

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Department of Sociology
Sociology 409 -- Social Determinants of Health
Fall 2008

Sociology Department Website: www.soci.ucalgary.ca

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00-3:00 p.m. or by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This is an advanced course in medical sociology, with a special focus on the determinants of health and illness. Simply put, the social determinants of health are the various economic, social and cultural conditions that influence, in stronger and weaker ways, people's health outcomes. We will explore how such social factors as socio-economic status, gender, working conditions, social support, "lifestyle," community and social environments, education and other social factors interact with each other to produce health and disease.

Our primary focus will be to explore *how* and *why* the social advantages and disadvantages people experience--based on their social positions and circumstances--determine their health status and overall well-being. We will also explore, with a critical lens, the relationship between the social determinants of health and various social and health policies. As a part of this discussion, we will also examine the question of responsibility, asking to what extent health is an individual concern, and to what extent it is the responsibility of the collective (e.g. public policy).

As an advanced undergraduate course with a maximum enrollment of only 40 students, class participation is expected. Thus, in addition to the development of a comprehensive understanding of the "whats," "hows" and "whys" of the social determinants of health, a key objective of this course is that students gain practice articulating their thoughts, ideas and questions in a scholarly setting, and gain preparation for future situations where they will be required to speak/present in front of others. Finally, this course aims to develop students' abilities to think and analyse critically, particularly when it comes to ideas, practices, and policies related to health.

REQUIRED READING

There are two required books for this class. They are:

- Cockerham, William C. 2007. Social Causes of Health and Disease. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Oliver, J. Eric. 2006. Fat Politics: The Real Story Behind America's Obesity Epidemic. New York: Oxford University Press.

Both books are available at the University Bookstore. There is also a copy of each book available on reserve at the library. In addition to the assigned texts, we will be reading the following articles:

- Link, Bruce & Jo Phelan. 1995. "Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease," Journal of Health and Social Behavior, Extra Issue: 80-94.
- Taylor, John & R. Jay Turner. 2001. "A Longitudinal Study of the Role and Significance of Mattering to Others for Depressive Symptoms," Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 42 (September): 310-325.
- Lomas, Jonathan. 1998. "Social Capital and Health Implications for Public Health and Epidemiology," Social Science & Medicine, 47(9): 1181-1188.

These articles are available online (electronic journals), and can be accessed through the U of C library website. Students are responsible for the retrieving and printing of assigned articles -- they will not be provided by the instructor.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Preparation and Participation: 10%

Readings are assigned for each day of class. ***Make sure you come to class having read the material well enough that you feel prepared to discuss it.*** This means that you are expected to come to class feeling able to:

- Articulate the key finding(s), argument(s) or concept(s) of the assigned reading;
- Answer questions about a particular point, concept or issue in the assigned reading;
- Ask questions or share ideas/thoughts about points of interest (or points of contention, provocation or confusion) from the reading.
- Make connections between the assigned material and things you have learned elsewhere (e.g., in other courses, in previous readings), and/or from current events, the media, etc.

B. Tests: 20% each

Students will write two in-class tests. The first test is scheduled for **September 30**, and the second for **October 21**. Each test is worth 20%. Tests will be written in-class and will contain a combination of short and long answer questions. Tests will cover material from the Cockerham text and the assigned articles.

C. In-Class Debate: 20%

Each student will participate in an in-class debate on a contemporary "determinants of health-related" issue. A list of debate topics will be provided in class, and students will be assigned both to a topic, as well as to a "side." It is expected that approximately six students will be assigned to each topic, meaning students will work in groups (of approximately three) to prepare and present the side of the argument for their assigned issue. Students will be given class time to prepare. More details about the expectations for, and format of, the debates will be provided in class.

D. Final Paper: 30%

Students will write a final course paper, based on the assigned book, *Fat Politics*. More details about the requirements for this paper will be provided in class. However, it is expected that students write a paper that not only engages with the Oliver book, but also incorporates other

learnings and materials from the course. Final papers should be between 5 and 7 pages in length, and are due on **December 9, no later than 3:00 pm**. Papers are to be handed in at my office, SS902. Late papers will be penalized at a deduction of 10% per day late.

GRADING

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Participation		10%
Tests (2)	20% each	40%
Class Debate		20%
Final Paper		30%
Total		100%

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

A+ = 95-100	A = 90-94	A- = 85-89
B+ = 80-84	B = 75-79	B- = 70-74
C+ = 67-69	C = 64-66	C- = 60-63
D+ = 55-59	D = 50-54	F = below 49

The following description of letter grades comes from the U of Calgary Calendar:

- A indicates superior performance, excellent mastery of the material.
- B indicates above average performance, good mastery of the material.
- C indicates satisfactory performance, a basic understanding of the material.
- D indicates marginal performance, minimal understanding of the material.
- F indicates unsatisfactory performance.

COURSE STANDARDS

Deferrals:

If at all possible you must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take a test or pass in an assignment or essay 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 physical or emotional problem 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 Sociology Department.

Please note that requests to defer a final examination or to defer term work past the end of a term go through the Undergraduate Programs Office (UPO) and must be processed by the deadlines that are established in the U. of C. Calendar. You can find the forms you need at:

Deferred Final Exam Application:

http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Winter2008DEFERREDFINALEXAMINATION_S.pdf

Deferred Term Work Form:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>

You must submit these deferral forms to the Social Sciences Associate Dean (Students) through the UPO office: Undergraduate Programs Office, 4th Floor, MacEwan Student Centre.

To make an appointment with the Associate Dean, phone (403) 220-8155.

Only the Associate Dean approves requests for deferrals which extend beyond the end of a term. Instructors are not involved in such decisions.

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.

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 at class, they should make arrangements to hand in their papers directly to the instructor or teaching assistant 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 revisions and will be updated in class if there are changes.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Sept 9	Introduction to course		
Sept 11	Setting the stage	Cockerham, ch 1	
Sept 16	Theorizing the social determinants of health	Link & Phelan 1995	
Sept 18	Theorizing the social determinants of health, cont.	Cockerham, ch. 2	
Sept 23	Health lifestyles	Cockerham, ch 3	
Sept 25	Social class and health	Cockerham, ch 4	
Sept 30			TEST 1
Oct 2	Social class cont.	Cockerham, ch. 5	
Oct 7	Age, gender, race/ethnicity and health	Cockerham, ch 6	
Oct 9	Gender & health cont	Taylor & Turner 2001	
Oct 14	Health & social capital	Cockerham, ch 8	
Oct 16	Health & social capital cont.	Lomas 1998	
Oct 21			TEST 2
Oct 23	prep time for in-class debates		
Oct 28	prep time for in-class debates		
Oct 30	In-class debates: Issues #1, #2		
Nov 4	In-class debates: Issues #3, #4		
Nov 6	In-class debates: Issues #5, #6 (if applicable)		
Nov 11	No class: reading break		No class
Nov 13	No class: prep time for "Fat Politics"		No class
Nov 18	"Fat Politics"	Intro, chaps 1-2	
Nov 20	"Fat Politics"	Chap 3	
Nov 25	"Fat Politics"	Chaps 4-5	
Nov 27	"Fat Politics"	Chaps 6-7	
Dec 2	"Fat Politics"	Chaps 8-9	
Dec 4	Last class: details TBD		