

Fall 2017
920:523:01
Monday 4:10pm-6:50pm

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Office hours: M 3-4pm, Davison 043

SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

Course Description

The sociology of health and illness (also known as medical sociology) is a broad field examining the social production of health, wellness, illness and mortality. We cannot understand the topics of health and illness simply by looking at biological phenomena and medical knowledge, but, instead, we must also consider a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural forces in which health and illness are produced and understood. We will survey the central topics in the field, with an emphasis on understanding the way that the following themes: the structural and cultural dimensions of health; health inequalities; the profession of medicine; the experience of illness; and attempts to reform healthcare. Throughout the course, we will apply sociological theory and the recent scholarship of anthropology, history and social and cultural studies of science to make sense of contemporary issues in medicine. Although the course focuses on the United States, we will try whenever possible to place issues in a global context and students are welcome to explore these topics in their course papers.

Learning Goals

Students will

- Acquire broad understanding of the major theoretical debates and areas of substantive concern within the sociology of health and illness.
- Understand the history and trajectory of the field of medical sociology, including its recent turn towards the sociology of science.
- Be able to use concepts developed across disciplines to analyze biomedical research on health and illness
- Critically assess how health is produced through social, political, economic and cultural forces on a macro, meso and micro level.

The acquisition of learning goals will be assessed using weekly memos, active participation in class, and the completion of a course paper.

Course Logistics

This is a seminar course. The quality of our discussions depends on your full participation. Typically, I will begin with a short presentation to provide background and history for understanding the readings. The discussion that follows will be grounded in the reading and based on your comments submitted for the week. Students must fulfill the following requirements:

1) Over the course of the semester, each student will be expected to write a 1-2 page memo responding to each week's readings. (single-space is fine.) These comments will be pasted into the discussion section on sakai by 10am on Monday morning, so that everyone has time to read each other's comments by Monday evening's class. Comments

may be informal, but they must be a *critical* response. Memos will be graded as ‘check,’ ‘check plus,’ or ‘check minus.’ **You can take three exemptions from writing these memos. If you choose to take an exemption, please let me know by email.** Also, I do not normally accept memos if you don't also come to class that day.

These memos should help you focus your ideas in a way that can contribute to our collective conversation during class time. In general, each memo should include both a synthetic analysis of some dimension of the course readings that you found compelling and warrants further discussion and two to three well-crafted questions for the class to consider as a group. These memos ought to address readings within that particular week, but you may also compare that week's readings to themes and theories discussed earlier in the semester. This is also a good opportunity to raise questions and concerns about the substance of the readings. Finally, these memos are a great opportunity to develop a killer set of notes.

These memos are worth 32% (each memo=4%) of your grade.

2) Participate in class! This is a seminar and each of you is expected to contribute to the discussion. Part of participation includes helping me lead at least one weekly class discussion for a single article or a book assigned that week. Sign-up sheets will be passed around during the first week of class. As a co-discussant, your job is to introduce the material and to come up with a few (3-5) substantive questions in the form of a one-page handout (to be electronically distributed to the rest of the group by 9 pm on the day before class) to get the discussion rolling. Such questions may target what you consider the key issue/problematic raised by the author(s) in question, a shortcoming in the argument/evidence, a puzzling claim, broader implications, exciting/provocative comparisons, and so forth. You will meet with me 15 minutes before class to go over our approach to discussion for the day.

Class participation is worth 20% of your grade.

It should go without saying, but attendance is mandatory. (Of course, stay home if you must -- but, attendance is expected.)

3) Students taking the course for credit are expected to submit a 17-20 page paper on a topic related to this course. The paper can be analytical, critically reflecting on a substantive issue related to the sociology of health and illness or you may choose to write a research proposal, drawing on theoretical perspectives and existing empirical work to identify an interesting and until now unsolved empirical question.

In order to get approval for your topic, you must submit a 2-3 page memo describing your project, complete with a brief bibliography by Feb 27th, after which you are expected to make an appointment to discuss this paper with me further. Of course, I'm happy to discuss this with you in advance. **Final paper is due on May 4th.** Late papers are strongly discouraged.

The memo is worth 5% of your grade. The paper is worth 35% of your grade.

4) Students will present their paper in progress in class on the last day of class.

The presentation is worth 8% of your grade.

Required Texts

Crosby, Christina. 2016. *A Body Undone: Living on After Great Pain*. New York: NYU Press.

Reich, Jennifer. 2016. *Calling the Shots: Why Parents Reject Vaccines*. New York: NYU Press.

Shostak, Sara. 2013. *Exposed Science: Genes, the Environment, and the Politics of Population Health*. University of California Press.

Skloot, Rebecca. 2011. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. New York: Broadway Books.

Books are available at the Barnes and Noble bookstore on campus, on Amazon, or on reserve at the Douglass Library.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction to the Sociology of Health and Illness

January 23rd

Week 2 – How is medicine social? Political? Cultural?

