

## SOCI 2509: SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS IN CANADA

**Lecture:** T/Th 1-2:30pm

**Location:** RB 2024

**Instructor:** Dr. Chris Sanders

**Office:** RB 2038

**Office hours:** T/Th 2:30-3:30pm, or by appointment



### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of SOCI 2509 is to introduce students to the important and exciting realm of health sociology! What makes health sociology so important is that it elucidates the critical role that social factors have in influencing the wellness of individuals, groups, and society writ large. A striking feature of contemporary Canadian society, for example, is how “medicine” developed from a small-scale enterprise in the 1800s to an enormous complex of behavioral norms, social roles, provider practices, economic interests, and organized services, all of which influence both societal health and the provision of health care. As you will see throughout the year, there is no shortage of opportunities to apply a sociological perspective to analyses of health, illness, and health care.

Students will be given a broad overview of the subfield of health sociology. The readings and lectures focus on sociology’s contribution to the study of medicine, patterns of disease, the experience of illness, and the Canadian health care system. The readings accomplish this along two dimensions: (1) key concepts are defined and analyzed using epidemiological and sociocultural perspectives; (2) sociological theories and research are brought to bear on the problems of definition and evidence, access to health care, the social organization of the health care system, and the new frontiers of health sociology. Lectures will provide additional background on the history of medicine, disparities in access to care, the political economy of health, theories of risk and health promotion, recent changes in health care delivery in Canada, and new perspectives on the role of pharmaceuticals in health care.

Readings and lectures will be supplemented by open discussions, in-class activities, quizzes, and group assignments. Readings and lectures will focus on key concepts and exemplars in research, while in-class activities and assignments will emphasize novel applications of the course material. Upon graduation, sociologists pursuing employment in health care and health-related services will likely find themselves working with researchers and practitioners from diverse academic and professional backgrounds. This course will prepare students for working in these settings and social contexts by offering them a critical perspective on both their parent discipline and the disciplines of their partners in other healthcare fields.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course focuses on developing both an empirical and theory-informed grasp of the sociology of health & illness. The learning objectives are:

- To provide students with an introduction to the social, economic, and political factors that shape medicine as an institution and the experience of health and illness;
- To introduce classical and contemporary works in medical sociology, and to appreciate the ways that sociologists have treated “medicine” as an object of study;
- To methodologically evaluate evidence and claims about health and health care;
- To foster respectful discussion and to encourage students to take a critical perspective by challenging taken-for-granted notions of medicine, including dominant and “alternative” conceptions of wellness, illness, and health care service delivery;
- To improve students’ skills at reading, writing, critical analysis, note taking, and synthesizing sociological theory and research into academic writing and discussion.

## COURSE READINGS

We will use the following books available at the LU Bookstore:

- Strohschein, Lisa and Rose Weitz. 2014. *The Sociology of Health, Illness & Health Care in Canada: A Critical Approach*. Toronto: Nelson Education.
- Armstrong, Pat and Hugh Armstrong. 2016. *About Canada: Health Care, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.
- Additional readings are uploaded to the D2L course website.

## COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

| Description        | Due Date                | Value |
|--------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Test 1 (in class)  | 20 October              | 15%   |
| Test 2 (in class)  | 24 November             | 15%   |
| Group Presentation | 29 November/01 December | 10%   |
| Test 3 (in class)  | 14 February             | 15%   |
| Test 4 (take home) | 30 March                | 15%   |
| Online Quizzes     | 10 in Fall/10 in Winter | 20%   |
| Participation      | -                       | 10%   |
| Extra Credit       | see schedule below      | TBD   |

**Tests** are comprehensive and include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Test questions are designed to evaluate students’ ability to apply key concepts as opposed to rote memorization of materials. There are no make-up tests except with appropriate authoritative documentation (e.g., no parents, partners, etc.); make-up tests are essay format.

The **Group Presentation** is designed to have students critically engage with a contemporary health issue. Groups will provide a 10-minute analytic presentation to the class.

**Weekly Online Quizzes** must be completed prior to the Tuesday lecture. Quizzes consist of multiple choice questions. Quizzes ask basic reading comprehension questions. As per university policy, students are expected to have computer and Internet access.

This course relies on weekly **participation**. Students are expected to reflect on readings in advance of class and bring questions to lecture for open discussion. Your participation grade will reflect the degree of participation and preparation you show throughout the year.

Students have the option of completing four **Extra Credit** assignments throughout the year. Due dates are listed below. Each assignment is worth up to 1 point toward the final grade. Students who complete all four assignments will be awarded an additional point!

An **optional course paper** (approx. 10-15 pages) can be completed at the end of the year. The course paper is intended to replace the lowest grade. Students must meet with me in advance of the end of the term to discuss this option and receive specific guidelines.

All work must be completed with **academic integrity**. Please review the LU policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty; it can be accessed from the LU homepage or the course information module of the course website. Please discuss with me any questions or concerns about this policy prior to handing in assignments or taking the tests.

