SOCIOMETRY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

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Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship in the kingdom of the well
and the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the
good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell,
to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.

—Susan Sontag, Illness as Metaphor

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the social contexts of health, illness, and medical care. It gives
prominence to the debates and contrasting perspectives which characterize the field of
medical sociology. Topics include the social, environmental, and occupational factors in
health and illness; the politics surrounding breast cancer and the AIDS epidemic; the
patient's perspective on illness; the development of the health professions and the health
work force; ethical issues in medicine as they relate to medical technology; and health care
reform. In exploring these topics, emphasis is given to how the social categories of gender,
race, social class, and sexuality affect both illness and health care.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1). To investigate the social contexts of illness and medical care.

2). To investigate the patient's perspective on the experience of illness and how patients
respond to the care of physicians.

3). To investigate the social-historical development of the medical system in the United
States, including the changing role of physicians and other health care providers.

4). To investigate the historical role of women in the medical system as patients,
practitioners, and health care providers.

5). To investigate current ethical issues and debates about new medical technologies
and their impact on doctor-patient relationships and on access to health care.

6). To investigate current problems in the organization of U.S. medical care as well as
alternatives for change.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

A. Exams: There will be two take-home exams (a mid-semester exam and a final exam) that will cover prior lecture and reading material. Any additional material provided by assignments, guest speakers, or videos also will be covered on the exams. The final exam is not comprehensive. Both exams are already scheduled in the course syllabus and students are expected to take the exams during the time period that is listed. There will be no makeup exams unless you have spoken with me prior to the exam and have a valid excuse. Each exam will count 25% of your final grade.

B. Assignments: In addition to the two exams, there will be two required outside assignments. The purpose of these assignments is to determine how well you can make an argument utilizing material learned in class. The two assignments are outlined as follows:

1). A 4 to 5 page position paper on the issue of poverty and health care. Primary focus is Abraham’s book and other readings related to social class.

2). A second 4 to 5 page position paper on an ethical debate related to medical technology that you will be assigned to investigate and present your opinion on in class. Note: Topic may change.

The two position papers are relatively short in length, and instructions will be given at least a week prior to when they are due. All assignments should be typed and reflect thoughtful writing skills. Late assignments, if accepted, will be graded down. Each position paper is worth 10% of your final grade.

C. Class Presentation: Teams of two students will lead a course discussion and present material on a course-related topic. In addition to summarizing that day’s readings, each group will present additional information, including a bibliography of books and articles on that topic to hand-out to the class. Specific guidelines for this presentation are on the next page. This class presentation is 15% of your final grade.

D. Attendance and Participation: Since this course is an upper-division sociology seminar, students are expected to take an active role in shaping their learning environment both within and outside the classroom. This role includes regular class attendance, leading and participating in class discussions, and group work.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Moreover, each student will arrive to class ready to participate by having discussion questions or comments already written down. Class participation, including these short discussion papers, class discussions, and attendance is worth 15% of your final grade.

Please note: There will be no extra credit work
Class Presentation: A Suggested Protocol

1. Duplicate and distribute handouts and bibliographies to class participants.

2. Spend the first ten minutes verbally summarizing the readings’ main findings and conclusions. Offer your evaluation of the reading material as well as your thinking on the larger topic. Discuss the link between your selected topic and broader issues of medical sociology.

3. Identify the common theme(s) in the articles. Synthesize the findings by showing how the articles relate to each other. You also might note similarities between your topic and issues that were previously discussed in class.

4. In addition, each presenter is expected to read at least three additional readings on the topic and present this information to the class. Presenters may use the suggested readings or something they found during their literature search.

5. Be prepared to identify a number of questions that the articles raise. Pose these questions to members of the class. In essence, these questions will serve as a guidepost for discussion during the remainder of the class time. The following questions are some examples:

   a. How might these issues vary by race, class, gender, generational group, or sexual preference? Are these principles universal in nature or specific to a particular group?

   b. What are the social and historical roots of this process?

   c. Who cares? Why are these processes and issues germane to the health, illness, and the practice of medicine today?

   d. Why are we discussing this issue in a sociology course? Make links to broader concepts, principles, and debates in sociology.

   e. Does this apply exclusively to the United States or might it apply equally to the practice of medicine in other industrial or developing nations?

Additional Thoughts:

Each team should make every effort to make their presentation interesting and lively. Use outside resources whenever possible. For example, you may want to find current data on your topic and present this information in class. You might even devise a class exercise that illustrates an important concept or issue in the readings. Do not hesitate to use visual or literary material. These suggestions are not obligatory. They merely serve to remind you that you have some flexibility and creativity in this presentation.
MAKE YOUR PRESENTATION INTERESTING, STIMULATING, & WORTHWHILE!

REQUIRED READINGS: The following books are available at the College Bookstore and are on reserve in Burling Library.


In addition to the above books, there are required supplementary readings that will be made available at the Reserve Desk in the library. Also note that on the course outline below, some of the readings are required and some are suggested. The suggested readings are additional sources for student interest and research. Please keep up with the syllabus by reading the assigned chapters or articles prior to the day that topic is discussed. It is essential to come to class prepared to discuss the readings because the readings are the foundation of the course.

Questions to Think About While You Are Reading:

Summary:

1). What are the author's main arguments or hypotheses?

2). What types of evidence does the author present in support of his or her arguments?

3). What are some implications of the author's findings or arguments?

Evaluation:

4). Do you agree with the author's conclusions? Why or why not?

5). Do you have any problems with this study or how it was conducted?
PART I: HEALTH AND ILLNESS IN PERSPECTIVE

Jan. 20 (TU): Introduction to the Course

Required Readings:
Read introductions or prefaces in your anthologies.

