

University of Toronto – Department of Sociology  
**SOC 363H1F: Sociology of Mental Health & Mental Disorders**  
**Wednesdays 9:10-11:00am**  
**Fall 2023**

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Office hours: Mondays 1-2pm via Zoom (or by appointment)  
Course website: Access via U of T Quercus ([q.utoronto.ca](http://q.utoronto.ca))  
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### **Course Description**

This course provides an overview of the link between social inequality and inequality in distress, focusing on differences in mental health across social groups and the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences. Sociological approaches to mental health and mental disorders reveal how inequitable social conditions have important consequences on mental and emotional well-being. In the first half of the course, we will examine key conceptual issues and theoretical models in the field, as well as the impact of coping resources in helping individuals negotiate the experience of mental stress, distress and disorder. In the second half of the course, we will explore patterns in the social distribution of mental health, paying special consideration to how mental health varies across different axes of inequality, including: race, gender and sexuality. We will also evaluate the impact of neighbourhood, as a social context influencing exposure and vulnerability to stress and mental health consequences. Lastly, we will review efforts to carry out social control of mental disorders via chemical restraints.

### **Goals & Learning Outcomes**

1. Acquire knowledge of relevant sociological theories and apply these to examine the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences
2. Interrogate how social inequality shapes the social distribution of mental health/ disorders
3. Engage in critical thinking and apply course and lecture materials to develop a sociological analysis of current issues in the sociology of mental health and mental disorders
4. Critically examine the social construction of mental health in the media and its implications for how we approach mental health interventions.

### **Course Format**

This is an in-person class. The format will be a combination of lecture and active learning and participation activities. As such, students are expected to come to class with the readings completed, prepared to ask and answer questions and engage in group-work based on assigned material. Classes may also include the presentation of material above and beyond that covered in the assigned readings (video clips, theory, empirical data, etc.). Class discussion and debate are strongly encouraged, providing they follow the expectations set out in the class etiquette section of the syllabus.

**Prerequisites:** The prerequisite to take this course is 1 sociology FCE at the 200+ level. Please note, students without this prerequisite will be removed any time they are discovered and without notice. Students who have already complete SOC334H1 are not permitted to take this course. The class prerequisites and exclusions are firm and cannot be waived.

## ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATIONS

**1 Class Participation:** Students will earn 10% of the final grade for attendance and participation in in-class activities. Instruction will be given in-class. Students should come to class having done the assigned readings so as to be prepared to complete the participation activities.

**2 Reading Response:** Students will demonstrate understanding of, and critical engagement with, the readings by preparing responses to assigned readings from classes 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, or 11. Assignment of reading response weeks will take place week 1. Responses can presented as: a written memo (no more than 3 pages double spaced) or a video response (no more than 3 minutes long). Each reading response is worth 10% of the final grade. Responses must be posted to the discussion board on Quercus (emailed submissions will not be accepted) by Wednesday midnight the week of the corresponding class. N.B. submitting a response does not guarantee a passing mark. A failing mark might be given if the response is incomplete or shows little evidence of critical engagement with the material. Full details on grading are provided in the Reading Response Instruction Sheet posted on Quercus.

**3 Reading Response Feedback:** Students will demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the readings and peers' perspectives by providing constructive comments on each other' responses. Responses must follow the [RISE Model for Peer-to-Peer Feedback](#). Feedback must be developed for 2 peer reading responses, each worth 5% of the final grade, and must be posted to the discussion board within 1 week of the original reading response being published. N.B. submitting feedback does not guarantee a passing mark. A failing mark might be given if the response does not follow the RISE Model or shows little evidence of critical engagement with the material. Full details on grading are provided in the Reading Response Feedback Instruction Sheet posted on Quercus.

**4 Research Project:** Students will work in groups to select a topic relevant to the sociology of mental health or stress process model, and develop a proposal for a 1 hour learning module on their chosen topic. The proposal must include: 1) a justification of the sociological relevance of the learning module, 2) a literature review, 3) an infographic or resource sheet with key terminology, concepts and/or findings, 4) a recommended audiovisual or multi-modal resource to engage learners to think critically about the topic as "pre-learning", 5) an overview of proposed activities for the 1 hour learning module and accompanying PPT.

- *Topic Proposal & Justification*—Must be uploaded for approval by October 4<sup>th</sup>.
- *Final Learning Module Proposals*—Must be uploaded for grading by November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

All assignments must be submitted to Quercus (emailed assignments will not be accepted). Detailed instructions and grading instructions will be posted to Quercus.

**5 Tests:** Students will write 2 non-cumulative tests to assess their grasp of class materials. These tests will be multiple choice and cover both assigned readings and lecture materials. Each tests is worth 20% of the final grade.

#### GRADING SUMMARY

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
In-Class Participation	10 points	Ongoing
Reading Response	10 points	Ongoing
2 Reading Response Feedback (5% each)	10 points	Ongoing
Test 1	20 points	Oct. 18th
Learning Module Proposal	30 points	Nov. 22nd
Test 2	20 points	Dec. 6th
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 points</b>	

#### 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 Quercus Messaging (not Outlook).**
- All online communication must include the course code (i.e., SOC363) 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/Tests

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.

