Sociology 321: Sociology of Health & Illness

Summer 2013

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Course Description

This course is designed to acquaint you with the sociology of health and illness, one of the largest sub-disciplines in sociology. This course will cover a necessarily select group of topics, but those covered are challenging and provocative. The course focuses on three major areas:

- the social construction of illness and the practice of medicine;
- social determinants of health
- health care policy and comparative health care systems.

Through lectures, class discussions, written commentaries and examinations, this course provides students with an opportunity to engage in disciplined reflection upon and discussion about health, medicine, and health care. To be successful in this course, students must strive to think about the course topics through a sociological lens, coming up with questions about health and illness-related topics that a sociologist might ask. Knowing and understanding medicine, health and illness from perspectives outside of sociology will not be enough to do well in this course. Successful students will use sociologically-informed critical thinking skills to engage with questions and materials related to health, illness and medicine.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the completion of the course, students should be able to:

1) differentiate different sociological arguments about the source of medical authority.
2) define, describe influences on, and provide illustrative examples of the social construction of illness.
3) describe and give examples of how disease distribution is influenced by factors other than genetics, behaviours, and health care systems.
4) evaluate existing debates about the distribution of disease that use or fail to account for the social determinants of health.
5) compare & contrast four different ways health care systems are organized.
6) describe current challenges and proposed solutions facing contemporary health care systems, and apply to a sociologically-grounded argument to evaluate the alignment between the two.

Required Readings

1) There is one book to purchase: Strohschein, L, & Weitz, R. (2013) *The sociology of health, illness, and health care in Canada: A critical approach.* Nelson Education.
    a. available at the bookstore, or online with 6 month access: https://www.nelsonbrain.com/
2) Custom Course Pack – available at the University Bookstore
3) Other required readings that are available for download through the U of C Library or via a direct website link are posted on the course Blackboard site. Students are responsible for downloading, and if they wish, printing the articles.

NOTE: I may add, omit, or change some readings during the semester as needed. If this happens, I will announce the changes in advance in class and on Blackboard, and ensure you have access to the new readings.

Expectations/Responsibilities of Students

- Come prepared and participate actively in class activities and student seminars;
- Read and thoughtfully consider all assigned readings;
- Complete all assignments to the best of your ability;
- Submit assignments on time;
- Be respectful of others opinions, especially when you disagree;

Readings should be completed before the class for which they are assigned. Readings will be addressed during lecture, but they will not always be covered in detail. Conversely, some of the work you will do during class with your fellow students will depend on your preparation to discuss what you read. Either way, your experience of the in-class time will depend on your preparation.

Laptops are allowed in the classroom, though not during exams. I encourage you to turn off distractions (e.g. your cellphone) during the time in class, both for your own attention as well as the learning environment of your fellow classmates. If you must keep your cell phone turned on (e.g. if you are a parent and need to be available), please use silent notifications for incoming calls and texts.

Productivity software can be a major help to your learning. You can download software that either temporarily blocks your access to certain websites or applications (such as Anti-Social, which temporarily blocks you from accessing social media on MacOS), or blocks the internet entirely for the time you are in class (or studying) while using your laptop (Freedom, available for PC and MacOS).

For more tips: http://99u.com/articles/6969/10-online-tools-for-better-attention-focus

Assignments & Evaluation

There will be two short written response papers, and three examinations during the course.

Response Papers

Students are required to write two short response papers for the course. See the document "Response Papers" on Blackboard for specific details about each paper, as well as the grading rubric.

Examinations

There will be three exams in this course: two midterms, and one final. The exams are not cumulative. They will have a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions, with one longer answer question on the final. The exams will be based on assigned reading and any material presented in class.

No memory aids will be allowed during the exams.

Grading

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Response Paper – Unit #1 (due July 15)	10%
Response Paper – Unit #2 (due July 26)	10%
Midterm – Unit #1 – July 17	25%
Midterm - Unit #2 – July 29	20%
Final exam – Unit #3 – to be scheduled*	35%

*Scheduled by the University. Daytime exam, Aug 15-17.

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

Percentage	**Final Grade**	**Description** (from UCalgary Undergraduate Calendar)
95-100%	A+	Outstanding
90-94%	A	Excellent; superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
85-89%	A-	
80-84%	B+	
75-79%	B	Good; clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete
70-74%	B-	
67-69%	C+	
63-66%	C	Satisfactory; basic understanding of the subject matter
59-62%	C-	
55-58%	D+	
50-54%	D	Minimal pass; marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject
0-49.9%	F	Fail; unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- You are required to complete all five graded components to complete the course. You are not required to pass a particular component in order to pass the course as a whole.
- The grades for a course component may be scaled to conform to departmental norms.
- Grade Reappraisal: Within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must submit a written response to the instructor explaining why reconsideration should occur. The instructor will reconsider the grade assigned, then book a time with the student to discuss his or her work and rationale. It should be noted that a mark may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.
- Late Policy: Unless negotiated with the instructor in advance of the due date, late response papers will lose 10% of the grade per day late. Students must make arrangements with the instructor to deliver late papers; the main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters, including the handling of assignments.

