

**SOCI/GERO 2509-ADE**  
**SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS IN CANADA**  
Spring 2021

**Instructor:** Dr. Sanders  
**Office hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 12-1pm or by appointment  
**Email:** [contact me via D2L](#) (not lakeheadu.ca email)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

SOCI/GERO 2509 provides an overview of medical sociology, one of the main sub-disciplines of sociology. This course is an important foundation for students interested in taking upper-division courses in the sociology of health & illness or for students who are simply interested in learning more about social perspectives on health, illness, and healthcare. An important feature of this course is that it examines the critical role that social factors play in influencing the health and illness of individuals, groups, and society at large. The readings and lectures focus on sociological contributions to the study of medicine, patterns of disease, the experience of illness, stigma and disability, and the Canadian health care system. Lectures will engage with contemporary, real-world examples of health and illness as well as provide additional background on the history of medicine, disparities in access to care, the political economy of healthcare, theories of risk and health promotion, recent changes to health care in Canada, and new frontiers in the sociology of health and illness such as pharmaceuticals and genetics.

**What is the benefit of taking this course?** Upon graduation, students 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 by offering them a critical perspective on both their parent discipline and the disciplines of their partners in other health care fields.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This course focuses on developing an understanding of both the empirical and theoretical underpinnings of the sociology of health and illness. The learning objectives are:

- To learn what it means to study health and illness from an “institutional-centered” perspective as opposed to the common “individual-centered” perspective;
- To learn about the range of theories, debates, and research topics that comprise the sociology of health and illness;
- To learn about how social, economic, and political factors shape the health and illness of the population as well as how they impact the healthcare system in Canada;
- To sociologically evaluate different forms of evidence and truth claims about health, illness, and medicine;
- To develop a critical perspective by challenging taken-for-granted notions of medicine, including both dominant and “alternative” conceptions of health care;
- To develop the ability to translate textbook information into written essay responses that include analysis and critique.

## COURSE TEXTS

The following textbooks are available in e-format using the links provided or can be purchased through online book sellers (i.e., Amazon, ABEbooks, etc.).

- Strohschein, Lisa and Rose Weitz. 2014. *The Sociology of Health, Illness & Health Care in Canada: A Critical Approach*. Toronto: Nelson Education. Available in e-format at: <https://www.nelsonbrain.com/shop/isbn/9780176514174>
- Armstrong, Pat and Hugh Armstrong. 2016. *About Canada: Health Care, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing. Available in e-format at: <https://fernwoodpublishing.ca/book/about-canada-health-care-2nd-edition>
- Additional weekly readings will be posted in folders on the D2L course website.

## COURSE EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF TESTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Description	Due Date	Value
Test 1	14 May	25%
Test 2	26 May	25%
Test 3	11 June	25%
Online Quizzes	As assigned	25%

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

Regular **online quizzes** will be assigned through D2L and will be active for 24 hours. Quizzes consist of four randomly selected multiple-choice questions. Quizzes are intended to test basic reading comprehension AND to keep people up on readings, and for this reason **quizzes cannot be made up when missed**. Quiz scores can be tracked using the grading tool on D2L.

An **extra credit paper** (approx. 8-10 pages) can be completed and will replace the lowest test mark. The task will be to analyze a film for key themes (e.g., medical vs. social model of illness, labeling theory and residual deviance, medicalization, political economy of health care). Choose from the following films: *Sling Blade* (1996), *Patch Adams* (1998), *The Hours* (2002), or *Sicko* (2007). Students must schedule a meeting with me in advance to discuss this option and receive specific guidelines.

## GENERAL POLICIES

**Email:** **Please email me through D2L and not via my LU account**. Due to time constraints, I can only respond to D2L emails during my office hours. Please do not send emails that ask questions that can be answered by reading the course outline (e.g., due dates). Also, when emailing professors it is good practice to use standard workplace etiquette: 1) **be brief** (lengthy emails are frequently postponed for later and then forgotten), 2) **address the recipient by name** (not "Hey"), 3) **use coherent and complete sentences** (people need to correctly understand the problem or request), 4) **use a courteous tone** (people are less likely to help

when content is perceived as being rude), and 5) **include a signature line** (the recipient needs to know who has contacted them). I generally do not reply to discourteous email or I will reply by asking that the email be respectfully rephrased and resent before I will deal with it.

**Grades:** I do not discuss grades by email or provide detailed breakdowns of graded work by email. All grade inquiries must be in person during office hours or by phone.

**Plagiarism:** 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 come to me with 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>

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Below is a list of online resources where you can go for reputable information about issues in health and illness, including official datasets, professional research reports, academic analyses and discussions, educated opinion pieces.

- Canadian Institute for Health Information: <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/>
- Stats Canada, Health Reports: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/82-003-X>
- Science-Based Medicine blog: <https://www.sciencebasedmedicine.org>

## SCHEDULE\*

### **03 May: Introduction to Course, Expectations, and Overview (Module 0)**

- No readings or quizzes assigned, but please listen to audio intro lecture to answer basic questions and for fair warning of what you are getting into for this course

**UNIT 1:** We begin by discussing how we define and measure health and illness, sociological perspectives for understanding health and illness in society, and social epidemiology.

