

University of Toronto – Department of Sociology
SOC363H1F: Sociology of Mental Health & Mental Disorders
L0101/L9101
Fall 2020

Thursdays: 16:00-18:00

Instructor: Brigid Burke
Email: b.burke@mail.utoronto.ca
Office hours: Thursdays 2-3 via BB Collaborate on Quercus (or by appointment)
Course website: Access via [U of T Quercus](#)
Teaching Assistant: Haosen Sun - haosen.sun@mail.utoronto.ca
Lauren Konikoff - lauren.konikoff@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the link between social inequality and inequality in distress, focusing on differences in mental health across social groups and the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences. Sociological approaches to mental health and mental disorders reveal how inequitable social conditions have important consequences on mental and emotional well-being. In the first half of the course, we will examine key conceptual issues and theoretical models in the field, as well as the impact of coping resources in helping individuals negotiate the experience of mental stress, distress and disorder. In the second half of the course, we will explore patterns in the social distribution of mental health, paying special consideration to how mental health varies across different axes of inequality, including: race, gender and sexuality. We will also evaluate the impact of neighbourhood, as a social context influencing exposure and vulnerability to stress and mental health consequences. Lastly, we will review efforts to carry out social control of mental disorders via chemical restraints.

Goals & Learning Outcomes

1. Acquire knowledge of relevant sociological theories and apply these to examine the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences
2. Interrogate how social inequality shapes the social distribution of mental health/ disorders
3. Engage in critical thinking and apply course and lecture materials to develop a sociological analysis of current issues in the sociology of mental health and mental disorders

Course Format

This is a fully virtual class. Synchronous video lectures will take place via *BB Collaborate* during the scheduled class time. These lectures will be recorded and made available to students online. There will be 3 graded group check-ins during lecture periods over the course of the semester. Students who anticipate unavoidable barriers to participation in these check-ins (due to time zone differences, childcare responsibilities, etc.) should be proactive in contacting the instructor. Some accommodations to the scheduling of these check-ins *may* be negotiated at the start of the semester. Students are also expected to participate in online class discussion boards on a regular weekly basis. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and

receive clarifications about the class material or assignments during weekly office hours, or any time via email/the class discussion board.

Prerequisites: The prerequisite to take this course is 1 sociology FCE at the 200+ level. Please note, students without this prerequisite will be removed any time they are discovered and without notice. Students who have already complete SOC334H1 are not permitted to take this course. The class prerequisites and exclusions are firm and cannot be waived.

ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS

1. Discussion Board Participation: Every week students will respond to online discussion topics corresponding to the assigned readings for class 2-11. The goal of these exercises is to assess students' participation and engagement with the materials. As such, contributions should demonstrate knowledge of the class material as well as personal reflection/critical thought. The weekly discussion board participation will be graded out of 2 points. Students will receive 1 point for writing an original post and 1 point responding to another student's post, for a total of 20 points over the semester. Each post will be graded as: 0-missing, 0.5-needs improvement, or 1- complete. Students should write their posts in response to each other in a respectful & constructive manner. The discussion boards for each class will close Friday at midnight on the week of the class. Submissions will not be accepted after the discussion boards are closed.
2. Memo: Students will write a 5-page double-spaced memo applying the Stress Process Model to analyze the risk of stress to students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Students can write about their own experiences and/or draw on outside research. You should consider risk/protective factors going into the pandemic, pandemic related stressors and coping resources/practices and well as the relevance of social location in shaping mental health outcomes (i.e. variations in levels of stress and distress). The memo should demonstrate strong theoretical understanding and critical reflection of the case study findings. Memos are worth 20 points and must be uploaded to Quercus by midnight on October 15th. Further instructions will be given in class and on Quercus.
3. Podcast Project: As a class, we will work in small groups to create podcasts about gender-related issues. This project will be carried out in stages to allow for ongoing feedback:

Topic & Group Selection: During the first week of class students will brainstorm and post research topic ideas to the class discussion board by September 23rd at midnight. The Topic Brainstorming is worth 2.5 points. You are encouraged to post as many ideas as you can come up with! Students will identify topics they are interested in working on by "liking" these posts. The instructor will select general podcast topics based on student interest (likes) and idea relevance/strength. Online groups will be created for each of these topics and students can self-select into the group of their choice. N.B. Each group will be capped at 5 students. If the group for your first choice of topic is full, you will be required to select into a different group. (More information on this process will be provided in the first class).

