

**Sociology 523: Proseminar in Demography and Health**  
Spring 2007: Mondays 1:10-3:50 pm

Julie Phillips, Ph.D.  
Department of Sociology

Office: A356 Lucy Stone Hall / Room 203, IHPCPAR, 30 College Avenue  
Email: [jphillips@sociology.rutgers.edu](mailto:jphillips@sociology.rutgers.edu)  
Phone: 445-7032 (Sociology office) / 932-1824 (IHPCPAR office)  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 1:00pm to 2:00pm (IHPCPAR office) or by appointment  
Course URL: [www.rci.rutgers.edu/~japhill/soc523.html](http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~japhill/soc523.html)

### **Course Description**

This course will provide graduate students and advanced undergraduate students with an overview to research currently conducted by faculty affiliated with the Department of Sociology and the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research at Rutgers. I will run six of our meetings, in which you will be introduced to demographic perspectives on mortality and health. These meetings will entail a lecture by me, in which I will provide background and context for the selected readings, followed by student presentations of the assigned readings and class discussion. Another six of our meetings will feature guest speakers, who will talk about their own research interests within the field of medical sociology. The remaining two meetings will involve presentations of students' own research papers and interests.

By the end of this course, students should have a good foundation in research on (1) major trends and patterns in health and mortality (2) the relationship between social factors and health/mortality and (3) social inequalities and disparities in health and mortality. The course will focus on health and mortality issues in developed countries, particularly the United States, and on the major theoretical perspectives within each topic, measurement of concepts, and the merits of various study designs.

### **Prerequisites**

Graduate standing or permission of the instructor is required. Some familiarity with quantitative research methods is recommended. A handout distributed on the first day of class provides a basic overview of statistical methodologies; students with limited backgrounds in statistics should familiarize themselves with this information.

### **Requirements**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following criteria:

- (1) Memos and Op-Eds (20%): For meetings featuring a guest speaker, you must prepare a short (1-2 pages singled-spaced) memo or op-ed piece (not more than 800 words) on the assigned readings. There are a total of five memos or op-ed pieces due during the course of a semester. You can choose which format you would like to use for a particular guest lecture, but you must do at least two of each format during the course of the semester. These assignments should help you to come prepared for the guest speaker's talk and to offer insightful questions and comments during and after the talk. Due by 5pm the day before the guest speaker's talk (send by e-mail to [jphillips@sociology.rutgers.edu](mailto:jphillips@sociology.rutgers.edu)).

- a. The memos should briefly summarize the main points of the readings, but also consider issues such as the strengths and weaknesses of the research, the theoretical and/or empirical connections between the readings, and key questions raised by the readings. These memos are intended to help you synthesize literature and identify links among the different pieces.
  - b. The op-ed pieces will allow you to focus on one area of particular interest in the reading and help you to develop the ability to take a point of view and argue it effectively. For guidelines on writing an effective op-ed piece, please refer to the following website: [http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke\\_community/oped.html](http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/duke_community/oped.html). The op-ed pieces in the New York Times can also serve as a good guide.
- (2) Class presentation (20%): Each week that does not feature a guest lecture, a student or pair of students will be responsible for giving a presentation and leading a discussion on the assigned readings. Essentially, the class presentation is an oral memo. A successful class presentation will do the following:
- a. Provide a summary of the assigned material, identifying the key insights made into the core questions for the topic of the day and highlighting the main points of each reading.
  - b. Identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the various research articles. Consider data sources and methods if relevant, breadth and depth, and logic/consistency of core arguments/empirical tests.
  - c. Discuss relevant theoretical and/or empirical connections between the different readings.
  - d. Identify missing gaps in our knowledge and key areas for future research.
  - e. Identify the major questions raised by the readings for further discussion.

These presentations, which are excellent practice in giving lectures, conference presentations, and job talks, should last about half an hour or so. Visual aids are advised. The student(s) giving the class presentation will also be responsible for leading and facilitating the class discussion that day following the class presentation.