Instructor Contact & Role

I recognize that there are certain expectations that I need to meet in order for you to have a positive learning experience in this class. As your instructor, I will:

- Be respectful of all persons in the class;
- Aim to create an environment where all opinions and comments are heard and considered;
- Strive to make lectures and learning activities interesting and relevant;
- Be available outside of class time to discuss course-work or other course concerns;
- Provide you with instructional material through lectures, on-line material and readings that will enable you to excel in this class;
- Assess all assignments fairly and provide suggestions and comments for improvement.

I am available during my office hours, or by pre-arranged appointments. Small, administrative type questions (e.g. having trouble downloading an article) or appointments can be set up via email (phthille@ucalgary.ca). Students with questions about the course content, or who wish to discuss grades should come to office hours or schedule an appointment.

Other

1) **Academic Misconduct:** Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Calgary code of academic conduct. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. Academic misconduct (cheating, plagiarism, or any other form) is a very serious offence that will be dealt with rigorously in all cases. All work submitted for this class is held to the strictest standards for intellectual honesty. A single offence may lead to disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion. Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct: http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html
1) **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places.

Anything that requires handing back will be returned to you directly during class or office hours. If you are unable to pick up your assignments from the instructor, provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

2) **Deferrals*:*** If possible, please provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component 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 health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student. If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the instructor.

- ***a.*** ***Deferred Final Exam Form:*** Please note that requests to defer a Registrar-scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at: http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp_Su_DFE_App.pdf
- b. ***Deferred Term Work Form:*** Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf
- **c.** Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

3) Student Representation: The 2012-13 Students' Union VP Academic is Emily Macphail (email: suvpaca@ucalgary.ca). The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/page/quality-education/academic-services/student-rights

4) Emergency Evacuation: In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the ICT - Food Court.

5) 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.

6) **Academic Accommodation**: Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, must register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 293, phone 403-220-8237). Please provide academic accommodation letters to the instructor as early in the semester as possible and no later than two weeks after the course begins.

Readings and Assignments

Unit	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Medical authority, medical practice, and the social construction of illness	Wed Jul 3	Course Overview + Intro to Parsons		
	Fri Jul 5	Where does medical authority come from? Critiques and alternatives to Parsons	Medical and Sociological Models: Text p 4-8, 160-163, 170-172 History of Medicine and Authority: Text p. 19-22, 231-235, 293-299	
	Mon Jul 8	Professionalization & Medicalization	Professionalization: Text p. 285-6; 299-308 Medicalization: Zola: *Medicine as an institution of social control* AND Text p. 164-170	
	Wed Jul 10	Social Construction of Disease & Illness	Text 157-160 Jutel (2009). Doctor's Orders: Diagnosis, Medical Authority and the exploitation of the fat body	
	Fri Jul 12	Social Construction of Disease & Illness	Readings assigned by breakout group	
	Mon Jul 15	Illness Experiences Pre-exam	Lorde (1980) *The Cancer Diaries* excerpt	RESPONSE PAPER 1 due

		review		
The social gradient + disease distribution; social determinants of health	Wed Jul 17	Midterm #1 + Intro to the social gradient in health	NO READINGS	MIDTERM
	Fri Jul 19	Sociological theories: how the social affects the biological	Text Ch 4: Socioeconomic inequalities in health p. 72-96 AND McKinley *A case for focusing upstream*	
	Mon Jul 22	Social Determinants of Health - overview	Mikkonen, J., & Raphael, D. (2010). Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts. Toronto: York University School of Health Policy and Management. http://www.thecanadianfacts.org/The_Canadian_Facts.pdf	
	Wed Jul 24	Examples: - social isolation - poverty/race intersections	Farmer; Klinenberg	
	Fri Jul 26	Policy responses – e.g. food Pre-exam review	NO READINGS	RESPONSE PAPER 2 due
Health care systems; the market in health care; contemporary issues and	Mon Jul 29	Midterm #2 + Key concepts in comparing health care systems	NO READINGS	MIDTERM

proposed solutions	Wed Jul 31	Canadian Health Care System England + Germany	Text Ch 10: A history of health care in Canada p. 230-253 + p.274-277	
	Fri Aug 2	U.S. Health Care System(s)	Text p. 258-274	
	Mon Aug 5	NO CLASS		
	Wed Aug 7	Health care as a market?	Sepheri & Chernomas (2004) Is the Canadian HC System Fiscally Unsustainable?	
	Fri Aug 9	Current challenges and debates	Gladwell (2005) The moral-hazard myth; Roos et al (2004) Does Universal comprehensive insurance encourage unnecessary use?	
	Mon Aug 12	Proposed solutions	CHSRF Mythbuster: A parallel private system would reduce waiting times in the public system; Alberta Hip& Knee replacement study	
	Wed Aug 14	How well do solutions align with problems? Pre-exam review		

FINAL EXAM: To be scheduled by the University. Daytime exam, 2 hours. Possible dates Aug 15-17th.