Podcast Project Check-Ins: Students will have 3 in-class group check-ins to work on their final podcast assignments. These meetings will be used to provide feedback and ongoing support, offer suggestions on integrating course and outside materials, review strategies and workplans, engage in group brainstorming, theorizing, analysis, & problem-solving, etc. Attendance at check-ins will be worth 2.5 points. Students are expected to attend 3 check-ins over the course of the semester, for a total of 7.5 points.

The Check-in schedule and session topics are as follows:

Check-in 1 (October 1st): How do you relate to the topic? Identify and share relevant experiences or feelings.

Check-in 2 (October 22nd): How can you connect the topic to course readings & concepts? What outside academic sources can you use to deepen your analysis? Plan how to integrate course materials.

Check-in 3 (November 5th): How can you build a critical narrative about the topic as a group? Determine format, develop outline and workplan, iron out logistics.

Podcast: Students will work together to develop a critical examination of their chosen topic. Each student will be expected to contribute 5 minutes' worth of material. Podcasts can take various formats ranging from anecdotes, discussions, analysis, etc. No prior podcast experience or specialized equipment (beyond a phone, laptop or voice recorder) is required. Technical instructions will be provided in lecture 6. Students will be graded on their ability to carry out a critical analysis of the topic, understand and apply the course and outside research materials, and reflect on the topic's personal and sociological significance. The podcast assignment is worth 25 points. The link to completed podcast, along with a brief podcast questionnaire, must be uploaded to Quercus by November 26th at midnight. Further information will be provided in class and on Quercus.

4. Take Home Test: Students will write 1 take-home test that will assess their understanding of the course readings and lecture materials. The format will include a mix of short answer and long answer questions. This test is worth 25 points. The questions will be posted on December 7th at 6pm and answers must be uploaded to Quercus by 6pm on December 9th.

GRADING SUMMARY

| <u>Assignment</u> | <u>Weight</u> | <u>Due Date</u> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Discussion Board Participation | 20 points | Ongoing |
| Research Project Check-Ins | 7.5 points | Ongoing |
| Topic Brainstorming | 2.5 points | Sept 23 rd |
| Memo | 20 points | October 15 th |
| Podcast | 25 points | November 26 th |
| Take Home | 25 points | December 7 th -9 th |
| Total | 100 points | |

PROCEDURES AND RULES

Course Webpage

The course syllabus, links to all the readings, handouts, assignment submission links and course announcements will be posted on Quercus. You are responsible for all course content posted to Quercus. Please make sure to check your official utoronto.ca email addresses, Quercus Messages as well as the course Quercus page regularly. You might want to review your Quercus settings to ensure that course notifications are turned on.

Electronic communication and electronic learning technology

You are encouraged to use electronic communication to enhance your learning and experience in the course. With that said, it is essential that you follow a few rules:

- Assignments will not be accepted via email. See above for how to submit them.
- All online communication must be conducted through Quercus Messaging (not Outlook).
- All online communication must include the course code (i.e. SOC363) in the subject line.
- All online communication should be signed with the student's full name and student number.
- Online communication from students will generally be answered within 48 hours of receipt (except on weekends or holidays).
- All online course communication must maintain a respectful and professional tone.
- Online communication asking questions that are answered in the course syllabus or website (e.g., "how much is assignment X worth; when is the assignment due; when is the test...") will not receive a response.
- Online communication must identify a specific question or concern. Students asking questions that are very involved or in-depth may be asked to attend office hours.

***Emails that do not follow these guidelines will not receive a response.**

Grade Appeals

Students who are dissatisfied with their grades have one week to address their concerns, in writing, to the teaching assistant. Students contesting a grade will submit a 1-page typed document to the TA, outlining why the grade is believed to be inappropriate. The teaching assistant will then review the claim and respond in writing, either by email or hard copy. Students who remain unhappy with the response should make an appointment with me to review the case.

Missed Deadlines

Work more than 10 days late will not be accepted without supporting documentation.

In case of illness, you must declare your absence on ACORN on the day the assignment is due, in addition to contacting the instructor. If a health, personal or family crisis prevents you from meeting a deadline, you should contact **your college registrar**. It is recommended you always advise your registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies. Should this occur, I advise you to inform both me and your registrar as soon as possible so we can coordinate any needed accommodations. If you delay, it becomes more difficult to put accommodations in place.