**Accommodations:** LU is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. This commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as early as possible. Please visit: <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

## GENERAL POLICIES

**Etiquette:** Common courtesy goes a long way. This includes paying attention in class (i.e., not multitasking with social media/email), listening to what others have to say without interrupting, and promoting a civil and constructive learning environment. Try to be mindful that some of your classmates will have deeply personal experiences with matters of health and illness.

**Email:** Students may contact me through D2L/mycourselink. Please note the course in the subject line. I will respond to email during office hours. Emails should be courteous and brief, requiring only a 1-2 line response. Lengthier inquiries should be brought to my office hours.

**Grades:** I do not discuss grades by email. Grade inquiries must be in person during office hours or by appointment.

## FALL TERM SCHEDULE

**UNIT 1:** We begin with a brief history of disease and medicine in the western world; students are introduced to key concepts in the sociology of health & illness and social epidemiology.

### Week 1. Welcome! The Sociology of Health & Illness and Why It Matters

- 06 Sept: *SHIHC* Ch. 1, "Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care"
- 08 Sept: D2L, "Medical Sociology" (Hafferty & Castellani) and "Medical Model" (Bury)

### Week 2. Sociological Approaches to Health & Illness

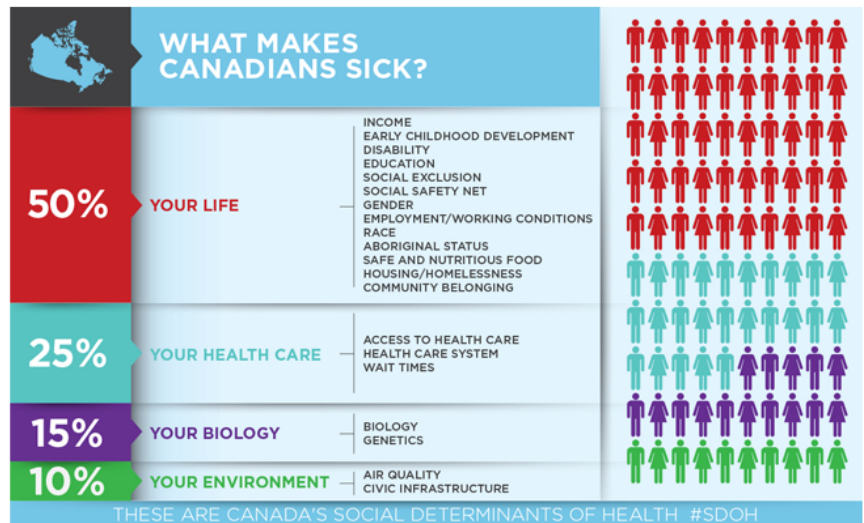
- 13 Sept: *SHIHC* Ch. 2, "The Social Sources of Disease and Death" and "Ebola and the Construction of Fear" (Sternheimer)
- 15 Sept: D2L, "Methodological Tools for a Sociological Analysis of Health, Illness, and Health Care" (Wade et al.) and "Food Faiths and Diet Religions" (Hall)

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**UNIT 2:** Students are provided with a systematic overview of what is known about the influence of social factors on the health of the population.

### Week 3. Social Factors and Health & Illness

- 20 Sept: *SHIHC* Ch. 3, "Social Determinants of Health and Illness: Age, Sex, and Race"
- 22 Sept: D2L, "NWAC Report"



### Week 4. Social Factors and Health & Illness (con't)

- 27 Sept: *SHIHC* Ch. 4, "Socioeconomic Inequalities in Health"
- 29 Sept: D2L, "Social Class" (Scambler)

### Week 5. Social Factors and Health & Illness (con't)

- 04 Oct: *SHIHC* Ch. 5, "Work and Family Life"
- 06 Oct: D2L, "Emotional Labor" (Theodosius)
- Extra Credit #1 due 06 October 2016 before lecture

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• Fall schedule subject to change

**Week 6. Reading Week**

- 11 Oct: No lecture (a wise student would begin studying for Test 1)
- 13 Oct: No lecture

**Week 7. Social Factors and Health & Illness (con't) and Test**

- 18 Oct: *SHIHC* Ch. 6, "Illness and Death in the Developing World" and test review
  - 20 Oct: Test 1 (in class)
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**Unit 3:** We shift gears to the social construction of health, that is the ways society frames and responds to matters of wellness and disease as well as how people make sense of the experience of being ill.

**Week 8. The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness**

- 25 Oct: *SHIHC* Ch. 7, "The Social Meanings of Illness"
- 27 Oct: D2L, "Socio-Cultural Variations in the Experience of Health and Illness" (Wade et al.) and "Medicalization" (Gabe)

**Week 9. The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness (con't)**

- 01 Nov: D2L, "Social Dimensions of Mental Illness" (Wade et al.)
- 03 Nov: D2L, "Is ADHD a Mental Health Crisis, or a Cultural One?" (Lunau)

**Week 10. The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness (con't)**

- 08 Nov: *SHIHC* Ch. 8, "The Experience of Disability, Chronic Pain and Chronic Illness"
- 10 Nov: D2L, "Stigma" (Monaghan & Williams)

**Week 11. The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness (con't)**

- 15 Nov: *SHIHC* Ch. 9, "The Body and the Pursuit of Health" and "Medicalization of Beauty" (Sternheimer)
- 17 Nov: D2L, "Sexualities and Health" (Barry, Yuill & Todd)

**Week 12. Test 2**

- 22 Nov: Test review, and work on group presentations
- 24 Nov: Test 2 (in class)

**Week 13. Group Presentations**

- 29 Nov: Group presentations
  - 01 Dec: Group presentations
  - Extra Credit #2 due 01 December 2016 before lecture
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## WINTER TERM SCHEDULE

**Unit 4:** We begin a new section on the sociology of health care settings and professions, paying particular attention to the Canadian health care system.



