

SOC496H1S: Population Health Inequality in Temporal and Global Context

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University of Toronto
Winter 2026

Time: Thursdays 11:10-1:00pm

Location: See ACORN

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2pm-4pm, 700 University Ave, 17th Floor

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Course Description

This course provides an in-depth introduction to the major conceptual frameworks and empirical research examining the adult health and health disparities from temporal and global perspectives. It covers topics related to population health and inequality over temporal dimensions, life course origins and pathways of health and aging, and comparative analysis of population health and disparities in the world. We will study the institutional, demographic, economic, political, epidemiological, and technological forces shaping these patterns. This course is not constrained to a single discipline, but instead uses an interdisciplinary approach and comparative perspective to understand the variations in population health and inequality over time and across spaces. We will not only learn some classic theories but also engage in active debates and cutting-edge research.

Prerequisite

Completion of 1.0 SOC at the 300+level is required to take this course. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the course without notice.

Requirements and Evaluation

The course is organized as a seminar. Although I will occasionally provide brief overviews in lecture, much instruction takes place in the process of discussion and exchanges focused on the readings. Therefore, *student's engagement* in discussion and intellectual exchange is essential in this seminar. Students are expected to attend each class and to have read all of the required readings thoroughly and critically *before* the class meeting. Reading *critically* means not only being able to grasp the main content of an assigned piece, but also to evaluate the scientific issues motivating the research question, the conceptual/theoretical strengths of the research, the weaknesses and problems in the logic, the adequacy of the research design and methods, the sufficiency of the evidences and arguments, the scientific implications of the findings, and the study's relation to other course materials. Students are strongly encouraged to contribute to the discussion both their insights / ideas for future research and/or questions from the readings and their own experiences.

Students are required to accomplish three major tasks:

- 1) Preparation of the reading for class discussion. All students are expected to complete all the required readings and write a 1-page single spaced critique on the week's readings before class. Your critique should consist of three components: (1) synthesis of the readings; (2) at least 3 questions about the readings; and (3) at least 3 critiques on the readings or ideas for future research. Class discussions will be oriented around these readings and students' questions and critiques on these readings. This weekly critique should be posted on Quercus before 8am on the day of the class (25% of grade).
- 2) Class presentation and discussion. For each class meeting, a student will be assigned an article, and the student will informally present the scientific factors motivating a study, the key gaps in knowledge being addressed, the major findings, and the conceptual/methodological strengths and weaknesses of the study. The informal presentations should be around 15 minutes. Besides class presentation, each student is expected to be highly involved in class discussion and intellectual exchange (25% of grade).
- 3) Two in-class essay tests. Each account for 25% of grade.

Missed Deadlines and Tests

Students who miss an assignment deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero for that assignment or test unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. Within three days of missing an assignment deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with one of the following:

- Absence declaration via ACORN (can only be used once during the semester)
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

Turnitin

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service is described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Assignments not submitted through *Turnitin* will receive a grade of zero (0%), unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Turnitin*) is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Turnitin* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

Plagiarism

Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the “Code of Behavior on Academic Matters”). If you are using somebody else’s ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else’s ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference -- you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Use of Generative AI Tools

You will not be permitted to use generative AI on any of the assignment or in-class tests. While some generative AI tools are currently available for free in Canada, please be warned that these tools have not been vetted by the University of Toronto and might not meet University guidelines or requirements for privacy, intellectual property, security, accessibility, and records retention. Generative AI may produce content, which is incorrect or misleading, or inconsistent with the expectations of this course. These tools may even provide citations to sources that don’t exist—and submitting work with false citations is an academic offense. These tools may be subject to service interruptions, software modifications, and pricing changes during the semester.