Given the current pandemic, I understand students may experience additional difficulties in completing coursework. My priority is on you, your wellbeing and your learning *as people*, and in supporting you to get through the semester. If you feel like you are falling behind or experiencing academic difficulties in the course, I encourage you to make an appointment with me so that I can assess the situation and recommend a strategy for moving forward. Again, if this is the case it's imperative you reach out as soon as possible, as the longer you wait the harder it will be for me to help you.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University's principles of academic integrity. Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Please see the "[Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#)" for specific information on academic integrity at the U of T.

Accessibility and Student Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and visit the [Accessibility Services Office](#) as soon as possible.

Writing Support

Students are urged to seek assistance from the [University of Toronto Writing Centre](#) should they anticipate problems in this area.

ENGAGING WITH COURSE MATERIAL

To prepare yourself to engage with the class materials as critical and analytic consumers, you should ask yourself a few questions as you read the assigned materials: *What are the main points that the author is trying to make? How do each of the articles relate to each other or contradict each other? What are the common themes across the readings? What implications do these readings have for how we understand health from a sociological perspective? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the readings?* Being able to answer these questions will help you move beyond absorbing facts, to develop a critical lens. If you are unsure about how to approach a specific reading or you are confused about what you should be getting out of the reading, please come speak to me during office hours.

ENGAGING WITH COURSE PARTICIPANTS

I encourage students to engage in vibrant online debate and discussion about the course material. Some topics covered may be sensitive in nature. Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally and be respectful of different opinions. If confronted with an opposing idea, my expectation is for students to engage in dialogue with each other to build understanding around these differences. It is important to recognize that each person in the class has valuable insights to contribute and that our learning as a group will be maximized when we each commit to sharing with and listening to each other as openly as possible. The same level of respect and professionalism should be brought to group work. Students are expected to be respectful of others' time, ideas, and perspectives, and work dialectically to resolve any conflicts. Students are

expected to be proactive in reaching out to the instructor as needed for additional problem-solving support (e.g. during group check-ins, office hours, or by Quercus messages). As noted above, students may experience more disruptions than usual due to Covid-19. Please be patient and supportive of groupmates facing challenges. I have adopted flexible submission policies for precisely this reason.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Sept. 10th Class 1: Introduction &
1. Aneshensel, Carol S., Jo E. Phelan, and Alex Bierman. 2013. "The Sociology of Mental Health: Surveying the Field." Pp. 1-22 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2nd Ed., New York: Springer. **(Recommended)**
- Sept. 17th Class 2: Concepts, Measurements & Outcomes
1. Aneshensel, Carol S., Carolyn M. Rutter, and Peter A. Lachenbruch. 1991. "[Social Structure, Stress, and Mental Health: Competing Conceptual and Analytic Models.](#)" *American Sociological Review* 56:166-78.
 2. Mirowsky, John and Catherine E. Ross. 2002. "[Measurement for a Human Science.](#)" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43:152-70.
 3. Wheaton, Blair. 2007. "[The Twain Meet: Distress, Disorder and the Continuing Conundrum of Categories \(comment on Horwitz\).](#)" *Health* 11(3):303-319.
- Sept. 22nd ***Topic Brainstorming Due**
- Sept. 24th Class 3: Modeling Mental Health: The Stress Process
1. Wheaton, Blair, Marisa Young, Shirin Montazer, and Katie Stuart-Lahman. 2013. "Social Stress in the Twenty-First Century." Pp. 299–324 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2nd Ed., New York: Springer.
 2. Pearlin, Leonard I. and Alex Bierman. 2013. "Current Issues and Future Directions into the Stress Process." Pp. 325-340 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2nd ed., New York: Springer.
 3. McLeod, Jane D. 2012. "[The Meanings of Stress: Expanding the Stress Process Model.](#)" *Society and Mental Health* 2:172-186.
- Oct. 1st Class 4: Psychosocial Resources
1. Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2013. "The Sense of Personal Control: Social-Structural Causes and Emotional Consequences." Pp. 379-404 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2nd Ed., New York: Springer.
 2. Taylor, S. E., & Stanton, A. L. (2007). [Coping resources, coping processes, and mental health.](#) *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 3, 377–401.
 3. Thoits, P. A. (2011). [Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health.](#) *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 52, 145–161.
- *Group Check-In 1**

