

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY  
Department of Sociology  
Sociology Department Website: [www.soci.ucalgary.ca](http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca)

**Soci 321: Sociology of Health and Illness**  
Course Outline, Spring 2009  
Tuesday and Thursdays 11:00am-1:50pm, ST131

**Instructor: Rebecca Godderis**  
Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00pm-3:00pm  
Office / Phone number (during office hours only): SS 902, 220-6226

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### Course Overview

This course provides an introduction to key areas of theoretical and empirical investigation in the sociology of health and illness, one of the largest sub-disciplines in sociology. Major topics covered in this course include: different perspectives on health, illness, and health care, social determinants of health, health care systems and the practice of medicine, illness experience, the social construction of health and illness, and the process of medicalization.

To be successful in this course, students need to challenge themselves to think about health, medicine, and health care *sociologically*. The goal of this course is to further your understanding of sociological aspects of health and illness; along the way you will also learn something about the organization of health care and medicine, but the latter is a secondary objective of this course.

The specific objectives for this course are as follows:

- To learn key terms and concepts used in the sociology of health and illness;
- To be able to interpret events in health, medicine, and health care using a sociological lens;
- To gain an understanding of how medical knowledge and practice is shaped by social, cultural, historical and political forces;
- To become familiar with the range of perspectives that are used by sociologists who study health and illness and the topics they examine, including the social determinants of health, illness experience, social constructionism, and medicalization;
- To become more informed about the history and organization of the Canadian health care system and its professions, in comparison to other Western health care systems.

This course makes use of Blackboard to communicate information to students. To access Blackboard, go to: [blackboard.ucalgary.ca](http://blackboard.ucalgary.ca) OR [my.ucalgary.ca](http://my.ucalgary.ca)

## Required Readings

- 1) There is one **textbook** for this course, available at the UofC bookstore:  
  
Chappell, Neena and Margaret Penning (2009). *Understanding Health, Health Care, and Health Policy*. Don Mills, Ontario: Oxford University Press.
- 2) There is one **custom course packet** for this course, available at the UofC bookstore.
- 3) Other readings will be assigned throughout the semester or some readings may be changed. Any announcements about changes or additional readings will be posted on Blackboard and relayed in class. You are responsible for attending class and checking Blackboard to find out about these changes.

You are expected to complete the assigned readings *in advance* of the lecture for which they are assigned. Doing so will increase your comprehension of the lectures and will facilitate learning the material. As well, although readings will be addressed during lecture, they will not always be covered in detail. Sometimes they will be used as a starting point for more advanced discussion.

## Evaluation

Your final grade will be based on the following evaluation components:

Sick Role Memoir	May 28 <sup>th</sup>	15%
Debate Project	due date variable	
Oral presentation		20%
Written component		10%
Group Work Evaluation		5%
<u>Take-Home Final Exam</u>	<u>June 29<sup>th</sup></u>	<u>50%</u>
Total		100%

**Sick Role Memoir:** We have all been sick before and, most likely, multiple times in our lives. Think about a time when you, a family member, or a close friend was sick. Write a brief personal memoir about the experience. You do not have to choose an illness that was momentous. You can talk about the common cold or flu. What was it like to be ill, or to confront the illness of someone close to you? Were there any special rituals associated with the illness? Did it change your sense of “the body”? Or how you reacted to future illness?

You could consider whether you fulfilled the sick role as envisioned by Talcott Parsons or whether you deviated from his ideal model? Or you could talk about the health care system. How was your encounter with the Canadian (or other national) healthcare system(s)? Did you face barriers when you tried to access resources and services? What aspects of the system did you find the most beneficial and/or positive? Did it change your views on healthcare? You could also talk about how your illness experience may have been affected by cultural views about sickness—or your gender, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality etc.

As you write, use your sociological imagination to reflect on how your personal experience relates to the sociological perspectives and issues we have discussed in class so far. The questions I have posed above are to facilitate your thinking about the assignment, **but it is not necessary to answer all, OR EVEN ANY, of these questions.** In fact, you will not have the space to answer all these questions so you will need to focus your assignment on only one or two aspects. I am interested in the unique connections you can make between your experiences and the discussions we have had in class.

- Expected length: 2-3 pages (*1 mark will be docked for being over 3 pages*). To save paper, a separate title page is NOT necessary. Just put your name, student number, date, and course number at the top of the first page.

**Debate Project:** You will work in groups in order to develop arguments to support a particular position about a controversial topic in Canadian health care. As a group you will be required to do enough research on the topic to be able to participate in a debate with another group about the issue in front of the class. You may use class resources, as well as outside sources, to complete the research. However, you **MUST** be very careful if you decide to use the Internet as a resource. There are many websites that are **NOT** legitimate sources, which includes Wikipedia! Groups will be assigned a debate topic as well as “a side” in class and given some class time to prepare.

Each group will likely have four members (depending on final class enrollment) and each member of the group will be expected to speak during the in-class debate. You will also be expected to hand in one written summary of your debate points/research with a list of at least 2 sources that you used to formulate your arguments. Each group member will also be expected to hand in a self-evaluation and an short assessment of the other members, which will determine the group work evaluation grade. Each member of the group will receive the same grade for the oral presentation (20%) and the written component (10%), but individual grades will be given for the group work evaluation component (5%).

- Expected length of written component: 1-2 pages. The format does not *need* to be essay style, although it can be. I encourage you to be creative with how you present the information, as long as you include high quality content.

