

**LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Sociology of Health and Illness (Soci/Gero 2509)**

**Fall/Winter 2013/14**

**Tues & Thurs, 10:00 - 11:30**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the social, material and cultural dimensions of health and illness with particular attention to the social determinants of health, the social organization of medical knowledge and practice, and access to health care. Our primary focus will be on Canada, however, other global examples will be presented for comparative purposes.

The course will follow a combined lecture/discussion format, with students expected to actively participate in raising questions and discussing issues. To facilitate this, students are expected to complete assigned readings in advance of classes, and be prepared to discuss issues arising from the readings. The basic philosophy is that the greater your level of active engagement in class, the greater will be your understanding of course material and your ability to critically appraise relevant issues.

**EVALUATION**

Assignment*	Weight
Active class participation/preparation: fall term	10%
Group presentation (end of November)	10%
Annotated bibliography review (due Nov. 28)	15%
Fall term exam during December exam period	20%
Active class participation/preparation: winter term	10%
Critical book review (due Mar. 13)	15%
Final exam during April exam period	20%

\* Assignments are explained at the end of this outline, pp. 5-7.

**REQUIRED READINGS**

- Germov, John and Jennie Hornosty (eds.). 2012. ***Second Opinion: An Introduction to Health Sociology***. Don Mills: Oxford University Press. [abbreviated in course outline as **SO**]
- Northey, Margot, Lorne Tepperman and Patrizia Albanese. 2012. ***Making Sense in the Social Sciences: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing***. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.
- Stone, Sharon-Dale. 2013. ***Readings Package for Sociology of Health and Illness***. [abbreviated **RP**]

Other required readings will be posted on the Desire2Learn site for this course

**PLAGIARISM:**

Plagiarism is unacceptable and subject to various sanctions. It involves not only copying word-for-word a portion of someone else's written work without crediting the author, but also paraphrasing the ideas of others without crediting the original author. See the website How to Avoid Plagiarism at <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html>, and see University Regulations section "IX Academic Dishonesty," Lakehead University Calendar. You will receive zero on an assignment if any part of it is plagiarized, and your name will be reported to the Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities.

### COURSE GOALS

- \* to offer students a sociological analysis and understanding of issues affecting health and illness
- \* to introduce students to current research offering a critical perspective on experiences of health and illness
- \* to encourage students to develop a critical awareness of factors affecting people's well-being
- \* to provide students with information and analysis that is relevant to their own lives and experiences
- \* to encourage students to reflect on the ways in which they are themselves affected by issues discussed in the course
- \* to encourage students to develop/practice/refine:
  - critical thinking skills
  - the ability to critically express yourself in writing
  - oral presentation skills
  - group work skills
- \* to foster a classroom atmosphere of respect for all, with an openness to varying perspectives on course material
- \* to provide students with a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience

### STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- \* to complete the assigned readings before class and reflect on them
- \* to attend all classes prepared to actively discuss course material
- \* to ask questions when not sure whether you understand something (most likely, other students will also benefit from your query)
- \* to be open to learning about new perspectives on topics discussed in the course
- \* to respectfully listen to what other students have to say and learn from them – recognize the ways in which your classmates are also your teachers
- \* to complete assignments on time (or be prepared to be penalized)
- \* to let the professor know about difficulties you are having with the course
- \* to actively work towards claiming your education

## WEEKLY TOPIC OUTLINE AND REQUIRED READINGS – FALL TERM

### **Week 1: Sept. 10 and 12 — Introduction to Sociological Perspectives on Health, Illness and the Body**

Reading: SO Ch 1, Imagining Health Problems as Social Issues

*DQ #1: Introduce yourself, why you are interested in this course (perhaps you have relevant personal experiences that you might want to share), and what you hope to get out of the course.*

*DQ #2: What do you think about the idea that health is socially determined? If you think this is true, why do you think this, or if you think social factors are irrelevant, why do you think this?*

### **Week 2: Sept. 17 and 19 — Perspectives on Health and Illness**

Reading: SO Ch 2, Theorizing Health: Major Theoretical Perspectives in Health Sociology

