

## Sociology of Urban Health (SOC335H)

Fall 2023 University of Toronto

Course Info: Wed 10:10 AM – 1:00 PM (first class Sept 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023)  
Course website and links for weekly lectures found on Quercus:  
<https://q.utoronto.ca>

Location: Omitted for security reasons

Instructor: Professor Brent Berry, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto  
[brent.berry@utoronto.ca](mailto:brent.berry@utoronto.ca)

Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:00pm & by appointment

Location: 17110 (17<sup>th</sup> floor), 700 University Ave (SW corner of College and Univ Ave)

(I can also talk after class, arrange a phone call or teams meeting, just ask)

TA: Olimpia Bidian [Olimpia.bidian@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:Olimpia.bidian@mail.utoronto.ca)  
Office Hours: Scheduled as needed

### Overview

Sociology of Urban health examines the intersection of health and urbanization. This course investigates how *place and urban social context* affects health and well-being through various social features of the urban landscape and their intersection with social identities. Health and health behaviors arise from a complex web of influences, from individual and household characteristics to institutional, organizational, and environmental contexts. An ecological approach may be fruitful for understanding patterns of health by focusing on the urban context that individuals enter into, influence, and are influenced by. With growing rates of urbanization, it is important to critically examine which features of cities impact individuals' health differentially, and why. To set the context for the course, we first discuss definitions, patterns, and historical to contemporary explanations of urban health in North America. We review historical changes in health (e.g. the epidemiological transition) and urban form (e.g. urbanization and suburbanization, the nature of community, and social life in urban areas). We examine why *place* is relevant to physical and mental health and for whom. We cover literature related to the relevance of everyday settings with a specific focus on individuals' neighborhood of residence. In the latter part of the course we focus on the risks and protections for special populations in urban areas, including the poor, the homeless, racial and ethnic minorities, the young and old, and families with young children. We critically review research on these topics and discuss potential solutions for remedying exposure and vulnerability of these groups to the risks of urban settings.

This course has a third hour of weekly instruction that will be devoted to different topics – skills development, workshops, presentations of discussion groups. Students will complete an individual exercise as well as work in small groups to complete a research project. In addition to submitting a final group paper, all groups will develop a video presentation of their work.

**Prerequisites:** The prerequisites to take this course is SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1 and two of

the following courses: SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. Students without these prerequisites will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

### **Evaluation**

Final marks will be based on the following—

- Weekly reaction/response papers 20%
- Individual exercise (due Oct 25<sup>th</sup>) 20%
- Group Project:
  - Paper (due Nov 29th) 30%
  - video presentation (due Dec 6<sup>th</sup>) 15%
- Participation and attendance 15%

### **Readings and Lectures**

The readings can be downloaded from the class web page. Due to copyright restrictions, you must login to access them. Most of the readings are in PDF format. Readings listed as “supplemental” or “further reading” are optional, meaning they are not required. The instructor will sometimes post slides or discussion guide the evening before class. They are provided to benefit in-class note taking. Besides the posted lecture slides, we will incorporate a range of audiovisual materials. It is important to complete all required readings and attend class.

### **Email and the Course Webpage**

In my courses, email and the ability to access the course webpage is important. I will use e-mail for reminders, clarifications, last-minute notifications, etc. Feel free to contact me via e-mail with questions, requests or problems that were not --or could not be-- addressed in class.

### **Missing Deadlines/Submitting Late Work**

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN).

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.

Late work will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

### **The University’s plagiarism detection tool**

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

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 someone 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.

Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through Ouriginal will not be assessed unless the student instead provides, along with their work, 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.

### ***Accessibility Needs***

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> .

### **Feedback on Ideas and Writing**

The instructor is willing to discuss your ideas and writing during online office hours, or through email within limits. However, more help can be provided to students who ask early. All too often, papers are one or two drafts short of excellence when time expires. We also encourage you to also use the university's writing resources.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **PART 1. Definitions, Patterns, and Explanations of Urban Health**

**NOTE: Assigned readings are numbered below.**

#### **Sept 13th– Introductory Class**

Discuss course and brief overview of mutual expectations and material

#### **Sept 20<sup>th</sup> -- Sociology and Urban Health**

- (1) Michael P. Kelly & Judith Green. 2019. What can sociology offer urban public health?, *Critical Public Health*, 29:5, 517-521, DOI: 10.1080/09581596.2019.1654193
- (2) Galea, Sandro and David Vlahov. 2005. “Urban Health: Populations, Methods and Practice.” Pp. 1-16 in S. Galea and D. Vlahov (eds.) *Handbook of Urban Health: Populations, Methods and Practice*. New York: Springer.