January 30th

Skloot, Rebecca. 2011. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. New York: Broadway Books.

Week 3 -- Health inequalities: Theoretical frameworks

February 6th

The McKeowan Thesis: *American Journal of Public Health*, 2002, 92(5):

Szreter, Simon. “Rethinking McKeown: The relationship between public health and social change.” pp 722-4.

Colgrove, James. “The McKeown thesis: A historical controversy and its enduring influence.” pp 725-9.

Link, Bruce and Jo Phelan. “McKeown and the idea that social conditions are fundamental causes of disease.” pp 730-2.

Phelan, Link, and Tehranifar, 2010, “Social Conditions and Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities: Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications.” *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*.

Williams, David R. and Michelle Sternthal. 2010. "Understanding Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51: S15-27.

Read, Jen'nan Ghazal, and Bridget K. Gorman. 2010. "Gender and Health Inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 36: 371-86.

Class canceled Feb 13th

Week 4 Biosocial approaches to health

February 20th

Guest speaker: Allan Horwitz

Horwitz, Allan. Forthcoming. Reeder Address.

Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *The Bare Bones of Race*. Social Studies of Science.

Springer, Kristen W. Hankivsky, Olena, Bates, Lisa M. *Gender and Health: Relational, Intersectional, and Biosocial Approaches*. *Social Science and Medicine*.

Week 5 Biomedical dominance

February 27th

Paul Starr. 1984. *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*. Basic Books. pp. 3-29, 79-144

Wertz, Richard and Dorothy C. Wertz. Notes on the Decline of Midwives and the Rise of Medical Obstetricians. In *Sociology of Health and Illness*, edited by Peter Conrad and Valerie Leiter.

Timmermans, Stefan, and Hyeyoung Oh. 2010. "The Continued Social Transformation of the Medical Profession." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51(S): S94-S106.

Week 6 Theories of (Bio)medicalization

March 6th

Conrad, Peter. The Shifting Engines of Medicalization, In *Sociology of Health and Illness*, edited by Peter Conrad and Valerie Leiter.

Clarke, Adele, et al. 2003. Biomedicalization: Technoscientific transformations of health, illness, and US Biomedicine. *ASR*. 68(2).

Fishman, Jennifer R. 2004. Manufacturing Desire: The Commodification of Female Sexual Dysfunction. *Social Studies of Science*. 34(2): 187-218.

Race, Kane. 2009. *Consuming Drugs for Pleasure: The Queer Politics of Drugs*. Duke University Press. 1-8.

March 9th:

Institute for Health Forum: Future of Health Care Reform
Health institute, 12-1:30

Attendance isn't mandatory, but it is strongly, strongly encouraged.

March 13th Spring Break – woo hoo!!!

Week 7 Healthcare Access and the Affordable Care Act?

March 20th

Readings to be announced.

Week 8 Environmental Health

March 27th

Guest speaker: Sara Shostak

Shostak, Sara. 2013. *Exposed Science: Genes, the Environment, and the Politics of Population Health*. University of California Press. Selections.

Altman Gasior, Rebecca, Morello-Frosch, Rachel. Green Brody, Julia, Rudel, Ruthann, Brown, Phil, Averick, Mara. 2008. Pollution Comes Home and Gets Personal: Women's Experience of Household Chemical Exposure. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.

To skim:

Auyero, Javier and Swiston, Debora. 2008. The Social Production of Toxic Uncertainty. *American Sociological Review*.

Week 9 Experiencing Illness

April 3rd

Christina Crosby. 2016. *A Body Undone: Living on After Great Pain*. New York: NYU Press.

To skim:

Rier, David. 2010. The Patient's Experience of Illness. *Handbook of Medical Sociology*. Sixth Edition.

Week 10 Social and cultural meanings of diagnosis

April 10th

Kempner, Joanna. *Not Tonight: A Cultural Analysis of Headache Medicine*. (Intro, Chapters 2 and 3)

Kempner, Joanna. "What Biology Can't Do." *Headache*.

Buchbinder, Mara. *All in Your Head: Making Sense of Pediatric Pain*. (Intro, Chapters 1, 2, and 3)

Week 11 Constructing risk

April 17th

Reich, Jennifer. 2016. *Calling the Shots: Why Parents Reject Vaccines*. New York: NYU Press. *Selections*.

Week 12 Health Social Movements

April 24th

Brown, P., S. Zavestoski, et al. (2004). "Embodied health movements: new approaches to social movements in health." *Sociology of Health & Illness* **26**(1): 50–80.

Epstein, Steven. 1995. "The Construction of Lay Expertise: AIDS Activism and the Forging of Credibility in the Reform of Clinical Trials," *Science, Technology & Human Values* 20: 408-437.

Nelson, Alondra. 2011. *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (Chapter 5: "As American As Cherry Pie: Contesting the Biologization of Violence").

Kempner, Joanna and Bailey, John. Under review. Title TBD.

Week 13 Presentations

May 1st

Final Papers Due: May 5th, 2017