Generative AI is not required to complete any aspect of this course. Instead, it is recommended that you treat generative AI as a supplementary tool only for exploration or further study. Ultimately, you (and not any AI tool) are responsible for your own learning in this course. It is your responsibility to critically evaluate the content generated, and to regularly assess your own learning independent of generative AI tools. Overreliance on generative AI may give you a false sense of how much you’ve actually learned, which can lead to poor performance on the assignments, in later courses, or in future work or studies after graduation.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

Class Schedule and Required Readings

Jan 8 – Introduction: review of syllabus

Jan 15 – Conceptual frameworks of population health

- Omran, A. R. (1971). The epidemiologic transition: a theory of the epidemiology of population change. *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, 83(4), 509-538.
- Fries, J.F. (2005). The Compression of Morbidity. *The Milbank Quarterly*, 83(4), 801-823.
- Verbrugge, L.M., & Jette, A.M. (1994). The Disablement Process. *Social Science and Medicine*, 38(1), 1-14.
- Robine, J.M., & Michel, J.P. (2004). Looking Forward to a General Theory on Population Aging. *Journal of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*, 59(6), M590-597.

Jan 22 – Period and cohort trend in morbidity and mortality

- Fogel, R.W., & Costa, D.L. (1997). A Theory of Technophysio Evolution, With Some Implications for Forecasting Population, Health Care Costs, and Pension Costs. *Demography*, 34(1), 49-66.
- Finch, C.E., & Crimmins, E.M. (2004). Inflammatory exposure and historical changes in human life-spans. *Science*, 305, 1736-1739.
- Carnes, B. A., & Olshansky, S. J. (2007). A realist view of aging, mortality, and future longevity. *Population and Development Review*, 33, 367-381.
- Langa, K. (2018). Cognitive Aging, Dementia, and the Future of an Aging Population. Pp. 249-268 in *Future Directions for the Demography of Aging*. The National Academies Press.

Jan 29 – Health Disparities over the Life Course

- House, J.S., J.M. Lepkowski, A.M. Kinney, R.P. Mero, R.C. Kessler, & R.A. Herzog. (1994). The Social Stratification of Aging and Health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 35, 213-234.
- Dupre, M.E. (2007). Educational Differences in Age-Related Patterns of Disease: Reconsidering the Cumulative Disadvantage and Age-As-Leveler Hypotheses. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 48, 1-15.
- Willson, Andrea E., Kim M. Shuey, & Jr Elder Glen H. (2007). Cumulative Advantage Processes as Mechanisms of Inequality in Life Course Health. *American Journal of Sociology*, 112(6), 1886–1924.
- Enroth, L., J. Raitanen, A. Hervonen, and M. Jylha. (2013). Do socioeconomic health differences persist in Nonagenarians? *Journals of Gerontology: Psychological and Social Sciences* 68(5): 837-847.

Feb 5 – How Does Childhood Influence Adult Health?

- Barker, D.J.P. (2007). The Origins of the Developmental Origins Theory. *Journal of Internal Medicine*, 261(5), 412-417.
- Lynch, John and George Davey Smith. (2005). A Life Course Approach to Chronic Disease Epidemiology. *Annu. Rev. Public Health* 26:1–35.
- Luo, Ye, & Linda J. Waite. (2005). The Impact of Childhood and Adult SES on Physical, Mental, and Cognitive Well-Being in Later Life. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, 60(2), S93–101.

- Palloni, Alberto, Carolina Milesi, Robert G. White, & Alyn Turner. (2009). Early Childhood Health, Reproduction of Economic Inequalities and the Persistence of Health and Mortality Differentials. *Social Science & Medicine*, 68(9), 1574–82.

