

Sociology of Health & Illness/Medical Sociology (working syllabus)

Instructor Information

- Instructor: Miles Marsala
- Email: miles.marsala@duke.edu
- Office Location: TBD
- Office Hours: TBD

Course Details

- Days: TBD
- Time: TBD
- Location: TBD

General Information

Description

What is health? Is health the absence of illness or the accumulation of positive behaviors? Is the health of individuals and the population driven by biology and genetics? Behavior? Preventative actions? Why are some social groups more likely to have depression and others to have heart disease? In this course, we examine the sociology of health (medical sociology), which investigates social determinants of health; the social construct of health, wellness, and illness; medicalization and the healthcare system; and the health disparities that exist between social groups and what we might be able to do to reduce said inequalities.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you will have a general understanding of the field of medical sociology, meaning that you will see the health of individuals and population through a social perspective, including:

- Acquire an understanding and identify the primary theoretical debates within medical sociology
- Understand that health is socially patterned and not merely a result of biology
- Describe health disparities between social groups and populations
- Critically assess the social and political arguments surrounding medicalization and healthcare
- Develop concrete skills, such as effectively reading academic texts, interpreting published quantitative data, professional writing, and engage in debates and discussions.

Course Materials

Required Materials*

Cockerham, William C. 2016. *Medical Sociology* (13th Edition).

All other reading and media materials will be provided by the instructor and available on the course website.

Course Requirements & Policies

Requirements

The format of this course is a combination of lecture and discussions based on health in society and health disparities between social groups. It is important that you come to each prepared to participate. Preparation for the class includes having read the assigned text for each day, taking notes on the main points and key ideas, and having prepared comments and questions related to the readings.

Grading

Your work will be graded on a point system, which will be converted to a percentage. In this course, there are 1,000 cumulative points available, which corresponds to a 100% scale. In some courses, students begin with a full grade, and points are deducted throughout the semester; this is not how I grade. In this course, everyone starts with zero points, and as you complete and turn in assignments, quizzes, and tests, points are added to your total. This is to ensure that students continue to work toward earning their grade, and not merely picking and choosing what assignments to focus on to "keep" their grade.

Grades are distributed as follows:

Attendance	150 points	15% of final grade
Participation	150 points	15% of final grade
Quizzes	100 points	10% of final grade
DEAL Exercises	100 points	10% of final grade
Policy Brief	100 points	10% of final grade
Exams	300 points	30% of final grade
Final Paper/Proposal	100 points	10% of final grade
Total	1,000 points	100%

Late or Missed Work

It is important to stay on task and complete your assignments on time. However, life circumstances sometimes get in the way. I will allow late work to be turned in no later than one class period late but will include a 10% reduction on any work that is turned in late. Any assignments turned in more than one class period late will not be accepted and will be given zero points.

There are some exceptions to the late work policy. First, if you are aware of an upcoming absence that will conflict with an in-class quiz, test, or assignment, you may complete an excused absence form.

Second, if you experience an unavoidable, verifiable, emergent, and extenuating circumstance preventing you from submitting work on time, you may have the opportunity to submit late work.

**Additional exceptions and policies regarding an inability to complete an assignment on time will be permitted based on college policies.

Attendance Policy

Students may miss a total of three class periods, no questions asked, without penalty. Once a student misses more than three class periods, each period missed beyond three will be a 50-point deduction, up to 150-point deduction, from the final grade.

Students may arrive to class up to five minutes late without penalty, any tardiness beyond five minutes will have a 20-point deduction, up to 100-point deduction, from the final grade. Any tardiness beyond 30 minutes will be considered as an absence.

Participation

It is vital that every student participates in the course to the extent that they are comfortable. This course is designed to function on discussion and debate, for this to work, everyone must come to class prepared and ready to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about your willingness or ability to participate, please let me know.