Optional Readings:

Vlahov D, Gibble E, Freudenberg N, Galea S. 2004. Cities and health: history, approaches, and key questions. *Acad Med.* 2004 Dec;79(12):1133-8.

Video (time-permitting): *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* 1988 (55 min)

This classic engaging and informative tour of the urban landscape explores how it can be made more hospitable for those who live in it. This film also shows what can be learned through systematic observation of people in urban environments.

### **Sept 27<sup>th</sup> -- How is Urban Health Patterned? Some Examples**

- (3) James, et al 2007. Avoidable mortality by neighbourhood income in Canada: 25 years after the establishment of universal health insurance. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 61(4):287-296
- (4) Hulchanski, David J. 2010. "The Three Cities within Toronto: Income polarization among Toronto's neighbourhoods, 1970-2005." *Centre for Urban & Community Studies Research Bulletin* 41, December 2007, 12 pages.

#### Optional Readings:

For a more extensive related analysis, see this report —

Trends in mortality by neighbourhood income in urban Canada from 1971 to 1996. *Statistics Canada Report, Catalogue 82-003. Supplement to Health Reports, Vol 13, 2002*

Canadian Institute for Health Information, *Reducing Gaps in Health: A Focus on Socio-Economic Status in Urban Canada* (Ottawa, Ont.: CIHI, 2008).

Manuel DG, Perez R, Sanmartin C, Taljaard M, Hennessy D, Wilson K, et al. (2016) Measuring Burden of Unhealthy Behaviours Using a Multivariable Predictive Approach: Life Expectancy Lost in Canada Attributable to Smoking, Alcohol, Physical Inactivity, and Diet. *PLoS Med* 13(8):e1002082. doi:10.1371/journal.pmed.1002082

### **Oct 4<sup>th</sup> -- Historical Sweep to the Present -- The Health Climacteric: From Material Scarcity to Social Disadvantage**

- (5) de Leeuw EJ, 2017, 'Cities and Health from the Neolithic to the Anthropocene', in Simos J; de Leeuw E (ed.), *Healthy Cities: The Theory, Policy, and Practice of Value-Based Urban Planning*, Springer, pp. 3 - 30, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-6694-3\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-6694-3_1)
- (6) Wilkinson, Richard G. 1994. "The Epidemiological Transition: From Material Scarcity to Social Disadvantage?" *Daedalus* 123(4): 61-77.

#### Optional Readings:

Frank, John W. and Fraser Mustard. 1994. "The Determinants of Health from a Historical Perspective." *Daedalus* 123(4): 1-19.

### **Oct 11<sup>th</sup> -- Sociological and Epidemiological Explanations of Health in the Urban Context**

- (7) Fitzpatrick, Kevin M. and Mark LaGory. 2003. "Placing 'Health' in an Urban Sociology: Cities as Mosaics of Risk and Protection." *City and Community* 2(1):33-46.

- (8) Gehlert S, Sohmer D, Sacks T, Mininger C, McClintock M, Olopade O. Targeting health disparities: a model linking upstream determinants to downstream interventions. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2008;27(2):339–349. doi:10.1377/hlthaff.27.2.339

Optional Readings:

Fitzgerald, D., Rose, N., Singh, I., (2016), 'Revitalizing sociology: Urban life and mental illness between history and the present', *British Journal of Sociology*

Kaplan, G.A. 2007 Health inequalities and the welfare state: perspectives from social epidemiology. *Norsk epidemiology* 17(1): 9-20

**Oct 18<sup>th</sup> -- Social Context and Urban Health: Neighbourhood Disadvantage, Risks, and Inequality**

- (9) Pabayo R, et al. 2016. Income inequality within urban settings and depressive symptoms among adolescents. *J Epidemiol Community Health* 2016;70:997–1003. doi:10.1136/jech-2015-206613
- (10) Rivera Navarro J, et al. Understanding Urban Health Inequalities: Methods and Design of the Heart Health Hoods Qualitative Project. *Gac Sanit*. 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gaceta.2018.07.010>
- (11) Hill, Terrence D. and David Maimon. 2013. “Neighborhood Context and Mental Health.” Pp. 479–501 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, edited by C. S. Aneshensel, J. C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman. New York: Springer.