Feb 12 – In-class essay test I

Feb 16-20 Reading week

Feb 26 – Trends in Health Disparities

- Miech, R., Pampel, F., Kim, J., & Rogers, R.G. (2011). The Enduring Association between Education and Mortality: The Role of Widening and Narrowing Disparities. *American Sociological Review*, 76:913-934.
- Montez, J.K., and Zajacova, A. (2013). Trends in mortality risk by education level and cause of death among U.S. White women from 1986 to 2006. *American Journal of Public Health*, 103(3), 473–479.
- Chetty, R., Stepner, M., Abraham, S., Lin, S., Scuderi, B., Turner, N., Bergeron, A., and Cutler, D. (2016). The association between income and life expectancy in the United States, 2001–2014. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 315, 1750–1766.
- Liu, Hui and Debra Umberson. (2008). The Times They Are A Changin’: Marital Status and Health Differentials From 1972 to 2003. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 49:239–253.

Mar 5 – Identifying the Contributing Factors

- Dowd, J.B., and A. Hamoudi. (2014). Is life expectancy really falling for groups of low socio-economic status? Lagged selection bias and artefactual trends in mortality. *International Journal of Epidemiology* 983–8.
- Chang, V.W. & Lauderdale, D.S. (2009). Fundamental Cause Theory, Technological Innovation and Health Disparities: The Case of Cholesterol in the Era of Statins. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 50:245-260.
- Geronimus, A. T., J. Bound, T. A. Waidmann, J. M. Rodriguez, and B. Timpe. (2019). Weathering, Drugs, and Whack-a-Mole: Fundamental and Proximate Causes of Widening Educational Inequity in U.S. Life Expectancy by Sex and Race, 1990–2015. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 60(2), 222–239.
- Zheng, Hui, & Linda K. George. (2012). “Rising U.S. Income Inequality and the Changing Gradient of Socioeconomic Status on Physical Functioning and Activity Limitations, 1984-2007.” *Social Science & Medicine* 75(12): 2170-82.

Mar 12 – Geography and health disparities

- Browning, Christopher R. and Kathleen A. Cagney. (2003). “Moving Beyond Poverty: Neighborhood Structure, Social Processes, and Health.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 44:552-571.
- Winter, A.S. and Sampson, R.J., (2017). From lead exposure in early childhood to adolescent health: A Chicago birth cohort. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(9), pp.1496-1501.
- Hicken, M.T., Gee, G.C., Morenoff, J., Connell, C.M., Snow, R.C. and Hu, H., (2012). A novel look at racial health disparities: the interaction between social disadvantage and environmental health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(12), pp.2344-2351.

- Montez, J. K., A. Zajacova, M. D. Hayward, S. H. Woolf, D. Chapman, and J. Beckfield. (2019). Educational Disparities in Adult Mortality Across U.S. States: How Do They Differ, and Have They Changed Since the Mid-1980s? *Demography* 56(2): 621–644.

Mar 19 – Why Has U.S. Lagged Behind?

- National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2013). *U.S. Health in International Perspective: Shorter Lives, Poorer Health*.
- Case A, Deaton A. (2015). Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century. *Proc Natl Acad Sci*, 112(49), 15078-83.
- Beckfield, J., & Bambra, C. (2016). Shorter lives in stingier states: Social policy shortcomings help explain the US mortality disadvantage. *Social Science & Medicine*, 171, 30-38.
- Zheng, Hui and Linda K. George. (2018). Does Medical Expansion Improve Population Health? *Journal of Health & Social Behavior*.

Mar 26 – Political Economy of Health Gradient

- Levecque, K., Van Rossem, R., De Boyser, K., Van de Velde, S., & Bracke, P. (2011). Economic hardship and depression across the life course: The impact of welfare state regimes. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 52, 262-276.
- Beckfield J, Olafsdottir S, Bakhtiari E. (2013). Health Inequalities in a Global Context. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57 (8), 1014-1039.
- Sosnaud B, Beckfield J. (2017). Trading Equality for Health? Social Inequalities in Child Mortality in Developing Nations. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*.
- Montez, J. K., M. D. Hayward, and A. Zajacova. (2019). Educational Disparities in Adult Health: U.S. States as Institutional Actors on the Association. *Socius*, 5.

Apr 2 – In-class essay test II