*DQ: Of the theoretical perspectives discussed this week, do you have a favourite? If so, why is this your favourite way to understand health and illness?*

**Week 3: Sept. 24 and 26 — Social Determinants of Health and Illness: Economic Considerations**

Reading: SO Ch 4, Class, Health Inequality, and Social Justice

*DQ: Do you think that the elimination of poverty in Canada would lead to better health for Canadians overall? Why or why not?*

**Week 4: Oct. 1 and 3 — Social Determinants of Health and Illness: Food and Housing**

Reading for Oct 1:

RP#1: Tarasuk, Health Implications of Food Insecurity

Recommended: RP#2: McIntyre & Rondeau, Food Insecurity

Reading for Oct. 3:

RP#3: Bryant, Housing and Health: More Than Bricks and Mortar

Recommended: RP#4: Shapcott, Housing

*DQ: In order to help Canadians be healthier, do you think it would be more important to address food insecurity or access to safe housing?*

**Week 5: Oct. 8 and 10 — Social Determinants of Health and Illness: Gender Issues**

Reading: SO Ch 5, Women's Health in Context: Gender Issues

*DQ: To what extent do your own experiences/observations support Armstrong's argument that the social determinants of health are highly gendered?*

**Week 6: Oct. 15 and 17 — Social Determinants of Health and Illness: Ethnicity and Marginalization**

Readings: SO Ch 6, Ethnicity and Health: Social and Cultural Factors; and

Lynam & Cowley, Understanding marginalization as a social determinant of health. Posted on Desire2Learn.

Recommended: Townsend et al., Linking Occupation and Place in Community Health. Posted on Desire2Learn.

*DQ: What do you think about Lynam & Cowley's contention that marginalization is a social determinant of health? Justify your answer.*

**Week 7: Oct. 22 and 24 – Issues in Indigenous Health**

Readings: SO Ch 7, Canada's Aboriginal Peoples and Health; and

Colomeda & Wenzel, Medicine Keepers: Issues in Indigenous Health. Posted on Desire2Learn.

*DQ: If you were in charge of creating social policy that would lead to improved health for aboriginal peoples, what would you do, and why?*

**Week 8: Oct. 29 and 31 – The Workplace and Health**

Readings: RP#5: Jackson, The Unhealthy Canadian Workplace; and

RP#6: Smith & Polanyi, Understanding and Improving the Health of Work

*DQ: Have you or anyone you know ever been asked to do something at work that you thought was dangerous? What was your response to the request? If you refused to perform the task, were there consequences? If you have never been in this situation, what do you think you would do if asked to do something dangerous?*

**Week 9: Nov. 5 and 7 — Capitalism And Health: The Case Of Injured Workers**

Readings: RP#7: Barab, The Invisibility of Workplace Death; and

RP#8: Sullivan and Cole, Work, Safety, Health, and Compensation

Recommended: Stone, Workers Without Work. Posted on Desire2Learn

*DQ: What can or should be done to improve well-being for workers who have a permanent workplace injury?*

**Have you had your group presentation topic approved?**

**Week 10: Nov. 12 and 14 — Capitalism And Health: Biotechnology, the Environment and Health**

Reading: SO Ch 8, Environmental Links to Health  
*DQ: Why is it so difficult to prove links between ill health and environmental factors?*

**Week 11: Nov. 19 and 21 — Group Presentations**

No reading. **Week 12: Nov. 26 and 28 – Group Presentations and 1<sup>st</sup> Term Review/Recap of Issues**

No reading.

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT DUE NOV. 28**

**WINTER TERM**

**1. Jan. 7 – 9 — Health Promotion Ideology**

Reading: RP #9 Segall and Fries, Unravelling the Mystery of Health: An Intersectional Model

*DQ: Why are sociologists critical of dominant health promotion messages that blame the individual for their unhealthy lifestyle which suggests that lifestyle is an easily changeable “choice”?*

**2. Jan. 14 and 16 — Medical Dominance in Health Care**

Reading: SO Ch 12, Medicine, Medical Dominance, and Public Health

*DQ: To what extent can the dominance of allopathic physicians be justified?*

**3. Jan. 21 & 23 — The Development of Health Care in Canada**

Reading: SO Ch 13, Power, Politics, and Values: The Canadian Health-Care System

*DQ: Are you surprised to learn about physician strikes in recent Canadian history? Why or why not?*

