

Soci 321, **Sociology of Health and Illness**, Winter 2009  
Sociology Department Website: [www.soci.ucalgary.ca](http://www.soci.ucalgary.ca)

Instructor: **Dr. Ariel Ducey**  
Office Hours: T & Th, 3:30 – 4:30  
Office: Social Sciences, Room 938  
Contact: [aducey@ucalgary.ca](mailto:aducey@ucalgary.ca), 220-5054

Teaching Assistant: **Jessica Gish**  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 9:30 – 10:30  
Office: Social Sciences, Room 901  
Contact: [jagish@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jagish@ucalgary.ca), 220-6503

---

### Course Overview

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 thought provoking. The course focuses on four major areas: the experience of illness, the practice of medicine, social determinants of health, and health care systems. This course is also the core requirement for the concentration in the Sociology of Health for sociology majors.

To be successful in this course, students must strive to think about health, medicine and health care *sociologically* and come up with questions about health and illness-related topics that a sociologist might ask. Please keep in mind that the goal of this course is to further your sociological imagination, no matter what your future goals; along the way you will also learn something about the organization of health care and medicine, but the former objective is just as important.

The goals for students in this course are:

- To learn major terms and concepts used in medical sociology
- To be able to interpret events in health, medicine, and health care from a sociological perspective
- To become familiar with the range of themes and topics that medical sociologists study
- To become familiar with some of the debates within sociology and medical sociology about what to study and how to study it
- To gain experience participating in high-quality, online academic discussions
- To achieve a basic understanding of how health care and medicine is financed and organized in western, capitalist countries

### Readings

- 1) There is one book for this course, available in the University of Calgary bookstore: Peter Conrad, *The Sociology of Health and Illness*, Worth Publishers, EIGHTH edition.
- 2) There is also a *custom course packet* available in the bookstore, containing a number of articles.

You are expected to read about 60 pages per week, though in some weeks it will be less and in several weeks it will be more. Readings must 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—rather they will be used as starting point for more advanced discussion. Your experience

of the lecture will depend heavily on whether you have done the readings in advance. I may add, omit, or change some readings during the semester as needed. Any changes in the course schedule will be announced in class and on Blackboard, but you are responsible for attending class and checking the site.

### Examinations

There will be three examinations in this course: two midterms and a final. The exams will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, but may also include short answer, true or false questions, and a short essay. The exams will be based on the readings and lectures. The exams are not cumulative, however some of the short answer and essay questions on the final exam may require you to draw upon materials from earlier sections of the course. Exam study guides will be provided on Blackboard about one week prior to each exam.

### Online Discussion

Because this class is large, we will make extensive use of an online course website in Blackboard to increase discussion among members of the class. The details of the online component of this course are attached in the Appendix. This material may also be found on the Blackboard site.

You will be expected to log in to the Blackboard site *at least twice a week*. In addition to the activities discussed in the Appendix, the course instructor and TA will use the Blackboard site to post slides from lecture, deadlines, changes to the course outline (which will also be announced in class), optional readings, helpful links, and anything else that you might find interesting. Blackboard is intended to make this course more interactive than a typical large lecture course.

### Grading

Your final grade will be computed as follows:

1. Exams 30% (each)
2. Online Participation 10%

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

A+ = 95-100	B = 75-79	C- = 55-59
A = 90-94	B- = 70-74	D+ = 50-54
A- = 85-89	C+ = 65-69	D = 45-49
B+ = 80-84	C = 60-64	F = below 45

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.

### Instructor Contact Information

The TA for this course, Jessica Gish, will be your first contact for most questions about the course. Her office hours are listed on the first page and she may also be available by appointment at other times. I am available during my office hours and at other times by appointment. There is also a discussion board on blackboard (“Dr. Ducey’s Virtual Office”) where you may post non-urgent questions about administrative and scheduling matters to which we will respond.

We (the instructor and TA) are happy to meet with students, but please observe the following so that we may respond to students in a way that is fair and attentive:

- 1) Except for cases in which we have instructed you to email something, we prefer that you **contact us by email for administrative purposes only**. For instance, you may email us to schedule an appointment outside of office hours.
- 2) Students with substantive questions should come to office hours or schedule an appointment. If you have questions related to grading, readings, or wish to discuss the course in greater depth, see us during office hours or make an appointment.

