

University of Toronto – Department of Sociology
SOC 243H1F: Sociology of Health and Illness
Fall 2022

Tuesdays: 10:10am - 12:00pm

Instructor: Brigid Burke
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Office hours: Tuesdays 12-1pm via Zoom (or by appointment)
Course website: Access via U of T Quercus (q.utoronto.ca)
Teaching Assistant: TBD

Course Description

This course will examine the social causes of illness and disease, the sociology of illness experience, and the social distribution of health. We will begin the first half of the course with an introduction to the sociology of health and illness and explore different theoretical approaches within this field. We will discuss medicalization as a process that influences how illnesses are defined and addressed and, interrogate the relevance of the sick role in delimiting the rights and responsibilities of both patients and medical professionals. We will then explore how the meanings of disease and illness may differ based on social location, paying particular attention to differences across patients and doctors, and cross-culturally. In the second half of the course we will emphasize socio-political aspects of health, beginning with a consideration of structural and political violence. We will then discuss social determinants of health, exploring how health risks and protections are distributed based on class, race, gender and sexual orientation. Our last two weeks will focus on the sociology of the body, and address how bodies are experienced and acted upon in relation to dominant ideas about health and illness. Throughout the semester students will apply these lenses to conduct a sociological media analysis of a health or illness related topic.

Prerequisites and Exclusions: The prerequisite to take this course is: SOC100H1. In addition, it is recommended that students have completed SOC150H1 as preparation for this course. Please note, it is your responsibility to ensure that the prerequisite for this course has been met. Students without this prerequisite will be removed any time they are discovered and without notice. Students who have already completed SOC239H5 are not permitted to take this course. The class prerequisites and exclusions are firm and cannot be waived.

Distribution Requirement: Social Science

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, students will learn how to:

1. Think critically about health as a social issue, both in terms of its outcomes & antecedents.
2. Explore how understandings of health and illness can differ based on social location.
3. Interrogate the role of different axes of inequality in shaping individual/population health.
4. Engage in critical thinking, apply course and lecture materials to engage in a sociological media analysis of current health issues.

Land Acknowledgement

The city of Toronto, including the UTSG campus, is on Indigenous territory. We acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. It has been a site of human activity for 15,000 years. This land is the territory of the the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. The territory is the subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and Confederacy of the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in the community, on this territory.

Course Format

This is a fully virtual class. Synchronous video lectures will take place via *Zoom* during the scheduled class time. Attendance is required and students are expected to come to class having done the readings so as to participate in class debates and discussions. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarifications about the class material or assignments during class, weekly office hours, or any time via email/the class discussion board.

ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Discussion Questions	15 points	Ongoing
In-Class Participation	10 points	Ongoing
Final Project Part I	20 points	Oct. 18 th
Final Project Part II	30 points	Nov. 22 nd
Take Home Test	25 points	Dec. 6 th -9 th
Total	100 points	

You should receive at least one significant mark (15%) before the last day you can drop a course without academic penalty (Nov. 16th). Please note that Grades in Quercus gives early access to preliminary grades; it does not represent your official final marks. For final grades logon to [ACORN](#).

1. **Discussion Questions:** For each class (lectures 2-11) students will submit a discussion question with a brief paragraph (250 words max.) explaining their question and corresponding thoughts in relation to the assigned readings. These questions aim to help students stay on top of the readings, grapple with and think about the assigned material in a critical manner, and to reflect on their applicability to other course materials. These discussion questions should be open ended (not yes/no or factual or definitional questions) and the accompanying paragraphs must demonstrate critical engagement with the readings. Discussion questions must be submitted to Quercus by 12 noon the day before the corresponding class. Each class, 2-3 discussion questions will be selected for group reflection activities. Discussion questions for each class will be graded as 0 (fail/missing), 0.5 (partial) or 1 (full marks) for a total of 10 points, which will then be weighted to 15% of the final grade.

