

SOCI 4010: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PUBLIC HEALTH*

Lecture: Fridays 11:30-2:30pm

Location: ATAC 1005

Instructor: Dr. Sanders

Office: RB 2038

Office hours: Tuesdays 2:30-3:30 at *The Study* or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

SOCI 4010 explores sociological research and perspectives on *public health*—defined as the combination of programs, services, and policies that are intended to protect and promote the health of the Canadian population. Public health consists of the collective, organized efforts to keep people healthy and prevent injury, illness, and premature death. Examples include government policies and programs that target: environmental protection, infectious disease surveillance and outbreak response, food safety and potable water, sanitation and waste management, reproductive health, harm reduction, scheduled vaccinations, diet and physical exercise, workplace safety, and rural and urban community health provision among others.

Keeping in mind these issues and more, this semester we will organize our analysis around the following questions: How are social issues framed as public health problems? What is the role of the state in promoting population health? How do public health objectives and practices differ from those of traditional hospital medicine? Whose interests are represented by public health and whose are excluded? What assumptions about the health and wellbeing of populations underlie public health policy and programs? How does "power" operate via public health policy and practices?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To learn about the history of and role of public health as an institution of medicine in modern society;
- To understand sociological approaches to thinking about and critically exploring contemporary public health issues;
- To gain an appreciation of the complexity and challenges of public health work;
- To understand the central social, political, and economic determinants of population health;
- To articulate thoughtful discussion questions and engage in open discussion of course material with classmates.

* This is a general outline and is subject to change. Contact me for current unabridged version.

COURSE READINGS

We will use the following book(s) available at the LU Bookstore:

- Picard, André. 2017. *Matters of Life and Death: Public Health Issues in Canada*. Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre.
- A course pack that can be purchased from the LU bookstore.

COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Description	Date	Weight
Discussant Duty	TBD	20%
Analytic Paper 1	October 06	10%
Midterm	October 20	20%
Analytic Paper 2	December 01	10%
Final	December 08	20%
Weekly Participation	-	20%

Midterm and Final. The midterm and final exams will include short answer and essay questions. The questions are designed to evaluate students' ability to apply key concepts.

Discussant Duty. Each week 1-2 students will serve as discussants. Discussant duties include a close reading of the assigned materials, facilitating class discussion, and providing discussion questions in advance of lecture. You may work independently or collaborate with the other discussants for that week; you may also design in-class activities or present short lectures.

Analytic Papers. Students are responsible for writing two analytic papers. In your papers, you must write about a reading (or readings if on the same topic) from *Matters of Life and Death* that has NOT been assigned for the course. Specific guidelines will be provided in class.

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

Plagiarism. All work must be completed with academic integrity. Please review the Lakehead University 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 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>

UNIT I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

WEEK 1. Sept 08: What is Public Health? Introduction to the Course

- Readings posted to D2L
- FILMS: Excerpts from *Unnatural Causes*, Episode 1 “In Sickness and Wealth” and *The Hidden Influence of Social Networks*

WEEK 2. Sept 15: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives on Public Health

- Course pack Week 2
- *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 7-12

UNIT II. THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC DETERMINANTS OF POPULATION HEALTH

WEEK 3. Sept 22: The Critique of Health Promotion

- To read more about *neoliberalism* [click here](#)
- Course pack Week 3
- *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 267-275
- FILM: Excerpts from *Unnatural Causes*, Episode 1 “In Sickness and Wealth”

WEEK 4. Sept 29: The Public Health Consequences of Economic Turmoil

- Course pack Week 4
- FILM: Excerpts from *Unnatural Causes*, Episode 7 “Not Just a Paycheck”

WEEK 5. Oct 06: Public Health and the Environment

- Course pack Week 5
- Analytic Paper 1 due in class
- FILM: *E-waste Dumping*
- Midterm exam distributed in class

WEEK 6. Oct 13: Reading Week (no classes)

- Work on midterm

UNIT III. PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

WEEK 7. Oct 20: "Denormalization": Tobacco Control

- Read: [Eight things that have changed since smoking ban ten years ago](#)
- Course pack Week 7
- *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 245-253
- Midterm due in class

WEEK 8. Oct 27: Harm Reduction and Safe Injection Sites

- Course pack Week 8
- *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 95-104
- FILM: *Staying Alive: Canada's Controversial Safe Injection Site*

WEEK 9. Nov 03: Epidemics and "Reckless Vectors"

- Course pack Week 9
- *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 223-241
- Radiolab podcast: "Patient Zero"
- Film: *Typhoid Mary: The Most Dangerous Woman in America*

UNIT IV. CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES AND DEBATES

WEEK 10. Nov 10: Food Insecurity

- To read more about *political economy* [click here](#)
- Course pack Week 10

WEEK 11. Nov 17: Indigenous Health and Northern Communities

- Course pack Week 11
- *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 185-195
- FILMS: *Third World Canada* and excerpts from *Unnatural Causes*, Episode 2 "When the Bough Breaks"

WEEK 12. Nov 24: Mental Health as a Public Health Matter

- Course pack Week 12
- *Matters of Life and Death*, pp. 51-78
- FILM: Excerpts from *Unnatural Causes*, Episode 5 "Place Matters"

WEEK 13. Dec 01: Course Conclusion

- Analytic Paper 2 due in class
- Final Paper instructions distributed in class and discussed