Sociology of Urban Health (SOC335H)

Fall 2023 University of Toronto

Course Info: Wed 10:10 AM – 1:00 PM (first class Sept 13th, 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
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:00pm & by appointment
Location: 17110 (17th 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
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 25th) 20%
- Group Project:
  - Paper (due Nov 29th) 30%
  - Video presentation (due Dec 6th) 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 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 20th -- Sociology and Urban Health**


**Optional Readings:**

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 27th -- How is Urban Health Patterned? Some Examples

Optional Readings:
For a more extensive related analysis, see this report —
Canadian Institute for Health Information, Reducing Gaps in Health: A Focus on Socio-Economic Status in Urban Canada (Ottawa, Ont.: CIHI, 2008).


Oct 4th -- Historical Sweep to the Present -- The Health Climacteric: From Material Scarcity to Social Disadvantage


Optional Readings:

Oct 11th -- Sociological and Epidemiological Explanations of Health in the Urban Context

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


Oct 18th -- Social Context and Urban Health: Neighbourhood Disadvantage, Risks, and Inequality


Video: Robert J Sampson ”Neighborhood Effects and the Contemporary City”; 16 minutes https://youtu.be/smuxHR_zc2Q

Optional Readings:


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 Woods Johnson Foundation Report # rwjf70452 “Violence, social disadvantage and health”

Oct 25th -- Healthy Cities Approach: Perspectives, Methods, Measurement

Exercise due by today

Readings for today:

(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


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

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

Nov 1st -- Healthiness of Green Spaces, Walkability, Physical Design of the City

Readings for Today:


Optional Readings:


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


Nov 8th is Reading Week (no class)

Nov 15th -- Housing, Homelessness, and Health

Readings for today:

www.homelesshub.ca/FindingHome


Optional Readings:


Video: Sidewalk (time-permitting)

Nov 22nd-- The Health of Urban Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities

Readings for today:


Optional Readings:


Video (time permitting)

**Nov 29th — Healthy Cities for Youth, Older Adults, and Families**

**Group Project Final Papers Due today**


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 6th– The Urban Foodscape and Food Environment

Group Project Presentation Due today

Readings for today:


Optional Readings:


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).


“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](http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/neighbourhoods.htm)
- Toronto Community Health Profiles: [http://www.torontohealthprofiles.ca/](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/vCORDl4bqDE?list=PLWpxAkD-s7P4p_ZqBhiHLkZI8kH4OXLim](https://youtu.be/vCORDl4bqDE?list=PLWpxAkD-s7P4p_ZqBhiHLkZI8kH4OXLim)
- How more Americans are “Aging in Place” [https://youtu.be/5VqgSkN14JE](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
• 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
• Ellen Dunham-Jones on “Retrofitting suburbia” (19 minutes)
  http://www.ted.com/talks/ellen_dunham_jones_retrofitting_suburbia.html