INSTRUCTOR
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Office Hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays 09:00-10:00 or by appt.

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 D2L (http://d2l.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

Class Participation and Paper Presentation 10 + 10 = 20 points (20%)
Four Short Reaction Papers 4 × 10 = 40 points (20%)
Paper Proposal 10 points (10%)
Term Paper 50 points (50%)

Total 120 points (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%  P ≥ 70%
B- 80 – 81%  C- 70 – 71%  D- 60 – 61%

Class Participation and Paper Presentation (20% of grade): Class attendance is mandatory, and I strongly encourage you to participate actively throughout the course – 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.

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.

Four Short Reaction Papers (20% of grade): Students are required to turn in four reaction papers (beginning in Week 4 and ending in Week 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 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 D2L Dropbox by Tuesday 11:59pm before each class period that the readings will be discussed.
**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 before October 25th (Friday).

**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.

**Academic Accommodations:** If you have a physical, psychiatric/emotional, or learning disability that may impact your ability to carry out assigned course work, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and arrange appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with disability. For more information about the resources that the DRC provides, refer to the DRC web page (http://www.drc.pdx.edu/).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Assignment Due/Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10/02</td>
<td>Course Introduction and Overview of Medical Sociology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10/09</td>
<td>Medicalization and Social Control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10/16</td>
<td>Social Construction of Health and Illness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10/23</td>
<td>Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Sex/Gender</td>
<td>Reaction Paper #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/30</td>
<td>Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td>Reaction Paper #2, Paper Proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11/06</td>
<td>Social Distribution of Health and Illness: SES</td>
<td>Reaction Paper #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>11/13</td>
<td>Aging, the Life Course and Health</td>
<td>Reaction Paper #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11/20</td>
<td>Health Care System</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11/27</td>
<td>Paper Presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>12/04</td>
<td>Paper Presentations (cont’d)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12/11</td>
<td>Term Paper Due (D2L Dropbox by 5pm)</td>
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</tbody>
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READINGS

Week 1 (Oct.2)  Course Introduction and Overview of Medical Sociology


Week 2 (Oct.9)  Medicalization and Social Control


Week 3 (Oct.16)  Social Construction of Health and Illness


Week 4 (Oct.23)  Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Sex/Gender


**Week 5 (Oct.30)**  **Social Distribution of Health and Illness: Race/Ethnicity**


**Week 6 (Nov.6)**  **Social Distribution of Health and Illness: SES**


(Supplemental reading)


**Week 7 (Nov.13)**  Aging, the Life Course and Health


**Week 8 (Nov.20)**  Health Care System


**Week 9 (Nov.27)**  **Paper Presentations**

**Week 10 (Dec.4)**  **Paper Presentations (cont’d)**