Jan. 22 (TH): The Experience of Illness

Required Readings:

Suggested Readings:
Read poetry in King reader, pp. 21-25.

Jan. 27 (TU): Sociological Perspectives on Health and Illness

Required Readings:
Suggested Readings:


Bell, Susan. “Experiences of Illness and Narrative Understandings” in Brown, pp.130-145.


PART II: THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF ILLNESS

Jan. 29 (TH): Social Factors in Health and Illness: Sex, Gender, and Sexism

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Feb. 3 (TU): Social Factors in Health and Illness: Race and Racism

***In Class: Video titled "The Deadly Deception" on the Tuskegee Experiment

Required Readings:


**Suggested Readings:**


Feb. 5 (TH): **Social Factors in Health and Illness: Intersection of Race & Social Class**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


Feb. 10 (TU): **Social Factors in Health and Illness: Failure of Health Care for the Poor**

**Required Readings:**


Abraham, Laurie K. *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead*, pp.44-133; 146-178.

**Suggested Readings:**

McCally, Michael et al. "Poverty and Ill Health: Physicians Can, and Should, Make a Difference" in Brown, pp.5-20.


Feb. 12 (TH): **Social Factors in Health and Illness: Occupational and Environmental Hazards**

**Required Readings:**


Brown, Phil. "Popular Epidemiology: Community Response to Toxic Waste Induced Disease" in Conrad, pp.70-77.

Another reading to be announced.

**Suggested Readings:**


Feb. 17 (TU): **Individual Rights vs. Individual Responsibility:**

Are Individuals "Responsible" for Their Health?

***In Class: Position Paper #1 Due and Class Debate***

**Required Readings:**


**PART III: THE CULTURAL SHAPING OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS**

Feb. 19 (TH): **Cultural Influences on the Experience of Illness**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


Feb. 24 (TU): The Experience of Illness and the Politics of Breast Cancer

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**

Read other chapters in *Breast Cancer: Society Shapes an Epidemic*.

Feb. 26 (TH): Discussion of Breast Cancer, continued

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**

Read other chapters in *Breast Cancer: Society Shapes an Epidemic*.

March 3 (TU): The Experience of Illness and the Politics of AIDS

***To Be Scheduled. Video: "And The Band Played On"

**Required Readings:**


Herek, Gregory M. “AIDS and Stigma” in Conrad reader, pp.126-134.
Weitz, Rose. "Life With AIDS" in Brown, pp.242-255. (Supplemental Reading)

**Suggested Readings:**


March 5 (TH): **Societal Response to the AIDS Epidemic**

**Required Readings:**


Epstein, Steven. “Democracy, Expertise, and AIDS Treatment Activism” in Brown, pp.609-625. (Supplemental Reading)


**Suggested Readings:**


**PART IV: THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF MEDICAL CARE**

March 10 (TU): **The Rise of Medical Authority I: The Dominance of Physicians**

**Required Readings:**


Suggested Readings:


March 12 (TH): The Rise of Medical Authority II: Nurses and the Order to Care

***In class: Video titled "Sentimental Women Need Not Apply: A History of the American Nurse" and Discussion

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


March 16th - March 27th: SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS (Begin Reading Perri Klass' book)
PART V: BECOMING A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

March 31 (TU):  The Socialization of Doctors I: The Medical School Experience

Required Readings:


Dwyer, James. “Primum Non Tacere: An Ethics of Speaking Up” in King reader, pp.130-142.


Klass, Perri. A Not Entirely Benign Procedure, pp.13-152.

Suggested Readings:


April 2 (TH):  The Socialization of Doctors II: Internships and Residency

***To Be Scheduled:  PBS Video "So You Want To Be A Doctor?" (60 min)

Required Readings:


Brewster, Abenaa. “A Student’s View of a Medical Teaching Exercise” in King reader, pp.127-129.

Shapiro, Daniel. “Perspective Shift” in King reader, pp.143-144.

Suggested Readings:


PART VI: MEDICINE AS AN INSTITUTION OF SOCIAL CONTROL

April 7 (TU): Medicine, Deviance, and Social Control

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


April 9 (TH): Increasing Medicalization and the Social Control of Women

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


PART VII: ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN MEDICINE-NEW MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIES

April 14 (TU): The Moral Order in Medicine

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


April 16 (TH): Medical Ethics and the Termination of Life

Required Readings:


Russ, Ann J. et al. “‘Choosing Later’ about Dialysis Treatment Near the End of Life” in Conrad, pp.405-414.


**Suggested Readings:**


April 21 (TU): **Medical Technologies and Transplants**

**Required Readings:**

Simmons, Paul D. “The Artificial Heart: How Close Are We, and Do We Want to Get There?” in Conrad reader, pp.418-424.


**Suggested Readings:**


Fox, Renée C. and Judith P. Swazey. "Transplantation and the Medical Commons" in Brown, pp.389-405.


April 23 (TH): **Improving Health Care for Patients**

**Required Readings:**


Suggested Readings:


PART VIII: THE CURRENT MEDICAL SYSTEM

April 28 (TU): The Structure of U.S. Medical Care

Required Readings:


Suggested Readings:


Light, Donald W. "The Origins and Rise of Managed Care" in Brown, pp.484-503.


April 30 (TH): Changing Current Medical Practice I: U.S. Health Care Reform

Required Readings:


Readings on Obama’s health care plans.

**Suggested Readings:**


**May 5 (TU): Changing Current Medical Practice II: Comparative Health Care Systems**

**Required Readings:**


**Suggested Readings:**


**May 7 (TH): Summary of Course**

No assigned readings for today. Spend time reading through your syllabus and your course notes to get an overview of how far we have come this semester.

**FINAL EXAM: Due During Final Exam Week, May 11th to May 15th**

**Have a Great Summer Break!!!**