- (3) Participation in class discussions (10%): This is a seminar, and class attendance and participation are vital to its success. All seminar participants are responsible for all of the required readings. Students should read carefully so that they come to class with useful comments and questions. Students should feel free to offer specialized knowledge from readings not assigned or other experience that is relevant to the discussion.
- (4) Final research paper (50%): Students are expected to prepare a research paper (20-25 pages in length) by the end of the semester. Your grade on this paper will be based on both the final written product and an oral presentation of the paper. Oral presentations of the paper should be about 15-20 minutes in length using PowerPoint. We will have these oral presentations on April 16 and April 23, so that you can incorporate feedback from the class in your final paper. A one-page proposal describing your paper topic and identifying your primary literature sources is due on **February 12**. The final paper is due on the last day of class (**April 30**). Your final paper may take one of the following suggested formats:
- a. An original empirical research paper on a topic relevant to health. This might serve as the basis of a journal submission, a qualifying paper or a dissertation chapter.

- b. A detailed research proposal on a health-related topic, including an extensive and critical review of the existing theoretical and empirical literature on your topic. This might serve as the basis for an actual grant proposal to support your dissertation or other work.
- c. A thorough analysis of the literature in one of the broad topic areas covered in this class (e.g. gender or race inequality in health; socioeconomic differences in health; etc). This review should include the readings from the syllabus as well as other critical work in the area and should outline the key issues, primary arguments or perspectives, and should provide a critical assessment of these various contributions to the literature. This option should assist those Sociology graduate students who choose to take an exam in lieu of one qualifying paper.

### **Readings**

All required readings will be available in a class directory on the Sociology server.

## **Overview of Lectures**

### The Basics: Mortality Decline and Measurement Issues

- January 22 Introduction
- January 29 Mortality decline, the health transition and its implications
- February 5 Measuring health and mortality

### Social Influences on Health

- February 12 Psychosocial influences on health (Prof. E. Idler)
- February 19 Social inequality and health/mortality
- February 26 Family and health/mortality (Prof. K. Springer 3-4pm)

### Race and Health

- March 5 Race and ethnic differences in health and mortality
- March 19 Race and ethnicity in biomedicine and health policy (Prof. C. Lee)
- March 26 To be determined based on student interests and needs  
Possible topics (among others students may propose) include: Research designs for health studies; Gender and health; Contextual influences on health; Health behaviors

### Sociology of Mental Illness

- April 2 Overview: Sociology of mental illness (Prof. A. Horwitz)
- April 9 Social inequalities and mental health (Prof. S. Rosenfield)

### Student Presentations

- April 16 Paper presentations
- April 23 Paper presentations

### Summing it up

- April 30 Approaches to population health (Prof. D. Mechanic)

## Course Outline

**January 22 Introduction**

**January 29 Mortality decline, the health transition and its implications**

### Readings:

- Coale, Ansley. 1974. "The History of the Human Population." *Scientific American* 231: 41-51.
- Omran, Abdel. 1971. "The Epidemiologic Transition: A Theory of the Epidemiology of Population Change." *Milbank Quarterly* 49: 509-538.
- Kolata, Gina. 2006. "So Big and Healthy Nowadays, Grandpa Wouldn't Know You." *The New York Times*, Sunday July 30.
- Olshansky, SJ, BA Carnes, C Cassel. 1990. "In Search of Methuselah: Estimating the Upper Limits to Human Longevity." *Science* 250: 634-643.
- Fries, James F. 1980. "Aging, Natural Death, and the Compression of Morbidity." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 303(3): 130-135.
- Crimmins, Eileen M. 2004. "Trends in the Health of the Elderly." *Annual Review of Public Health* 25: 79-98.
- Mann, Charles C. 2005. "The Coming Death Shortage." *The Atlantic Monthly* 295(4), 92-4, 96, 98-100, 102.

### Recommended:

- Schneider, EL and Brody, JA. 1983. "Aging, Natural Death and the Compression of Morbidity: Another View." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 309: 854-855.
- White, Kevin M. and Samuel H. Preston. 1996. "How many Americans are Alive because of Twentieth-Century Improvements in Mortality?" *Population Development Review* 22(3): 405-419.
- Wilmoth, John R. 1998. "The Future of Human Longevity: A Demographer's Perspective." *Science* 280 (5362):395-396.