**4. Jan. 28 & 30 — The Pharmaceutical Industry**

Readings: SO Ch14, The Pharmaceutical Industry and Health Canada

*DQ: What do you think about Lexchin's argument that most new drugs do not make valuable contributions to treating illness or disease?*

**5. Feb. 4 - 6 — Stratification and Power in Health Care**

1. Jan 28: Nursing

Reading: SO Ch 15, Nursing in the Twenty-First Century

2. Jan. 30: Complementary and Alternative Medicine

Reading: SO Ch 16, Complementary and Alternative Health Care

*DQ: Discuss the commodification of health care with reference to nurses and alternative providers, and the ability of the general public to have access to high quality care.*

**6. Feb. 11 - 13 — Knowledge and Practice in Biomedicine**

Reading: RP#10: Freund, McGuire & Podhurst, Modern Biomedicine: Knowledge and Practice

Recommended: RP#11: Lupton, Power Relations and the Medical Encounter

*DQ: Why is it difficult for most people to resist medical dominance?*

**FEBRUARY 17-21: READING WEEK**

**7. Feb. 25-27— The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge**

Reading: SO Ch 9, The Medicalization of Society

Recommended: RP#12: Zola, Medicine as an Institution of Social Control

*DQ: Discuss the relationship between naming a bodily experience and medicalization.*

### **8. Mar. 4 – 5 — Aging and Health**

Readings: SO Ch 11, Aging, Dying, and Death in the Twenty-first Century; and  
RP#13: Estes and Binney, The Biomedicalization of Aging

*DQ: What social factors can you identify to support the idea that seniors are different from younger people?*

### **9. Mar. 11 and 13 — Disability Issues**

Readings: SO Ch 10, Constructing Disability and Living with Illness; and  
RP#14: Stone, Resisting an Illness Label

*DQ: If you were in charge of creating policy to include disabled people in mainstream society, what would you do?*

### **CRITICAL BOOK REVIEW DUE MARCH 13**

### **10. Mar. 18 and 20 – Medicalization and Mental Health**

Reading: RP#15: Morrow, Recovery: Progressive Paradigm or Neoliberal Smokescreen?  
RP#16: Tew, Power Relations, Social Order and Mental Distress

*DQ: How could society be better organized to decrease mental distress and promote mental well-being?*

### **11. Mar. 25 and 27 — Ethical Issues**

Reading: RP#17: Storch et al., Ethics in Health Care in Canada.

*DQ: What do you consider to be a particularly important ethical problem that needs to be addressed? Explain.*

### **12. Apr. 1 and 3 — Health In A Global Context/ Course Review**

Reading: Adams, Against Global Health? Arbitrating Science, Non-Science, and Nonsense through Health. Posted on Desire2Learn.

*DQ: What have you found to be most interesting/valuable in this course?*

**April Exam Period: Final Exam**

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Please note that late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5% per day. You will need to plan your time to make sure your assignments will be handed in on or before the due date.

Be sure to always keep a backup copy of everything handed in.

### **Critical Reading Towards Critical Writing**

Your written assignments in this course are expected to be **critical**. This means that you need to reflect on what you are reading and offer your own evaluation of the ideas presented. To be critical is not necessarily to find fault with the text, it is to carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas and arguments presented. An excellent resource that will help you with this is the webpage published by the University of Toronto Writing Support Centre:

<<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/critrdg.html>> (also posted on WebCT). You are strongly encouraged to download the superb advice on this page and follow it (even if you think you already know how to write critically). The page also has links to other pages with writing advice.

### **Class Participation/Preparation (10% per term)**

- **(1) Brief Comment Paper (5% per term):**

The purpose of the Brief Comment Paper is to make sure that you are prepared to participate actively in class discussions in relation to the topic and readings of the week. This is basically a device to get you

thinking about the issues, what the author is trying to say, and what strikes you as interesting about that. Writing these comments trains you to be able to get into a reading quickly and begin to offer your own analysis of what the reading has to say. This assignment is useful for learning how not to be intimidated by a complex reading, how to jump in and pick out key points and be in a position to discuss it -- a useful skill applicable in many settings.