2. **In-Class Participation:** Throughout the semester students will be required to participate in lecture and complete active participation activities based on lecture material and student discussion questions. These will be completed in instructor-assigned groups and submitted to the instructor during class. Participation in each class (weeks 2-11) will be graded as 1 point, to make up a total of 10 points of the final grade.
3. **Final Project: Health/Illness Media Analysis:** Throughout the semester you will work in groups to conduct a sociological media analysis of a health/illness related topic. This will be a scaffolded project:
 - a) *Group sign-up (by October 4th).* Students will be encouraged to post possible project topics on the class discussion board during the first 3 weeks of class. The course instructor will review and select broad areas of interest from these, based on sociological promise and feasibility. Online groups will be created for each of these areas 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 area is full, you will be asked to select into a different group. (More information on this process will be provided in the first class).
 - b) *Final Project Part I:* Students will develop a paper introducing their chosen topic, developing a sociological rationale for their research, and reviewing sociological literature relevant to their health/illness topic. This assignment should be no more than 3 double-spaced pages (excluding bibliography). It must be uploaded to Quercus by October 18th at midnight and is worth 20 points. A handout with further information will be provided and students will have access to the grading rubric to aid in their preparation.
 - c) *Final Project Part II:* Students will work in groups to conduct a media analysis based on their selected topic. They will draw on their literature reviews to help them analyze media coverage and develop a critical reflection on their selected topic. This assignment should be no more than 8 double-spaced pages (excluding bibliography & annexes). It must be uploaded to Quercus by November 22nd at midnight and is worth 30 points. Students will be graded both individually and as a group. A handout with further information will be provided and students will have access to the grading rubric to aid in their preparation.
4. **Take Home Test:** Students will write a cumulative take-home test to assess their understanding and mastery 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% of the final grade. The questions will be released during the review session on December 6th. Answers must be uploaded to Quercus by 6pm on December 9th.

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 U of T Outlook accounts.
- All online communication must include the course code (i.e. SOC243) 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

There are no late penalties in this course. Work more than 7 days late will not be accepted without supporting documentation. After 7 days, a grade a zero will be applied.

***N.B. The 7-day leniency period does not apply to the final take home test. In-class participation activities cannot be made up except in serious extenuating circumstances**

(illness/medical issue, personal crisis, family emergency, etc.) wherein special permission must be granted by the course instructor.

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 ongoing 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 we can work out 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.

During synchronous lectures, for example, students will not only hear the instructor lecture, but they are also exposed to their classmates' questions (many of which they might not have thought of on themselves), opinions/responses (which they may or may not agree with to varying degrees), real life examples/experiences (which may resonate with them in a variety of ways: e.g. as relatable, reassuring, eye-opening, strange, or uncomfortable), etc. Regular participation in class is therefore a vital element of your and your classmates' learning and should be prioritized.

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. 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.