Video: Robert J Sampson ”Neighborhood Effects and the Contemporary City”; 16 minutes  
[https://youtu.be/smuxHR\\_zc2Q](https://youtu.be/smuxHR_zc2Q)

Optional Readings:

- Ross, Catherine E., John Mirowsky, and Shana Pribesh. 2001. “Powerlessness and the Amplification of Threat: Neighborhood Disadvantage, Disorder, and Mistrust.” *American Sociological Review* 66:568-91
- Sampson, Robert J. and J. D. Morenoff, and Thomas Gannon-Rowley. 2002. “Assessing ‘Neighborhood Effects’: Social Processes and New Directions in Research.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 28:443-78.
- Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2009. “Neighborhood Disorder, Subjective Alienation, and Distress.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 50:49-64.
- Curry et al 2008 Pathways to depression impact of neighborhood violent crime on inner city residents in Baltimore. *Social Science and Medicine*. nihms-55719
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Report # rwjf70452 “Violence, social disadvantage and health”

**Oct 25<sup>th</sup> -- Healthy Cities Approach: Perspectives, Methods, Measurement**

**Exercise due by today**

Readings for today:

- (12) Pederson A., Rootman I. (2017) From Health Care to the Promotion of Health: Establishing the Conditions for Healthy Communities in Canada. In: de Leeuw E., Simos J. (eds) *Healthy Cities – The Theory, Policy, and Practice of Value-Based Urban Health Planning* Springer New York, NY
- (13) Hancock, T. 2017 “Healthy Cities emerge: Toronto – Ottawa – Copenhagen” In De Leeuw, Evelyne and Simos, Jean *Healthy Cities – The Theory, Policy, and Practice of Value-Based Urban Health Planning*. Springer
- (14) Leeuw-Green 2017 “The Logic Of Method For Evaluating Healthy Cities” In De Leeuw, Evelyne and Simos, Jean *Healthy Cities – The Theory, Policy, and Practice of Value-Based Urban Health Planning*. Springer [Skim]

Optional Readings:

Promoting Health in the Urban Context WHO Healthy Cities Papers Num 1 E87743

Oickle Clement 2019 Glossary of health equity concepts for public health action in the Canadian context

Cappon, Daniel. 1989. Indicators for a Healthy City.

**PART 2. Special Topics and Populations in the Sociology of Urban Health**

**Nov 1<sup>st</sup> -- Healthiness of Green Spaces, Walkability, Physical Design of the City**

Readings for Today:

- (15) Steinbach R, Green J, Datta J, et al. (2011) Cycling and the city: A case study of how gendered, ethnic and class identities can shape healthy transport choices. *Social Science & Medicine* 72(7): 1123–1130.
- (16) Cole HVS, Triguero-Mas M, Connolly JJT, Anguelovski I. Determining the health benefits of green space: Does gentrification matter? *Health and Place* 2019; 57: 1-11.
- (17) Gascon M; Triguero-Mas M; Martínez D; et al. Residential green spaces and mortality: a systematic review. *Environ Int.* 2016; 86: 60-67.

Optional Readings:

- Galea S. Ahern J, Rudenstine S, Wallace Z, Vlahov D. 2005 Urban built environment and depression: a multilevel analysis. *J. Epid and Community Health.* 59(10):822-7.
- Anguelovski I, Cole H, Connolly J, Triguero-Mas M. Do green neighbourhoods promote urban health justice? *Lancet Public Health* 2018; Published:June, 2018 doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S24682667\(18\)30096-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S24682667(18)30096-3).
- Cole HVS, Garcia Lamarca M, Connolly JJT, et al Are green cities healthy and equitable? Unpacking the relationship between health, green space and gentrification *J Epidemiol Community Health* Published Online First: 19 August 2017. doi: 10.1136/jech-2017-209201
- Van den Berg M, Van Kamp I, Ruijsbroek A, Triguero-Mas M, Gidlow C, Nieuwenhuijsen MJ, Grazuleviciene R, Van Mechelen W, Kruize H, Maas J. Do physical activity, social cohesion, and loneliness mediate the association between time spent visiting green space and mental health?. *Environment and Behaviour* 2019; First Published November 14, 2017 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916517738563>.
- Saelens, B.E., Sallis, J.F., Black, J., & Chen, D. 2003. “Neighborhood-based differences in physical