### **Week 1. Health Care Systems, Professions, Settings, and Technologies**

- 10 Jan: *SHIHC* Ch. 10, “The History of Health Care in Canada” and *SHIHC* Ch. 11, “Health Care in Other Countries” (pp. 258-274)
- Recommended: “Kitchen Table Politics: The Cost and Quality of Health Care in the US” Accessible at: <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/kitchen-table-politics-the-cost-and-quality-of-health-care/>
- 12 Jan: D2L, “Health Care” (Maioni)

### **Week 2. Health Care Systems, Professions, Settings, and Technologies (con’t)**

- 17 Jan: *About Canada: Health Care*, Chapters 3-4
- 19 Jan: *About Canada: Health Care*, Chapters 5-6
- Recommended film: CBC, The Fifth Estate: “Rate My Hospital” (2013, 45 min) Accessible at: <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2394113115/>

### **Week 3. Health Care Systems, Professions, Settings, and Technologies (con’t)**

- 24 Jan: *SHIHC* Ch. 12, “Health Care Professions”
- 26 Jan: TBD

### **Week 4. Health Care Systems, Professions, Settings, and Technologies (con’t)**

- 31 Jan: *SHIHC* Ch. 13, “Health Care Settings and Technologies”
- 02 Feb: TBD

### **Week 5. Health Care Systems, Professions, Settings, and Technologies (con’t)**

- 07 Feb: D2L, “Complementary and Alternative Health Care” (Easthope & Hornosty)
- 09 Feb: Critiques of CAM  
Read: “A Harris Poll on ‘Alternative Medicine’,” accessible at: <https://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org/a-harris-poll-on-alternative-medicine/>  
Read: “We Should Abandon the Concept of ‘Alternative Medicine’,” accessible at: <https://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org/we-should-abandon-the-concept-of-alternative-medicine/>
- Test review
- Extra Credit 3 due 09 February before lecture

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• Winter schedule subject to change

### **Week 6. Test**

- 14 Feb: Test 3 (in class)
- 16 Feb: No lecture (begin reading break early with my compliments!)

### **Week 7. Reading Week**

- 21 Feb: No lecture
  - 23 Feb: No lecture
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**Unit 5:** We conclude by applying what we've learned to social analyses of pharmaceuticals. We examine how health sociologists orient to drugs as objects of inquiry and pose questions about social, cultural, and political relations through research on treatments and clinical trials.

### **Week 8. Moving Forward: Bioethics, Pharmaceuticals & Genetics**

- 28 Feb: *SHHC* Ch. 14, "Issues in Bioethics"
- 02 Mar: TBD

### **Week 9. Pharmaceuticals and the "Social"**

- 07 Mar: D2L, "The Medicalization and Pharmaceuticalization of Society" (Wade et al.)
- 09 Mar: D2L, "Social Lives of Medicines" (Whyte et al.)

### **Week 10. The Political Economy of the Pharmaceutical Industry**

- 14 Mar: D2L, "The Pharma Industry and Health Canada" (Lexchin)
- 16 Mar: TBD



### **Week 11. Pharmaceuticals and the Construction of New Markets**

- 21 Mar: D2L, "Potency in all the Right Places" (Mamo & Fishman)
- 23 Mar: D2L, "Sex, Drugs, and Politics: The HPV Vaccine" (Casper & Carpenter)

### **Week 12. Pharmaceuticals and Public Health: Studies of HIV**

- 28 Mar: D2L, "Configuring the Users of New HIV-Prevention Technologies" (Holt)
- 30 Mar: TBD
- Test 4 (take home) distributed in class (due date TBD)

### **Week 13. Conclusion: The Globalization of Pharmaceutical Research and Marketing**

- 04 Apr: D2L, "Clinical Trials Off-Shored" (Petryna)
- 06 Apr: TBD
- Extra Credit #4 due 06 April 2017 before lecture

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

CBC News, Health Reports

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/health>

Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI), Quick Stats

<https://www.cihi.ca/en/quick-stats>

Health Canada

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>

Healthy Debate

<http://healthydebate.ca>

Mental Health News, Canada

<http://globalnews.ca/tag/mental-health/>

Statistics Canada, Health Reports

<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/subject-sujet/theme-theme.action?pid=2966&lang=eng&more=0>

Science-Based Medicine blog

<https://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org>

Everyday Sociology Blog

<http://www.everydaysociologyblog.com>

Skeptoid Podcast (can be streamed through iTunes or at website below)

<https://skeptoid.com/>