**February 5 Measuring health and mortality**

### Readings:

- Elo, Irma. 2001. "Mortality Crossover." In NJ Smelser and PB Baltes (eds.). *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 15: pp. 10065-1067.
- \*Idler, Ellen, Yael Benyamini. 1997. "Self-Rated Health and Mortality: A Review of Twenty-Seven Community Studies." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 38[1]: 21-37.
- \*Ferraro, KF and MM Farmer. 1999. "Utility of Health Data from Social Surveys: Is There a Gold Standard for Measuring Morbidity?" *American Sociological Review* 64: 303-315.
- \*Gill and Feinstein. 1994. "A Critical Appraisal of the Quality of Quality-of-Life Measurements" *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 272:619-626.
- \*Wiener, J, RJ Hanley, R Clark and JF Van Nostrand. 1990. "Measuring the Activities of Daily Living: Comparisons Across National Surveys." *Journal of Gerontology: SOCIAL SCIENCES Volume 45, Number 6, pp.S229-237.*

\* Student presenter(s) should focus on the asterisked articles for the class presentation.

Recommended and Good Texts for Reference:

- Coale, Ansley J. and Ellen Eliason Kisker. 1986. "Mortality Crossovers: Reality or Bad Data?" *Population Studies* 40:389-402.
- Hoerger, Thomas J. 2006. "Controversies in Obesity Mortality: A Tale of Two Studies." *Health Promotion Economics* Volume 1: Issue 1.
- Preston, S.H., P. Heuveline, and M. Guillot. 2001. *Demography: Measuring and Modeling Population Processes*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers.
- Young, T. Kue. 2004. *Population Health: Concepts and Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press, Selected Chapters.

**February 12 GUEST LECTURE: Psychosocial influences on health (Prof. E. Idler)  
ONE-PAGE PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

Readings:

- House, JS, C Robbins, and HL Metzner. 1982. "The association of social relationships and activities with mortality: Prospective evidence from the Tecumseh Community Health Study." *American Journal of Epidemiology* 116:123-140.
- Idler, EL. 2001. "Religion and health." In Smelser, NJ, and PB Baltes, *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. Pp. 13037-13040. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Idler, EL, SV Kasl. 1992. "Religion, Disability, Depression, and the Timing of Death." *American Journal of Sociology* 97(4): 1052-79.
- Idler, EL, SV Kasl. 1997. "Religion among Disabled and Nondisabled Persons I: Cross-sectional Patterns in Health Practices, Social Activities, and Well-being." *Journal of Gerontology: SOCIAL SCIENCES* 52B(6): S294-S305.
- Idler, EL, SV Kasl. 1997. "Religion among Disabled and Nondisabled Persons II: Attendance at Religious Services as a Predictor of the Course of Disability." *Journal of Gerontology: SOCIAL SCIENCES* 52B(6): S306-S316.

**February 19 Social inequality and mortality/health**

Readings:

- Pappas, G., S Queen, W Hadden and G Fisher. 1993. "The Increasing Disparity in Mortality between Socioeconomic Groups in the United States, 1960 and 1986." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 329: 103-109.
- Smith, James P. 1999. "Healthy Bodies and Thick Wallets: The Dual Relation between Health and Economic Status." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 13(2): 145-166.
- Lutfy, K, J Freese. 2005. "Toward some fundamentals of fundamental causality: Socioeconomic status and health in the routine clinic visit for diabetes." *American Journal of Sociology* 110: 1326-72.
- Lynch, J., GD Smith, GA Kaplan and JS House. 2000. "Income Inequality and Mortality: Importance to Health of Individual Income, Psychosocial Environment, or Material Conditions." *British Medical Journal* 320: 1200-1206.
- Hayward, Mark D. and Bridget K. Gorman. 2004. "The Long Arm of Childhood: The Influence of Early-Life Social Conditions on Men's Mortality." *Demography* 41(1): 87-107.
- Kolata, Gina. 2007. "A Surprising Secret to a Long Life: Stay in School." *The New York Times*, Wednesday January 3, 2007.

