Office: CH 217S
Office Phone: 503-725-9572
Email: gin5@pdx.edu
Office Hours: MW 10:00-11:00am

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

Course Structure/Requirements
Students are expected to complete all assigned readings prior to class. The class will begin with a brief introduction to the subject matter. In addition, each student will be required to prepare a discussion question/critique of at least one of the assigned readings each week (this will be used for participation credit).

Criteria for Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>(%) of Total</th>
<th>Grading Scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation/Discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>A = 90-100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Reaction Papers

Students are required to turn in four reaction papers (students may select four weeks between Wk 2 – Wk 7). 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 and should be no more than 2 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. All of the reaction papers should be submitted through D2L Dropbox by Monday 11:59pm before each class period that the readings will be discussed.

### Term Paper and Proposal

The paper proposal should describe the focus of the term paper. The proposal (no more than 3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins) should include a (tentative) title, the motivation of the study (1-2 paragraphs), the purpose and the specific aims of the paper (1-2 paragraphs), the research questions and hypotheses (1 paragraph), and the data and methods you are going to use for the paper if you work on a research paper (2 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 before October 23rd (Friday).

There are three options for the term paper:

a. An empirical research paper that develops a research question(s), analyzes relevant data, and provides an answer(s) to the question(s).

b. A focused review of a specific topic that includes an annotated list of readings, with a qualifying exam style questions that pertains to those readings, and the answer to that question.

c. A research proposal that includes a clearly defined research question, a thorough literature review, a methods section with information on where you will get data, relevant variables from dataset, and what methods are appropriate to address your question.
The term paper should be at least 12 pages but no longer than 30 pages in length, double-spaced, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. Papers should conform to the appropriate disciplinary guidelines (APA or ASA).

**Paper Presentation**
Toward the end of the term, you will have an opportunity to present your term paper to the class. The paper presentation will give you a chance to share your research interests, to provide/receive comments, and to refine the ideas and analysis prior to submitting a final draft of your term paper. The paper presentation should be constructed using PowerPoint and not be longer than 15 minutes.

**Students with Disabilities**
(DRC) coordinates support services, accommodations, and equipment for students with disabilities. DS works to ensure equal access to all University programs, services, and activities for students with disabilities. DS certifies eligibility for services, determines reasonable accommodations, and develops plans for the implementation of accommodations. The DRC Director also assists students in the informal resolution of complaints. More information is available on their website: [http://www.drc.pdx.edu](http://www.drc.pdx.edu)

**Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty**
It is expected that the students will maintain the highest level of academic integrity while participating in this class. As per university guidelines, “Scholastic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act.

Any of the above mentioned violations will result in the appropriate disciplinary penalties as outlined by University Rules and Regulations including an "F" in the class, suspension, and/or expulsion. 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.
Class Schedule

Week 1 (9/29): Course Introduction and Overview of Medical Sociology
   ➢ Readings

Week 2 (10/6): Medicalization and Social Control
   ➢ Readings:

Week 3 (10/13): Social Construction of Health and Illness
   ➢ Readings:

Week 4 (10/20): Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Sex/Gender
   ➢ Readings

**Paper Proposal Due at end of week**

Week 5 (10/27): Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Race/Ethnicity

**Readings:**

Week 6 (11/3): Social Distribution of Health and Illness: SES

**Readings:**

Week 7 (11/10): Aging, the Life Course, and Health
  - Readings:

Week 8 (11/17): Health Care System
  - Readings:

- **Drafts due at beginning of class Tue**

Week 9 (11/24): No Class

Week 10 (12/1): Paper Presentations

- **Final Papers due Tue, Dec 8**