- Oct. 8th Class 5: Social Patterns of Mental Health
1. Kessler, Ronald. C. 2013. "Overview of Descriptive Epidemiology of Mental Disorders." Pp. 169-82 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2nd Edition, New York: Springer.
 2. Turner, R. Jay, Blair Wheaton, and Donald A. Lloyd. 1995. "[The Epidemiology of Social Stress](#)." *American Sociological Review* 60: 104–25
 3. Schieman, Scott., Karen van Gundy, and John Taylor. 2001. "[Status, Role, and Resource Explanations for Age Patterns in Psychological Distress](#)" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 42(1): 80-96.
- Oct. 15th Class 6: Public Sociology (Podcast Workshop)
Readings TBA
***Memo Due**
- Oct. 22nd Class 7: Race, Discrimination and Police Violence
1. Brown, T. N. et al. 2013. "Race, Nativity, Ethnicity, and Cultural Influences in the Sociology of Mental Health." Pp. 255-276 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2nd Ed., New York: Springer.
 2. Taylor, J. & Turner, R.J. 2002. "[Perceived Discrimination, Social Stress, and Depression in the Transition to Adulthood: Racial Contrasts](#)." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 65:213-225.
 3. Alang, S. et al. 2017. "[Police brutality and black health: Setting the agenda for public health scholars](#)". *American Journal of Public Health* 107(5): 662-665.
 4. DeVlyder, J. E. 2017. "[Donald Trump, the Police, and Mental Health in US Cities](#)", *American Journal of Public Health* 107(7):1042-1043
 5. Staggers-Hakim, R. 2016. "[The nation's unprotected children and the ghost of Mike Brown, or the impact of national police killings on the health and social development of African American boys](#)". *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 26 (3-4): 390-399.
 6. Geller, A., Fagan, J., Tyler, T., & Link, B. G. 2014. "[Aggressive policing and the mental health of young urban men](#)". *American Journal of Public Health* 104(12): 2321-7
- *Group Check-In 2**
- Oct. 29th Class 8: Gender
1. Simon, R. W. (2020). [Gender, Emotions, and Mental Health in the United States: Patterns, Explanations, and New Directions](#). *Society and Mental Health*, 10(2), 97–111
 2. Thoits, P.A. & Longest, K.C. 2012. "[Gender, the Stress Process, and Health: A Configurational Approach](#)". *Society and Mental Health* 2(3): 187-206
 3. Harnois, Catherine E., Băsto, Joao L. 2018. "[Discrimination, Harassment, and Gendered Health Inequalities: Do Perceptions of Workplace Mistreatment](#)

[Contribute to the Gender Gap in Self-Reported Health?](#)” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 59:283–99.

- Nov. 5th Class 9: Sexuality
1. Caplan, Z. 2017. [“The Problem with Square Pegs: Sexual Orientation Concordance as a Predictor of Depressive Symptoms”](#). *Society and Mental Health* 7(2): 105-120
 2. Green, A. I. 2008. [“Health and Sexual Status in an Urban Gay Enclave: An Application of the Stress Process Model”](#), *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 49:436-451
 3. Hsieh, N. 2014. [“Explaining the Mental Health Disparity by Sexual Orientation: The importance of Social Resources”](#). *Society and Mental Health* 4(2):129-146
- *Group Check-In 3**
- Nov. 12th **Fall Reading Week (No Class)**
- Nov. 19th Class 10: Space, Place & Neighbourhoods
1. Aneshensel, CS, Sucoff CA. 1996. [“The neighborhood context of adolescent mental health.”](#) *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 37:293-310
 2. Turney, K., Kissane, R. & Edin, K. 2012. [“After Moving to Opportunity: How Moving to a Low-Poverty Neighborhood Improved Mental Health Among African American Women”](#). *Society and Mental Health* 3(1): 1-21
 3. Mesa Vieira, C. et al. (2020) [COVID-19: The forgotten priorities of the pandemic](#). *Maturitas*. 136: 38-41
- Nov. 26th Class 11: Mental Disorders and Social Control
1. Kilty, Jennifer. (2012). [“It’s Like They Don’t Want to Get Better: Psy Control of Women in Carceral Contexts.”](#) *Feminism & Psychology*, 22(2): 162-182
 2. Fitzgerald, T. D. (2009). [“Controlling the Black School-Age Male: Psychotropic Medications and the Circumvention of Public Law 94-142 and Section 504”](#). *Urban Education*, 44(2): 225–247.
 3. Freundlich, Naomi. (2011). [““Atypical” Antipsychotics Misused As “Chemical Restraints” For Youthful Offenders”](#). *Health Beat* (online)
 4. Schweikart, Scott. (2019). [“April 2018 Flores Settlement Suit Challenges Unlawful Administration of Psychotropic Medication to Immigrant Children”](#). *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 21(1): E67-72
- * Podcast Assignment Due**
- Dec. 3rd **Review Session (no readings)**
- Dec 7th-10th **Take Home Test**