Recommended:

- House, James. 2002. "Understanding Social Factors and Inequalities in Health: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Progress and 21<sup>st</sup> Century." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43(2): 125-142.
- Link, Bruce and Jo C. Phelan. 1995. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. Extra Issue. 80-94.
- Preston, SH and P Taubman. 1994. "Socioeconomic Differences in Adult Mortality and Health Status." In Martin L and SH Preston, eds. *Demography of Aging*. Washington DC: National Academy Press, pp. 279-318.

**February 26 GUEST LECTURE: Family relationships and mortality/health (3-4 pm Prof. K. Springer)**

Readings:

- Cherlin, Andrew J., P. Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, and Christine McRae. 1998. "Effects of Parental Divorce on Mental Health throughout the Life Course." *American Sociological Review* 63(2): 239-249.
- Lillard, Lee A. and Linda J. Waite. 1995. "'Til Death Do Us Part: Marital Disruption and Mortality." *American Journal of Sociology* 100: 1131-56.
- Umberson, Debra, Williams, Kristi; Powers, Daniel A.; Liu, Hui; Needham, Belinda. 2006. "You Make Me Sick: Marital Quality and Health over the Life Course." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 47(1): 1-16.
- Ross, Catherine and John Mirowsky. 2002. "Family Relationships, Social Support and Subjective Life Expectancy." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43(4): 469-489.
- Springer, KW. "Childhood Physical Abuse and Mid-Life Physical Health: Testing a Multi-Pathway Life Course Model." Under review, invitation to resubmit revised manuscript.
- Springer, KW. "His and Her Marriage Today: Gendered Models of How Wives' Income Impacts Husbands' Later Mid-Life Health." Under review.

Recommended:

- House, James S., Karl R. Landis, and Debra Umberson. 1988. "Social Relationships and Health." *Science* 241: 540-545.

**March 5 Race and ethnic differences in mortality and health**

Readings:

- Hummer, Robert A. 1996. "Black-White Differences in Health and Mortality: A Review and Conceptual Model." *The Sociological Quarterly* 37: 105-125.
- Hayward, Mark D., Eileen M. Crimmins, Toni P. Miles, and Yu Yang. 2000. "The Significance of Socioeconomic Status in Explaining the Race Gap in Chronic Health Conditions." *American Sociological Review* 65: 910-930.
- Phillips, Julie A. 2002. "White, Black and Latino Homicide Rates: Why the Difference?" *Social Problems* 53(2): 161-185.
- Williams, DR, HW Neighbors, JS Jackson. 2003. "Racial/Ethnic Discrimination and Health: Findings from Community Studies." *American Journal of Public Health* 93(2): 200-208.
- Schnittker, J. BA Pescosolido and TW Croghan. 2005. "Are African Americans really less willing to use health care?" *Social Problems* 52: 255-271.

Recommended:

- Bond Huie, Stephanie A., Robert A. Hummer and Richard G. Rogers. 2002. "Individual and Contextual Risks of Death among Race and Ethnic Groups in the United States." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43(3): 359-381.
- Geronimus, A. 1992. "The Weathering Hypothesis and the Health of African American Women and Infants: Evidence and Speculation." *Ethnicity and Disease* 2: 207-221.
- Rosenbaum, S., J. Teitelbaum. 2005. "Assessing Racial Inequality in Health Care." In D. Mechanic et al. (eds.) *Policy Challenges in Modern Health Care*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp.135-147.

**March 11-18 SPRING BREAK**

**March 19 GUEST LECTURE: Race and ethnicity in biomedicine and health policy (Prof. C. Lee)**

Readings:

