

**SOC352H1S – New Topics in Sociology:
Ethnoracial Inequality in Health**

Summer 2023

Department of Sociology

Classroom Location: Online, Synchronous via Zoom

Class Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:10pm-3pmEST

Professor: Harvey L. Nicholson Jr.

Email: Harvey.nicholsonjr@utoronto.ca

Office hours: By appointment via Zoom

Teaching assistant(s): TBA

Email: TBA

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Course overview: There are significant ethnoracial health disparities in many countries, including Canada and the United States. Studies have routinely documented that non-White populations often experience worse health outcomes compared to their White counterparts. Why is this the case? Researchers across numerous fields, including sociology, continue to investigate and debate about the causes of ethnoracial disparities in health. This course does not address the health concerns of specific ethnoracial groups. Rather, it provides a broad overview of ethnoracial disparities in health, emphasizing how we should think about, understand, and address these ongoing disparities. This class will challenge students to think critically about ethnoracial disparities in health and the forces that drive them. We will cover numerous topics related to the study of ethnoracial disparities in health, including the conceptualization and use of race and ethnicity in health disparities research; the patterns of ethnoracial disparities in health; and the explanations for ethnoracial disparities in health. More specifically, we will emphasize the influence of socioeconomic status, health care access and quality, neighborhood conditions, environmental exposures, immigration and culture, interactions with the healthcare system, psychosocial mechanisms and resources, as well as racism and discrimination. We will use concepts taken from sociology and other fields that examine ethnoracial disparities in health.

Course objectives: By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Properly conceptualize and apply race/ethnicity to examine ethnoracial disparities in health.
- Define, measure, and identify ethnoracial disparities in health.
- Critique commonly held beliefs about the reasons for ethnoracial disparities in health.
- Discuss the sources of ethnoracial disparities in health, such as racism, discrimination, neighborhood conditions, socioeconomic status, unequal interactions with the health care system, and more.
- Think critically about how and why ethnoracial disparities in health persist.
- Discuss effective solutions toward addressing ethnoracial disparities.

Prerequisites: You are required to take the following courses before taking this class: SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1 and 1.0 credit from SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. Students discovered to have not met these requirements will be removed from the class.

Reading materials: There is no textbook required for this course. You will be assigned peer-reviewed academic articles to read before coming to each class. All readings are available on Quercus via the Library Reading List. Additional readings are available upon request.

Course communication: For questions about course grades or assignments, or for other course-related concerns, please contact the TA. If the TA determines they are unable to respond to your inquiry, they will contact Professor Nicholson for further clarification. Please allow the Professor and TA a total of 24-48 hours during regular workdays (9am-5pm, Monday-Friday) to respond. If we do not respond to you by then, you may send a follow-up email. All emails must contain proper email etiquette and "SOC352H1S – Ethnoracial Inequality in Health" in the subject line.

Assessments

Tests: There will be two written tests throughout the term. Each test will take place during regular class hours. The first test will be based on any topics covered in the readings, lectures, and/or other course related materials from July 4th-July 20th. This test must be written during the final hour of the scheduled class period (see below for test date). The second test is a longer version of the first test. This test will be based on any topics covered in the readings, lectures, and/or other course related materials from July 20th-August 10th. This test must be written during the final two hours of the scheduled class period (see below for test date).

For each test, you must select and respond to ONE of several essay prompts that appear on the test. The first test response must be at least 250 words (maximum 500) in length (excluding title page, etc.). The second test response must be at least 500 words (maximum 1000) in length (excluding title page, etc.). You are expected to write—**in your own words**—responses that clearly, accurately, and fully answers the question. Your responses should not be surface level; instead, they must clearly demonstrate your ability to critically engage with the question in a sophisticated, accurate, and intelligent manner. You will be permitted to consult with your notes and other course materials (e.g., readings) for each test. You **MUST NOT** consult with any other persons or sources while taking the tests. Each test will be accessible via Quercus during regular class hours (see Quercus for scheduled open and close dates/times for each test). Fully completed responses must be submitted to Quercus before the test's scheduled close date. Absolutely **NO** extensions will be granted. It is your own responsibility to make sure your tests are submitted on time! Emailed tests will **NOT** be accepted! All responses must be double-spaced, 12-point font, and Times New Roman font. All test answers will be submitted to Ouriginal.