- activity: An environment scale evaluation.” *American Journal of Public Health*, 93, 1552-1558.
- Lopez, R. P., & Hynes, H. P. (2006). Obesity, physical activity, and the urban environment: Public health research needs. *Environmental Health*, 5, pp. 25. 1476-069X-5-25
- Guthman, J. Too much food and too little sidewalk? Problematizing the obesogenic environment thesis. *Environ. Plan. A* 2013, 45, 142–158.
- Berry, Brent. 2007 “Disparities in Leisure Time Inactivity: Trends and Explanations” *Sociological Perspectives* 50(2) Summer: 166-199.

### **Nov 8<sup>th</sup> is Reading Week (no class)**

### **Nov 15<sup>th</sup> -- Housing, Homelessness, and Health**

#### Readings for today:

- (18) Frankish, C. J., Hwang, S. W., & Quantz, D. (2009). The relationship between homelessness and health: An overview of research in Canada. In J. D. Hulchanski, P. Campsie, S. Chua, S. W. Hwang, and & Paradis (Eds.), *Finding Home: Policy options for addressing homelessness in Canada* (e-book), Chapter 2.1. Toronto: Cities Centre, University of Toronto.  
[www.homelesshub.ca/FindingHome](http://www.homelesshub.ca/FindingHome)
- (19) Jacobs, D. E. 2011. Environmental health disparities in housing. *American Journal of Public Health* 101(Suppl. 1):S115-S122.

#### Optional Readings:

- Berry, Brent. 2014. “Sociology of Housing”. In *Urban Canada: Sociological Perspectives*, Third Edition, edited by Harry H. Hiller. Oxford University Press.
- Hwang, Stephen W. 2001. “Homelessness and Health.” *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 164(1): 229-33.
- O’Grady, Bill and Stephen Gaetz. 2004. “Homelessness, Gender and Subsistence: The Case of Toronto Street Youth.” *Journal of Youth Studies* 7(4): 397-416
- Pollack, C. E., Griffin, B. A., & Lynch, J. (2010). Housing affordability and health among homeowners and renters. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 39(6), 515-521.
- Coley, R. L., Leventhal, T., Lynch, A. D., & Kull, M. (2013). Relations between housing characteristics and the well-being of low-income children and adolescents. *Developmental Psychology*, 49(9), 1775-1789.

Video: *Sidewalk (time-permitting)*

### **Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>-- The Health of Urban Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities**

#### Readings for today:

- (20) Wilson K, Rosenberg M.W., Abonyi S. 2010. Aboriginal peoples, health and healing approaches: the effects of age and place on health. *Social Science and Medicine* 72(3) 355-64
- (21) Noh, Samuel and William R. Avison. 1996. “Asian Immigrants and the Stress Process: A Study of

Koreans in Canada.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 37:192-206.

- (22) Khan AM, Urquia M, Kornas K, Henry D, Cheng SY, Bornbaum C, Rosella LC. 2017. Socioeconomic gradients in all-cause, premature and avoidable mortality using among immigrants and long-term residents using linked deaths records in Ontario, Canada. *J Epidemiol Community Health*. 71:625-32.

Optional Readings:

Boardman, Jason D., Jarron M. Saint Onge, Richard G. Rogers, and Justin T. Denney. (2005). "Race differentials in Obesity: The Impact of Place." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 46(3):229-43.

Doherty, Alison. 2007. "Sport and Physical Recreation in the Settlement of Immigrant Youth." *Leisure/Loisir* 31 (1) (January 1): 27–55.

Montazer, Shirin and Blair Wheaton. 2011. "The Impact of Generation and Country of Origin on the Mental Health of Immigrant Children: New Models for Understanding Adjustment across Generations." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52: 23-42.