You might want to think of yourself as hired to brief your incredibly busy boss so that she can understand what is most crucial to know about the topic being considered. This means that you need to go through the readings and thoroughly digest the material so that you can offer your boss the information needed to appreciate what the key points are. You should be able to justify why you focus on something as significant and you should be able to answer any questions your boss might have about the material.

The word length is 200-250 words. The idea is **NOT** to summarize the whole reading. Rather, your memo should identify what you consider to be the most important or significant paragraph/section in the reading, and then explain why this information or argument is important and significant. You may find that there are numerous points of equal importance, but please choose only one idea to discuss in your comment. **There is no right or wrong choice** and each person will likely identify different parts of the reading. This gives us a way of starting into an interesting discussion about what the readings tell us. In weeks when there is more than 1 required reading, you will also need to explain which reading seems more important to you and why.

You need to **email your comment to me at [sdstone@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:sdstone@lakeheadu.ca) by 9:30 each Tuesday** (Fall Term weeks 2-10; Winter Term weeks 1-12). Late Brief Comment Papers will be accepted after class but worth only 25% rather than 100%.

- **(2) In Class Participation (5% per term):**

Generally, readings should be understood as raising issues and offering perspectives, rather than understood as representing the final word on anything. Ideally, you should view class meetings as an opportunity to discuss readings and other class material, raise questions, and debate the issues raised.

Participation in class discussions is a way for you to demonstrate your understanding of issues raised in the readings and other material. All students are expected to contribute to **every** class discussion. Thus, you need to **read and think about the required readings**. Coming to class prepared will not only allow you to get more out of class lectures, but will also allow you to **be prepared to critically discuss issues in class**. You are also encouraged to show in class that you have read and considered the recommended readings, and are able to critically comment on them. Please note that you will not earn class participation marks by simply talking in class, much less by simply attending. Your **class participation mark will reflect your active participation in discussing class material and the degree of thoughtful and critical reflection** shown by you as you engage with course material.

As well, depending on the quality and quantity of your contributions, you may earn up to 5 bonus participation marks by making contributions to discussions on Desire2Learn: you can respond to questions already posted and/or post your own discussion questions (under "create your own discussion"). The idea is to actively engage with your peers in discussion of relevant issues. Please ensure that you have changed your settings so that you will receive notifications for all posts.

**Group Presentation (10%):**

Each group will be required to take approximately 15-20 min to present a topic relevant to the course. Presentations will take place Nov. 19, 21 and 26. The sooner your groups begins to consider what to present, the better prepared you will be. At the latest, you need to get pre-approval for your topic before Nov. 5. A limited amount of time will be given in class on Oct. 31 to allow groups to meet and

discuss their presentation plans, but you should also plan on having group meetings and/or discussions on Desire2Learn before this date.

**Annotated Bibliography Assignment Due November 28 (15%):**

An annotated bibliography is a review of literature on a particular subject. This assignment allows you to demonstrate your familiarity with and ability to critically evaluate literature on a topic related to the sociology of health and illness. Instructions for completing this assignment are posted on Desire2Learn.

**Critical Book Review Due March 13 (15%):**

Later in the fall term you will be provided with a list of books for review and you will need to choose one of the books listed to write a critical review of 5-7 pages. Additional instructions, including details on specific points to address, will be posted on Desire2Learn.

Some websites offering useful information on how to write a critical book review are:

Writer's Handbook: <<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/CriNonfiction.html>>;

Writing Book Reviews: < [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/book\\_reviews.pdf](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/book_reviews.pdf) >;

**A SAMPLING OF IMPORTANT JOURNALS RELEVANT TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF  
HEALTH AND ILLNESS**

Critical Public Health

Health and Place

Health Policy

Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the  
Social Study of Health, Illness, and Medicine

Journal of Health and Social Behavior

Qualitative Health Research

Social Science and Medicine

Social Theory and Health

Sociology of Health and Illness

Women and Health