### **04 May: The Sociology of Health & Illness and Why It Matters (Module 1)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 1, "Sociology of Health, Illness, and Health Care"
- "Medical Model" (Bury)
- Quiz 1

### **05 May: Sociological Approaches to Health & Illness (Module 2)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 2, "The Social Sources of Disease and Death"
- "Ebola and the Construction of Fear" (Sternheimer)
- Quiz 2

**UNIT 2:** Next we learn about the "social determinants of health," or the social distribution of wellness and disease. Ask yourself: In what ways is health related to social position?

### **06 May: Social Factors and Health & Illness (Module 3)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 3, "Social Determinants of Health and Illness: Age, Sex and Race"
- "NWAC Report" on Indigenous Women's health
- Quiz 3

### **07 May: Social Factors and Health & Illness (con't) (Module 4)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 4, "Socioeconomic Inequalities in Health"
- "Social Class" (Scambler)
- Quiz 4

### **10 May: Social Factors and Health & Illness (con't) (Module 5)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 5, "Work and Family Life"
- "Emotional Labor" (Theodosius)
- Quiz 5

### **11 May: Social Factors and Health & Illness (con't) (Module 6)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 6, "Illness and Death in the Developing World"
- No quiz

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\* Schedule subject to change as needed.

**12 May: Study Day**

- No quiz, no assigned readings, study for the test

**13 May: Limbo Day**

- In the realm of theology, “limbo” refers to an intermediate state or period of uncertainty where one awaits final judgement. We’ll use it metaphorically to refer to the period between studying and the test. Consider limbo day to be a period where you can either study for an extra day or take the test now and get it over with so you can enjoy an extra day off. The choice is yours.

**14 May: Test 1**

- Test active for 48 hours starting 13 May at 12:01am

**17 May: Take-a-Breather Day**

- No quiz, no assigned readings
- You’ve been working hard, so take a breather today and don’t do any work for this course 😊

**Unit 3:** We now 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. Ask yourself: In what ways is the experience of illness affected by our social and cultural understandings of disease and ability?

**18 May: The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness (Module 7)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 7, “The Social Meanings of Illness”
- “Medicalization” (Gabe)
- Quiz 6

**19 May: The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness (con’t) (Module 8)**

- “Social Dimensions of Mental Illness” (Wade et al.)
- “Is ADHD a Mental Health Crisis, or a Cultural One?” (Lunau)
- Quiz 7

**20 May: The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness (con’t) (Module 9)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 8, “The Experience of Disability, Chronic Pain and Chronic Illness”
- “Stigma” (Monaghan & Williams)
- Quiz 8

**21 May: The Meaning and Experience of Health & Illness (con’t) (Module 10)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 9, “The Body and the Pursuit of Health”
- Quiz 9

**24 May: Study Day**

- No quiz, no assigned readings, study for the test

**25 May: Limbo Day**

- Either study for an additional day or take the test early and then have a day off—you decide

**26 May: Test 2**

- Test active for 48 hours starting 25 May at 12:01am

**27 May: Breather Day**

- No quiz, no assigned readings
- You've been working hard, so take a breather today and don't do any work for this course 😊

**Unit 4:** We conclude with a section on the sociology of health care, focusing on clinical settings, services, professions, and mounting concerns about cost control and reforms in the Canadian public health care system.

**28 May: Our Health Care System: Part 1 (Module 11)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 10, "The History of Health Care in Canada"
- Quiz 11
- Please note that Quiz 10 is not assigned for this course

**31 May: Our Health Care System: Part 2 (Module 12)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 11, "Health Care in Other Countries" (read pp. 258-68)
- No Quiz

**01 June: Our Health Care System: Part 3 (Module 13)**

- *About Canada: Health Care* by Armstrong & Armstrong (Chapters 1-4)
- Recommended: "Inside the nearly eight-year long fight of Brian Day, the doctor who would free Canadians from Medicare"
- No Quiz

**02 June: Our Health Care System: Part 4 (Module 13 continued)**

- *About Canada: Health Care* by Armstrong & Armstrong (Chapters 5-8)
- Quiz 12

**03 June: Settings, Professions & Technologies: Part 1 (Module 14)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 12, "Health Care Professions"
- "Gift Horse or Trojan Horse?" (read pp. 2613-15)
- Quiz 13

**04 June: Settings, Professions & Technologies: Part 2 (Module 15)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 13, “Health Care Settings and Technologies”
- Quiz 14

**07 June: Settings, Professions & Technologies: Part 3 (Module 16)**

- “Complementary and Alternative Medicine Health Care” (Easthope & Hornosty)
- “A Harris Poll on ‘Alternative Medicine’” (Novella) and “We Should Abandon the Concept of ‘Alternative Medicine’” (Novella)
- Quiz 15

**08 June: Sociology and Medical Ethics (Module 16)**

- *SHIHC* Ch. 14, “Issues in Bioethics”
- “BiDil: Assessing a Race-Based Pharmaceutical” (Brody & Hunt)
- Quiz 16

**09 June: Study Day**

- No quiz, no assigned readings, study for the test

**10 June: Limbo Day**

- Either study for an additional day or take the test early and then have a day off—you decide

**11 June: Test 3**

- Test active for 48 hours starting 12 June at 12:01am

**14 June: Breather Day**

- You’re done!
- You’ve been working hard, so take a breather today and don’t do any work for this course 😊

Congratulations on completing the course (\*cue confetti\*).  
Enjoy the rest of spring and summer,  
and good luck with your program!