- Satel, Sally. 2002. "I'm a Racially Profiling Doctor," *New York Times* 5 May.
- Carolyn J. G. 2004. "Should Medicine be Colorblind? Debate Erupts Over Drug that Works for Blacks," *Boston Globe*.
- Burchard, Esteban et al. 2003. "The Importance of Race and Ethnic Background in Biomedical Research and Clinical Practice," *New England Journal of Medicine* 348:1170-5.
- Williams, David R. and Pamela B. Jackson. 2005. "Social Sources of Racial Disparities in Health," *Health Affairs* 24:325-34.
- Duster, Troy. 2003. "Buried Alive: the Concept of Race in Science" in *Genetic Nature/Culture: Anthropology and Science beyond the Two-Culture Divide*, edited by Alan H. Goodman, Deborah Heath, and M. Susan Lindee. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Duster, Troy. 2005. "Enhanced: Race and Reification in Science," *Science* 307(5712): 1050-1.
- Lee, Catherine and John Skrentny. 2006. *From Civil Rights to Science: An Examination of Racial Construction in the Federal Government and Biomedical Research*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Epstein, Steve. 2004. "Bodily differences and collective identities: the politics of gender and race in biomedical research in the United States," *Body and Society* 10(2-3): 183-203.

**March 26 To be announced**

**April 2 GUEST LECTURE: Sociology of mental illness (Prof. A. Horwitz)**

Readings:

- Carr, D. 2002. "The psychological consequences of work-family tradeoffs across three cohorts of men and women." *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 65, 103-24.
- Guarnaccia, P. 1993. "Ataques de Nervios in Puerto Rico: Culture-bound syndrome or popular illness?" *Medical Anthropology* 15: 157-170.
- Horwitz, A. V. 1999. "The sociological study of mental illness: A critique and synthesis of four perspectives. In C.S. Aneshensel and J. Phelan (Eds.) *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health* (pp. 57-80). New York: Kluwer/Plenum.
- Horwitz, A. V. 2005. "Media Portrayals and Health Inequalities: A Case Study of Characterizations of Gene X Environment Interactions." *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences* 60B: 48-52.

Mechanic, D. 1962. "Some factors in identifying and defining mental illness." *Mental Hygiene* 46: 66-74.

**April 9**            **GUEST LECTURE: Social inequalities and mental health (Prof. S. Rosenfield)**

Readings:

- Rosenfield, Sarah. 1999. "Splitting the Difference: Gender, the Self, and Mental Health" in Carol Anaschensel and Jo Phelan, eds., *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*. New York: Plenum.
- Rosenfield, Sarah, Mary Clare Lennon, and Helene White. 2005. "Mental Health and the Self: Self-salience and the Emergence of Internalizing and Externalizing Problems" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 46:326-340.
- Rosenfield, Sarah, Julie Phillips, and Helene Raskin White. 2006. "Gender, Race, and the Self in Mental Health and Crime," *Social Problems* 53:161-185.
- Dodge, Kenneth A. 1993. "Social-Cognitive Mechanisms in the Development of Conduct Disorder and Depression." *Annual Review of Psychology* 44:559-84.
- Markus, Hazel and S. Kitayama. 1991. "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation." *Psychological Review* 98:224-253.

**April 16**            **PAPER PRESENTATIONS**

**April 23**            **PAPER PRESENTATIONS**

**April 30**            **GUEST LECTURE: Approaches to population health (Prof. D. Mechanic)**  
\*Note: We will meet in the seminar room at the Health Institute, 30 College Avenue.

Readings:

- Mechanic, D. 2002. "Disadvantage, Inequality and Social Policy." *Health Affairs* 21(2): 48-59.
- Link, B., J. Phelan . 2005. "Fundamental Sources of Health Inequalities." In D. Mechanic et al. (eds.) *Policy Challenges in Modern Health Care*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 71-84.
- Warner, K. "Tobacco Policy in the United States." In Mechanic, op ed., pp. 99- 114.
- Lynch, J et al. 2004. "Is Income Inequality a Determinant of Population Health? Part 1: A Systematic Review." *Milbank Quarterly* 82(1).

Recommended:

- Stephen J. Kunitz. 2007. *The Health of Populations: General Theories and Particular Realities*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**Article Extract Form**

**Title:**

**Author(s):**

**Journal, date, pages:**

**Institution of primary author:**

**Project or data set:**

**Most important previous studies mentioned in literature review:**

**Research question:**

**Hypothesis:**

**Study design:**

**Sample size and selection procedures:**

**Dependent variable(s):**

**Primary independent variable(s):**

**Analytic or statistical technique used:**

**Primary findings:**

**Weakness of study:**

**Strength of study:**

**Other important issues:**