Research paper: Using evidence based in Canada or the United States, you must write an original research paper on a topic relevant to ethnoracial disparities in health. You must focus your topic on one of the following course themes:

- Use of Race and Ethnicity in Health Research
- Definitional, Measurement, and Other Issues in Research on Ethnoracial Disparities in Health
- Patterns of Disparities
- Frameworks for Understanding Ethnoracial Disparities in Health
- Racism and Discrimination
- Immigration and Culture
- Neighborhoods, Place, and the Environment
- Socioeconomic Status
- Psychosocial Mechanisms and Resources
- Patients, Providers, and the Healthcare System

Your research paper will consist of three stages: (1) *research topic*, (2), *the initial draft*, and (3) *the final paper*. Each assignment will be graded separately. All papers must be submitted on Quercus. All papers will be submitted to Ouriginal. Additional details on the research paper assignments will be posted on Quercus and announced during class.

Participation: You are expected to participate by making meaningful contributions to our class discussions. You are not being evaluated on the number of times you participate. What matters is the quality of your contribution. You may raise your hand and/or use the chat to demonstrate your engagement. Your participation in any group discussions will also count toward your participation grade. Please remember that you must be considerate of your classmates and allow them a chance to engage as well. Participation will be worth 1 point each class. You will not receive credit toward participation for classes you do not attend.

Reflections: You will write two reflections during the term. The first will occur at the beginning of the term, and the second will take place at the end of the term. In your own words (250 minimum, 500 maximum, excluding title page, name, etc.), the first reflection will require you to address ONE of the following questions:

- What do you think race and ethnicity have to do with health?
- What do you think is the main reason for racial and ethnic disparities in health?

The second (same word requirements) will require you to reflect on how and why your response to the first reflection has changed (or not changed). No references are required for reflections, and there are no “right” or “wrong” responses. However, you are being evaluated on your ability to fully and intellectually engage with these questions in a reflective manner. Reflections should explore your own thinking and feelings and express why you hold certain beliefs. They should also consider how your own assumptions and life experiences may influence your way of thinking about these issues. Reflections will be graded on a straightforward pass/fail basis. Reflections must be posted to the discussion board on Quercus. You are encouraged to read and respond to reflections written by your peers.

Grade breakdown and due dates

Assessments	Percentage of Grade	Due Dates
Reflections	3%	July 6 th , August 9 th
Research Paper Topic	6%	July 11 th
Participation	6%	Ongoing
Test #1	15%	July 20 th
Initial Draft of Research Paper	20%	July 21 st
Test #2	25%	August 10 th
Final Research Paper	25%	August 11 th
Total	100%	

Course policies and procedures

Missed test & assignments

Students who miss scheduled tests/assessments or are late in submitting an assignment by the scheduled due date for medical reasons, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). Students who miss scheduled tests/assessments 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. Missing a test/assessment for any other reason will result in an automatic zero. There will be no extra credit or alternative assignments offered in this course.

Lecture notes policy

Unless students provide proper documentation detailing that they require access to the lecture notes, they will not be shared with students under any circumstances. You are required to come to class and actively take notes during the lectures.

Class recording policy

Students are not permitted to record any of the online lectures. Recordings of the class will not be made available for students who are unable to attend the live session held during regular class hours. Thus, even if you are not able to attend the live session, you will be unable to receive a recorded version of the class since it will not be recorded. Course videos and materials belong to your instructor, the University, and/or other sources depending on the specific factors of each situation and are protected by copyright. Do not download, copy, or share any course or student materials or videos without the explicit permission of the Professor.

General classroom behavioral policies

- Unless stated by the Professor, you must not engage in conversations with your peers while instruction is in progress.
- Phones must be silenced; other electronic devices must be turned off; laptops, iPad, and other notetaking devices are permitted.
- You must be respectful of and courteous toward the Professor and the TA. You can expect the same from us. We will not tolerate any form of disrespectful or condescending behaviors or comments.