RECORDING AND DISTRIBUTION OF COURSE MATERIALS

- Sharing, Distributing or Reposting Course Materials (including online lectures and slides) is strictly prohibited. All class materials (including lecture slides) are the intellectual property of the course instructor and are protected by the University of Toronto copyright restrictions. If at any time the course instructor discovers class materials posted online without proper authorization, posting of all lecture slides will cease.
- Recording any portion of lectures is strictly forbidden without written permission from the instructor. If you would like a recording of the lectures for accessibility reasons please make a request before the start of class.
- Respect the rights all class participants and refrain from taking screenshots or videos during online lecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Sept. 13th Class 1: Introduction
1. Armstrong, D. (2000). Social theorizing about health and illness. In: G. L. Albrecht R. Fitzpatrick & S. C. Scrimshaw: [Handbook of social studies in health and medicine](#) (pp. 24-35). London: SAGE Publications (**recommended**)
- Sept. 20th Class 2: Medicalization
1. Conrad, P. (1992). [Medicalization and social control](#). *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18(1): 209-232.
 2. Wada K. (2022) [Medicalization of grief: Its developments and paradoxes](#). In J.N. Lester & M. O'Reilly (Eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Critical Perspectives on Mental Health*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Sept. 27th Class 3: The Sick Role
1. Cockerham, William (2001) The Sick Role. In *Medical Sociology*. 8th ed. Pp.160-178 Prentice Hall. (**On Quercus**)
 2. Glenton, C. (2003). [Chronic back pain sufferers—striving for the sick role](#). *Social Science and Medicine*, 57(11), 2243-2252
 3. Burnham, J. (2014). [Why sociologists abandoned the sick role concept](#). *History of the Human Sciences*, 27(1), 70-87
- Oct. 4th Class 4: Illness as Soc. Experience and Narrative
1. Kleinman, Arthur (1998) *The Illness Narratives* (Chapter 1). USA: Basic Books (**On Quercus**)
 2. Excerpts from *Wasted* by Mara Hornbacher (On Quercus)
 3. Excerpts from [The Bell Jar](#) by Sylvia Plath
 4. Esme Weijun Wang (2016) [Who gets to be the “Good Schizophrenic”](#). BuzzFeed News.
*TW: readings 2-4 deals with mental health and eating disorders and may be triggering to some students
- Oct. 11th Class 5: Cultural and Medical Pluralism
1. Lock, M., & Kaufert, P. (2001). [Menopause, local biologies, and cultures of aging](#). *American Journal of Human Biology*, 13(4), 494-504
 2. Fadiman, A. (1997) *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (Chapters 3 and 5) (**On Quercus**)
 3. Friedman, L. D., Wear, D., Pachucki, K., & Jones, T. (2014). [Health humanities reader](#) (L. D. Friedman, D. Wear, K. Pachucki, & T. Jones, Eds.). Rutgers University Press. Chapter 24.
- Oct. 18th Class 6: Health Discourse Research (Readings TBA)

- Oct. 25th Class 7: Structural and Political Violence
1. Farmer, Paul (1996) "[On Suffering and Structural Violence: A view from Below.](#)" *Daedalus*. 125(1): 261-283.
 2. Karandinos, G., & Bourgois, P. (2019). [The Structural Violence of Hyperincarceration — A 44-Year-Old Man with Back Pain.](#) *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 380(3), 205–209.
 3. Salas. (2021). [Environmental Racism and Climate Change — Missed Diagnoses.](#) *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 385(11), 967–969.
- Nov. 1st Class 8: Social Determinants of Health I
1. Raphael, Dennis (2004) Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health. Pp. 1-17 In. *Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. **(On Quercus)**
 2. Link & Phelan (2005) Fundamental Sources of Health Inequalities. In: Mechanic, D. (Ed) *Policy challenges in modern health care*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press. **(On Quercus)**
- Nov. 8th Reading Week (no class)**
- Nov. 15th Class 9: Social Determinants of Health II
1. Williams, David R & Michelle Sternthal. (2010). [Understanding Racial-ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions.](#) *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. Vol. 51 Pp 15-28
 2. Bird, C. E., & Rieker, P. P. (1999). [Gender matters: An integrated model for understanding men's and women's health.](#) *Social Science & Medicine*, 48(6), 745-755
 3. Logie, C. (2012) [The case for the world health organization's commission on the social determinants of health to address sexual orientation.](#) *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(7), 1243-6.
- Nov. 22nd Class 10: Embodied Health
1. Gimlin, D. (2007). [Accounting for cosmetic surgery in the USA and Great Britain: A cross-cultural analysis of women's narratives.](#) *Body & Society*, 13(1), 41-60
 2. Andreescu, F. C. (2018). [Opening up bodies for harvest: Embodiment and global capitalism.](#) *Theory & Event*, 21(2), 411-433.
- Nov. 29th Class 11: Health Practices & Interventions
1. Clark, S. L. (2018). [Fitness, fatness and healthism discourse: Girls constructing 'healthy' identities in school.](#) *Gender and Education*, 30(4), 477-493
 2. Firth, J. (2012). [Healthy choices and heavy burdens: race, citizenship and gender in the 'obesity epidemic'.](#) *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(2), 33+

3. Rice, C., Jiménez, K. P., Harrison, E., Robinson, M., Rinaldi, J., LaMarre, A., & Andrew, J. (2020). [Bodies at the Intersections: Refiguring Intersectionality through Queer Women's Complex Embodiments](#). *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 46(1), 177–200.

Dec. 6th

Online review session during class time via Zoom (no readings)