Exam Policies: You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an examination 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 an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the course outline are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

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.

Since it is important that you read and discuss the work of others in academic papers and research, please take the time to review the following website: [Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Recognize and Avoid It](#).

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. Term 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**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Online Discussion</b>
Jan 13 T	Introduction to the course		
Jan 15 Th	1: McKinlay & McKinlay	Medical authority and professional dominance	Discussion Unit 1 January 16 - 31
Jan 20 T	16: Conrad & Schneider 17: Wertz & Wertz		
Jan 22 Th	Farmer, Ch. 8, "New Malaise" (CP)		
Jan 27 T	Klass (CP) 31: Anspach 29: Mishler ( <i>optional</i> )	Medical discourse and the role of medical practitioners	
Jan 29 Th	38: Zola		
Feb 3 T	Kaw (CP) 30: Timmermans ( <i>optional</i> )	Medicalization and the experience of illness	Discussion Unit 2 February 3 – 28
Feb 5 Th	13: Barker 14: Conrad		
Feb 10 T	44: Pitts Ehrenreich (CP)		
Feb 12 Th	<b>EXAM ONE</b>		
READING WEEK			
Feb 24 T	2: Syme & Berkman 9: Wilkinson	Income/inequality and health	
Feb 26 Th	5: Banks, et al. Augur (CP) Shah (CP)		
Mar 3 T	Farmer, Ch. 1, "On Suffering and Structural Violence" (CP)		Discussion Unit 3 March 3 - 14
Mar 5 Th	8: Klinenberg 7: House, Landis, Umberson	Social relationships and health	
Mar 10 T	48: McKinlay Pollan (CP)	Food politics and health	
Mar 12 Th	37: Lupton 36: Hahn, et al. (skim) 6: Brown	Risk discourses	

Mar 17 T	<b>EXAM TWO</b>		
Mar 19 Th	(no new reading)	Markets and health care	Discussion Unit 4 March 19 – April 4
Mar 24 T	46: Deber 25: Bodenheimer & Grumbach Evans, "Canada" (CP)	Canada's health care system	
Mar 26 Th	24: Quadagno 27: Weiss 28: Sered & Fernandopulle	U.S. health care system	
Mar 31 T	catch-up		
Apr 2 Th	45: Light 47: Gabe	British and German health care systems	
Apr 7 T	Roos et al, "Does universal comprehensive..." (CP) Gladwell, (CP)	The politics of health care reform	Discussion Unit 5 April 7 – 18
Apr 9 Th	Sepehri & Chernomas (CP)		
Apr 14 T	Sanmartin et al (CP) Film: <i>Sicko</i>		
Apr 16 Th	Film continued, exam prep		
April 20 - 30	<b>FINAL EXAM: DATE TBA</b>		

## **APPENDIX: Online Participation**

Students are expected to participate in online discussions. In order to make discussion manageable and productive, the class has been randomly broken into about 17 discussion groups of 14-15 students each. When you logon to Blackboard, you will only be able to view postings within your assigned group. Each discussion group will be moderated by the TA or instructor. There are 5 discussion units in the course; the dates of the discussion units are in the course outline and on the blackboard site.

Please note the following:

- 1) Discussions and questions will **inform the content of lectures**. Therefore, it is a way for you to influence the emphasis of the course.
- 2) After each discussion unit the instructor will post, for the entire class, a letter (“Dr. Ducey’s Discussion Unit Diagnosis”) that responds to class discussions and highlights particular comments or lines of thought.

### Online Participation Responsibilities

During each of the discussion units, you will be expected to respond to the threads and questions posted by group moderators (the TA or instructor) and your classmates. You may participate in your group’s conversation by responding to the threads and questions posted by the moderators or classmates *or* by starting threads and questions of your own. You must follow the **guidelines for participation** on the last page of this outline. Please also read the following.

The discussion groups are meant to be *conversations*: your participation will be assessed in terms of whether you are responding to one another; we will not reward students who make posts primarily to demonstrate their knowledge of the course material, instead of engaging with their peers (see also the line limit for posts, under participation guidelines). Nonetheless, it is still important that the conversations are *rooted in the course content* – this gives everyone in the course the best chance to participate and discuss ideas. Your opinions are welcome, but they should be expressed in a respectful manner and connected to the course content. Your participation is not graded on whether what you post is “right” or “correct,” but on your willingness to **engage in substantive conversation and debate related to the course**.