Quizzes

The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that students are doing the reading and prepared to discuss the topics for the week that we will cover in class. All quizzes are available online and can be taken as many times as a student wants. These are not meant to be a burden or detriment to your grade, but to prepare you to participate. Reading quizzes will be about the reading for the upcoming week on the course schedule. For example, the reading quiz for week eight covers the material from chapters 7 and 8. All quizzes are due before class begins on the first day of class for that week.

DEAL Exercises

For the DEAL Exercise, you should turn in a reflection of at least 500 words, but not more than 750 words. These entries will require you to DEAL with the reading, podcast, or documentary. That is, you will: Describe, Examine, and Articulate what you are Learning. Further instructions and a rubric are on the course website.

Policy Brief

You will spend the semester working in small groups (3-4 students per group) to research a topic of your choosing related to medical sociology and health policy. The topic should be based in the U.S. context and have contemporary relevance. This research will result in two graded products; an infographic (1 page) produced as a group, and a five-minute in-class group presentation.

Exams

Exams will cover the chapters listed next to each exam on the course schedule. Even if we do not discuss a specific topic or section of the reading in class, it will be on the test. In addition to the readings, exams will also cover anything covered in class discussion.

Final Paper/Research Proposal

During the course, we will cover a variety of topics related to the sociology of health and illness. For your final paper, you will pick a topic, approved by the instructor, related to medical sociology and will compose a solo-authored paper of 5-7 double-spaced pages. You have three options for this final paper. 1) Write a research paper, including some data analysis. 2) Write a literature review on a specific topic with a research question in mind. 3) Propose a research idea, including a literature review and suggested methods and possible datasets.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Week 1			
Class 1	Review syllabus and course introduction	Syllabus	
Class 2	Medical Sociology	Ch. 1	
Week 2			
Class 1	Epidemiology	Ch. 2	Reading Quiz
Class 2	Epidemiology	Ch. 2	
Week 3			
Class 1	The Social Demography of Health: Social Class	Ch. 3	Reading Quiz
Class 2	The Social Demography of Health: Social Class	Ch. 3	
Week 4			
Class 1	The Social Demography of Health: Gender, Age, & Race	Ch. 4	Reading Quiz
Class 2	The Social Demography of Health: Gender, Age, & Race	Ch. 4	
Week 5			
Class 1	Screening: "The Divide"		
Class 2	Exam 1	Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4	
Week 6			
Class 1	Group Work	Policy Brief Ideas	
Class 2	Social Stress & Health	Ch. 5	DEAL Exercise 1
Week 7			
Class 1	Health Behavior & Lifestyles	Ch. 6	Reading Quiz

Class 2	In-Class Activity/Debate	Ch. 6	Research Idea
Week 8			
Class 1	Illness Behavior	Ch. 7	Reading Quiz
Class 2	The Sick Role	Ch. 8	
Week 10			
Class 1	Doctor-Patient Interaction	Ch. 9	Reading Quiz
Class 2	Exam 2	Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	
Week 11			
Class 1	Group Work	Policy Brief	
Class 2	Physicians	Ch. 10	
Week 12			
Class 1	Physicians in a Changing Society	Ch. 11	Reading Quiz
Class 2	Nurses, Physician Assistants, Pharmacists, & Midwives	Ch. 12	
Week 13			
Class 1	Healing Options	Ch. 13	Reading Quiz
Class 2	Health Care Reform & Health Policy in the United States	Ch. 15	DEAL Exercise 2
Week 14			
Class 1	Global Health Care	Ch. 16	
Class 2	Exam 3	Chapters 11, 12, 13, 15, 16	
Week 15			
Class 1	Group Policy Brief Presentations		
Class 2	Group Policy Brief Presentations		Final Paper Due

*Other possible texts include, but are not limited to: *The Sociology of Health & Illness: Critical Perspectives (10th Edition)*, Peter Conrad & Valerie Leiter; *An Introduction to the Sociology of Health & Illness (3rd Edition)*, Kevin White; *Understanding the Sociology of Health(4th Edition)*, Anne-Marie Barry & Chris Yuill.