Suto, Melinda J. 2013. "Leisure Participation and Well-being of Immigrant Women in Canada" *Journal of Occupational Science*, 20:1, 48-61

Trouille, David. 2013. "Neighborhood Outsiders, Field Insiders: Latino Immigrant Men and the Control of Public Space." *Qualitative Sociology* 36 (1) (March 1): 1–22.

Video (time permitting)

**Nov 29<sup>th</sup> -- Healthy Cities for Youth, Older Adults, and Families**

**Group Project Final Papers Due today**

(23) Aneshensel, CS, Sucoff CA. 1996. "The neighborhood context of adolescent mental health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 37:293-310.

(24) Schieman, Scott, Len Pearlin, and Stephen C. Meersman. 2006. "Neighborhood Disadvantage and Anger among Older Adults: Social Comparisons as Effect Modifiers." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 47(2): 156-172.

(25) Swisher, Raymond, Steven Sweet, and Phyllis Moen, P. 2004. "The Family-Friendly Community and its Life Course Fit for Dual-Earner Couples." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66: 281-92.

Optional Readings:

Morrow 2003 No ball games: children's views of their urban environments

Gusmano Rodwin 2010 urban aging social isolation and emergency preparedness

Video: Aging in Place (12 min)

## December 6<sup>th</sup>– The Urban Foodscape and Food Environment

### Group Project Presentation Due today

#### Readings for today:

- (26) Wakefield, Sarah, et al. 2007. “Growing Urban Health: Community Gardening in South-East Toronto.” *Health Promotion International* 22(2): 92-101.
- (27) Joassart-Marcelli, P.; Rossiter, J.; Bosco, F. Ethnic markets and community food security in an urban ‘food desert’. *Environ. Plan. A* 2017, 49, 1642–1663.
- (28) Kirkpatrick, S. I., & Tarasuk, V. (2011). Housing circumstances are associated with household food access among low- income urban families. *Journal of Urban Health*, 88(2), 284-96

#### Optional Readings:

Cummins, S.; Petticrew, M.; Higgins, C.; Findlay, A.; Sparks, L. Large-scale food retailing as an intervention for diet and health: Quasi-experimental evaluation of a natural experiment. *J. Epidemiol. Commun. Health* 2005, 59, 1035–1040.

Pothukuchi and Kaufman. 1999. “Placing the food system on the urban agenda: The role of municipal institutions in food systems planning.” *Agriculture and Human Values* 16(2) 213-224 (12).

French, SA, M Story, and RW Jeffery. 2001. “Environmental Influences on Eating and physical activity,” *Annu. Rev. Public Health* 22:309–35

“A Failed Food System in India Prompts an Intense Review” - The New York Times (8 June 2012)

*Video: The Obesity Epidemic (5 min)*

### **Other Course Resources**

Maps: We will examine maps from two websites in class--

- Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles: <http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/neighbourhoods.htm>:
- Toronto Community Health Profiles: <http://www.torontohealthprofiles.ca/>

Films: I show a number of short films that may include but not be limited to the following--

- Flemingdon Park: The global village – 2002, audiovisual library (Media commons, 3rd floor, Robarts library), videocassette #00672, 46 minutes
- The Obesity Epidemic. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[https://youtu.be/vCORDI4bqDE?list=PLWpxAkD-s7P4p\\_ZqBhiHLkZI8kH4OXLim](https://youtu.be/vCORDI4bqDE?list=PLWpxAkD-s7P4p_ZqBhiHLkZI8kH4OXLim)
- How more Americans are “Aging in Place” <https://youtu.be/5VqgSkN14JE>

- Steven Johnson tours the “Ghost Map” [about the cholera outbreak in 1854 London and the impact it had on science, cities and modern society] (10 minutes)  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/steven\\_johnson\\_tours\\_the\\_ghost\\_map.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/steven_johnson_tours_the_ghost_map.html)
- Carolyn Steel on “How food shapes our cities” (15 minutes)  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/carolyn\\_steel\\_how\\_food\\_shapes\\_our\\_cities.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/carolyn_steel_how_food_shapes_our_cities.html)
- Ellen Dunham-Jones on “Retrofitting suburbia” (19 minutes)  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/ellen\\_dunham\\_jones\\_retrofitting\\_suburbia.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ellen_dunham_jones_retrofitting_suburbia.html)