If you post a comment or question, you must check back to see if it was responded to and respond in turn, if needed. If there are multiple threads in your group, it is not necessary to post on all of them. It is more important to engage in a conversation on one or two threads you find most interesting. If you make posts largely during the last few days of a discussion unit you cannot very well engage in a conversation. Please note that it is not necessary to make constant or daily posts; quality matters more than quantity.

The moderators will post threads and questions for you in each discussion unit (the threads will be the same for all groups). They may also post comments in some groups to focus the conversation or raise new ideas. *You may also start threads for discussion on your own*, at any time during the discussion unit. If you choose to do this, please try to make sure that your thread

does not duplicate a thread or discussion already posted. Threads should be organized around a main topic or idea. You should think of the threads that you post as “thought notes,” in which you share an idea, concern, or question provoked by the course readings or lectures about which you’d like to hear others’ thoughts. You can debate issues, ask each other for help with a tricky concept or idea, and share reactions to course material. (Please note, it is *not necessary to start threads to receive excellent scores for participation*, so please do not start repetitive or unnecessary threads in the hope that it will improve your participation grade.)

Your major incentive to participate in the discussions should be their quality and the fact that they are a chance for you, as a class, to draw your own conclusions about what is interesting and thought provoking in the course. Both the instructor and the TA will be able to read your posts.

### Grading of Online Participation

For each of the five discussion units, everyone will receive a participation score, as follows:

- 0 = no posts, no participation and/or does not follow guidelines for participation
- 5 = makes posts, but they are infrequent and/or do not meaningfully contribute to the conversation
- 8 = regularly participates and makes a substantive contribution to the conversation
- 10 = regularly participates, encourages exceptional level of discourse and engagement with the course content

Your discussion scores will be posted on blackboard after Units 1, 3, and 5. One discussion unit will be dropped from your final grade (the unit in which you receive the lowest score). Therefore the maximum number of points you can receive for online participation in the course is 40.

You *must follow the guidelines for participation explained on the next page*. The TA will inform the instructor if any student is violating the basic discussion ground rules.



### **Guidelines for Student Participation & Expectations for Online Discussions**

- This is not a chat space. For chat and personal comments, use email or other chat groups to save your peers reading too much! This is a place to discuss topics in the course that matter to you. **Follow the same moral and practical guidelines you normally use in a university level class.** Your moderators and instructors will hold you to that expectation.
- Posting size: **No post should be more than ten typewritten lines** (vertically). More means too much for all to read.
- **Professional discourse is expected** - while we engage in scholarly exchanges based on ideas and opinions, discussion grounded in the texts and lectures is necessary. **Your CONSTRUCTIVE** tone in the online discourse is essential and your peers appreciate it. *Unprofessional online discourse will result in a student being invited to leave the class, as would occur in a face to face environment.* Robust intellectual discourse is welcome.
- Contact the TA via email if discussions are becoming uncomfortable, if the discourse is not positive or is unprofessional.
- There are ebbs and flows to academic discussions online - sometimes there will be little said - don't feel every day has to be a vibrant discussion day.
- This is a great chance to prepare for exams by discussing items of interest. If questions arise that cannot be answered readily, tap the group's expertise and research capacity to find an answer.
- Be kind. Enjoy your colleague's comments on the topic but do not descend into chatter that will take hours for everyone to read - these are busy students whose time, as yours, is respected.
- While your discourse must be professional, your writing does not have to be formal. Please feel free to use "emoticons" if they help convey your meaning or tone.
- Comments that participants post **should be of interest to most of the people** in your online group. If the comments are specific to you or to one or two people, use email.
- Comments should have **substance**. "Way to go, Jennifer" comments add little to a group discussion, and make for a lot of extra reading. Remember that 15 other people are reading everything you write. Be **kind** and **concise**.
- All online transactions are dated and recorded by the university computing system, but no classmates outside your discussion group (and your instructor & TA) can see your discussion work.
- **Have fun.** This is a chance to discuss things between classes, and to identify themes that arise in group (topics of interest, issues and ideas pertinent to Soci 321) that may be of particular interest.