**Take-home final exam:** The final exam will be cumulative and require students to draw on ideas and information from the entire course. The goal is to demonstrate your ability to synthesize the information you have learned in class and apply it in new contexts. You will have a choice of which questions to answer and will be expected to answer each question in essay format. The questions will be handed out during the last class on Thursday June 25<sup>th</sup> and will be due on Monday June 29<sup>th</sup> between 12-1pm. You will be required to drop off a hard copy to me at my office during this time. More details about the final exam will be given in class.

IMPORTANT details for written assignments (including take-home final):

- Please type your assignment, double-spaced and in 12-point type. Proofread written assignments before handing them in. I expect that the papers will be well-written and include proper sentence and paragraph structure. I also expect that they will be free of errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- Include student names and numbers, as well as the date the assignment was handed in and course number.
- All written assignments are to be handed in **at the beginning of class (11:00am) to the instructor on the due date or at the time specified. DO NOT** put papers under an office door—a paper will not be considered for grading if submitted in this fashion.
- Late penalty. Late papers will be **penalized** 10% per day, starting from the time when the papers are due. For example, if the paper is due on Wednesday at 11:00 am, but your paper is handed in at 12:00 pm that day, you will be deducted 10%. If it is still not handed in by Thursday at 11:00 a.m., you will be deducted 20% and so on. **Please note:** Saturday and Sunday are each worth a 10% deduction. If your paper will be late, YOU have the responsibility to contact the instructor to make appropriate arrangements to submit your paper.
- Extensions will NOT be given unless the instructor is supplied with a doctor's note or other appropriate documentation as to why the paper must be late.

The following scale converts percentage to letter grades for this class:

A+ = 95-100	B+ = 80-84	C+ = 67-71	D+ = 54-58
A = 90-94	B = 76-79	C = 63-66	D = 50-53
A- = 85-89	B- = 72-75	C- = 59-62	F = 0-49

*Please note: the grades for a course component may be scaled to maintain equity among sections and to conform to departmental norms.*

## Course Standards

**Deferrals:** You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an exam due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original test as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred test. Deferred tests will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

Deferral requests for *final examinations* go through the Dean’s office and must be processed by the deadlines that are established in the UofC Calendar. If you wish to make such a request you should go to the Faculty of Social Sciences Office where you can get the appropriate paperwork for completion. The Dean then needs to approve your request. The instructor is not involved in this decision.

**Ethics Research:** Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

**Academic Misconduct:** cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct. University of Calgary policies related to academic misconduct can be found at: [www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2007/how/How\\_LB.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/2007/how/How_LB.htm)

**The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP)** legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside an instructor’s office or the Department main office. Written assignments must be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructor’s office hours. If a student is unable to pick up her/his assignment s/he may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

**Safewalk:** The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

**Academic Accommodation:** Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. *It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation, if required.*

**Handing in Papers Outside of Class, Return of Final Papers and Release of Final Grades:**

1. When students are unable to submit papers in class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor rather than at the Sociology Department main office.
2. Final papers will not be returned through the Sociology Department main office. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, (i.e., outside an instructor's office, the department office, etc.). Students who want their final papers returned by mail must attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with the paper. Otherwise final papers will only be available for pick-up during the instructor's office hours at the end of this term or the beginning of the next term.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology department. They are only available online.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to revision and will be updated in class if there are changes.

Date	Readings	Topic/Notes
<b>Week 1</b>		
May 14	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 1	Sociological Perspectives on Health and Healthcare
<b>Week 2</b>		
May 19	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 2 (pgs 35-40) - Articles from CP: <i>McKinlay &amp; McKinlay; Pollan; Zola</i>	Sociological Perspectives <i>continued</i> and Medicalization
May 21	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 2 (pgs 40-76) - Article from CP: <i>Martin</i>	Social Construction of Health, Illness, and Medical Knowledge
<b>Week 3</b>		
May 26	- Articles from CP: <i>Farmer; Gladwell; Klinenberg</i>	Social Determinants of Health
May 28	Articles from CP: <i>Herndl; Moore &amp; Durkin</i>  <b>SICK ROLE MEMOIR DUE</b>	Social Determinants of Health
<b>Week 4</b>		
June 2	- Articles from CP: <i>Karp; Conrad</i>	Experiencing Health and Illness
June 4	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 3	Experiencing Health and Illness
<b>Week 5</b>		
June 9	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 4 (pgs 114-144)	Medical Professionals and The Healthcare System

Date	Readings	Topic/Notes
June 11	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 4 (pgs 144-164) - Article from CP: <i>Klass</i>  <b>Group Debates – Topics 1/2</b>	Medical Professionals and The Healthcare System
<b>Week 6</b>  June 16	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 5 (pgs 168-183)  <b>Group Debates – Topics 3/4</b>	Canadian Healthcare, Politics, and Public Policy
June 18	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 5 (pgs 188-190) - Article from CP: <i>Taylor</i>  <b>Group Debates – Topics 5/6</b>	Pharmaceutical Industry
<b>Week 7</b>  June 23	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 5 (pgs 183-188) - Article from CP: <i>Ehrenreich</i>  <b>Group Debates – Topics 7/8</b>	Healthcare Systems, Globalization, and Capitalism
June 25	- <i>Understanding Health</i> , chapter 6 - Article from CP: <i>Lupton</i>  <b>Take Home Final Handed Out</b>	The Future of Healthcare

**TAKE HOME FINAL DUE: June 29<sup>th</sup> 2009 between 12-1pm**