- You must be respectful of and courteous toward your peers. Once again, we will not tolerate any form of disrespectful or condescending behaviors or comments.
- You must be respectful of the course content; even if you disagree with particular concepts, understand that you are here to learn new or different ideas that may challenge your pre-existing beliefs.
- Unless stated by the Professor, you are not permitted to leave early; we will start and end on time.

Students found in repeat violation of these rules may be asked to leave the classroom and/or face other appropriate sanctions.

Class structure

The first half of class will generally be lecture-based. Lectures will be mostly instructional but will still require student participation. The second half of class will be reserved for video screenings, in-class tests, workshops, group-based discussions, and/or further time for questions and answers. There will be a 15-minute break in-between the first and second half of class. You are expected to come to class having read the required readings and be able to discuss them in a constructive manner.

Academic integrity

Students must follow the University of Toronto's principles of academic integrity. Absolutely no plagiarism will be tolerated in this course.

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>

<https://teaching.utoronto.ca/resources/plagiarism-detection/>

“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>).”

Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through Ouriginal will not be assessed unless a 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.

Generative artificial intelligence

I understand that some students may make use of technology, including generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, while taking this course. **However, the use generative AI intelligence tools to aid in the completion of tests is strictly prohibited in this course.** I also understand that while it is not my preference for students do to so, they may ultimately decide to use generative AI tools as they work through their research paper; however, this use must be clearly documented in an appendix of the paper. The

documentation should include what tool(s) were used, how they were used, and how the results from the AI were incorporated into the submitted work. While students may use AI tools for their research paper, including generative AI, they are ultimately accountable for the work they submit. The work you submit **MUST BE YOUR OWN WORDS**, or otherwise properly cited. Therefore, I highly recommend that if students choose to use AI technologies for their research paper that they do so with extreme caution and integrity. Any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool must be cited appropriately. Many organizations that publish standard citation formats are now providing information on citing generative AI (e.g., MLA: <https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>).

Accessibility services

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

Writing support

If you require writing support, I encourage you to reach out to the writing center in your college:
<https://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres>

Course schedule/reading list

Week 1

July 4th

Syllabus Review and Introduction

Recommended reading:

Thomas, S. B. (2001). The color line: race matters in the elimination of health disparities. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(7), 1046.

LaVeist, T. A. (1996). Why we should continue to study race... but do a better job: an essay on race, racism and health. *Ethnicity & disease*, 6(1/2), 21-29.

July 6th

Conceptualizing and Applying Race and Ethnicity in Health Research

Required reading:

Lee, C. (2009). "Race" and "ethnicity" in biomedical research: how do scientists construct and explain differences in health?. *Social science & medicine*, 68(6), 1183-1190.

Corbie-Smith, G., Henderson, G., Blumenthal, C., Dorrance, J., & Estroff, S. (2008). Conceptualizing race in research. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 100(10), 1235-1243.

August 3rd

Socioeconomic Status

Required reading:

Williams, D. R., Mohammed, S. A., Leavell, J., & Collins, C. (2010). Race, socioeconomic status, and health: complexities, ongoing challenges, and research opportunities. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1186(1), 69-101.

Williams, D. R., Priest, N., & Anderson, N. B. (2016). Understanding associations among race, socioeconomic status, and health: Patterns and prospects. *Health psychology*, 35(4), 407

Week 6

August 8th

Patients, Providers, and the Healthcare System

Required reading:

Gaskin, D. J., Spencer, C. S., Richard, P., Anderson, G. F., Powe, N. R., & LaVeist, T. A. (2008). Do hospitals provide lower-quality care to minorities than to whites?. *Health affairs*, 27(2), 518-527.

LaVeist, T. A., & Nuru-Jeter, A. (2002). Is doctor-patient race concordance associated with greater satisfaction with care?. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 296-306.

Final Term Test Review

August 10th

Effectively Addressing Ethnoracial Disparities in Health

Required reading:

None

*****At any point during the term, the Professor reserves the right to make modifications to this syllabus if they deem it to be in the best interest of the delivery/structure of this course. It is entirely your responsibility to keep up with any changes to this course.*****