I understand students may experience difficulties in completing coursework. My priority is on you, your wellbeing and your learning *as people*, and in supporting your mastery on the material and overall success in the class. 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 recommend 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.

- Marked participation activities will take place weekly throughout the semester. Students can miss no more than 3 weeks (excluding workshops weeks) to receive full participation marks
- Students who miss the Test writing time due to illness or emergency/unavoidable circumstances must contact the instructor or TA within 24 hours to schedule a make-up.

### 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.

### Food Insecurity Support

Students who are experiencing food insecurity are encouraged to access either [The University of Toronto Student Union \(UTSU\) Food Bank](#) or [The Toronto Food Bank and Community Food Programs](#).

### **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.

### **CLASS ETIQUETTE**

I encourage students to engage in vibrant 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 in-person 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.

Videotaping and recording lectures is strictly forbidden without written permission from the instructor.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

- Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> Class 1: Introduction & Class Overview
1. Aneshensel, Carol S., Jo E. Phelan, and Alex Bierman. 2013. "The Sociology of Mental Health: Surveying the Field." Pp. 1-22 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Springer.
- Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> Class 2: Concepts, Measurements & Outcomes
1. Aneshensel, Carol S., Carolyn M. Rutter, and Peter A. Lachenbruch. 1991. "[Social Structure, Stress, and Mental Health: Competing Conceptual and Analytic Models](#)." *American Sociological Review* 56:166-78.
  2. Mirowsky, John and Catherine E. Ross. 2002. "[Measurement for a Human Science](#)." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43:152-70.
  3. Wheaton, Blair. 2007. "[The Twain Meet: Distress, Disorder and the Continuing Conundrum of Categories \(comment on Horwitz\)](#)." *Health* 11(3):303-319.
- Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> Class 3: Sociology of Mental Health Workshop 1
1. Knott, Deborah (N.D.) [Critical Reading Towards Critical Writing](#). New College Writing Center – University of Toronto
  2. Turner, R. Jay, Blair Wheaton, and Donald A. Lloyd. 1995. "[The Epidemiology of Social Stress](#)." *American Sociological Review* 60: 104–25
- \*Additional Materials TBA
- Oct. 4<sup>th</sup> Class 4: Modeling Mental Health: The Stress Process
1. McLeod, Jane D. 2012. "[The Meanings of Stress: Expanding the Stress Process Model](#)." *Society and Mental Health* 2:172-186.
  2. Aneshensel, Carol S., and Uchechi A. Mitchell. 2014. "The Stress Process: Its Origins, Evolution, and Future." In: Johnson, R., Turner, R., Link, B. (eds) *Sociology of Mental Health*. Springer Briefs in Sociology. Springer, Cham (On Quercus)
- \*Learning Module Topic & Justification Due**
- Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> Class 5: Psychosocial Resources
1. Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2013. "The Sense of Personal Control: Social-Structural Causes and Emotional Consequences." Pp. 379-404 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Springer.
  2. Thoits, P. A. (2011). [Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health](#). *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 52 , 145–161.

- Oct 18<sup>th</sup>**      **Class 6: Test 1**
- Oct 25<sup>th</sup>      Class 7: Social Patterns of Mental Health
1. Kessler, Ronald. (1982) [A Disaggregation of the Relationship between Socioeconomic Status and Psychological Distress](#). *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 47:752-64.
  2. Phelan, Jo C, Bruce G. Link, and Parisa Tehranifar. (2010) [Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Health Inequalities: Theory, Evidence, and Policy](#). *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 28-40.
  3. Bauldry, S. (2015). [Variation in the Protective Effect of Higher Education against Depression](#). *Society and Mental Health*, 5(2), 145–161.
- Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>      Class 8: Sociology of Mental Health Workshop 2
1. Buttram, C., MacMillan III, D. & Koch, Jr., R.T. (2012) [Comparing the Annotated Bibliography to the Literature Review](#). Center for Writing Excellence-University of Northern Alabama
  2. VIDEO: [LGBTIQ+ People Talk About Their Experiences Accessing Health Care](#)
- \*\*Additional Materials TBA
- Nov. 8<sup>th</sup>      **READING WEEK - NO CLASSES**
- Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>      Class 9: Racism, Discrimination, Colonization
1. Brown, T. N. et al. 2013. "Race, Nativity, Ethnicity, and Cultural Influences in the Sociology of Mental Health." Pp. 255-276 in [The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Springer.
  2. Sellers, Sherrill L. and Harold W. Neighbors. (2008) [Effects of Goal-Striving Stress on the Mental Health of Black Americans](#). *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 49:92-103.
  3. Nelson, Sarah E. and Kathi Wilson. (2017) [The mental health of Indigenous peoples in Canada: A critical review of research](#). *Social Science & Medicine* 176: 93-112.
- Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>**      Class 10: Gender & Sexuality
1. Simon, R. W. (2020). [Gender, Emotions, and Mental Health in the United States: Patterns, Explanations, and New Directions](#). *Society and Mental Health*, 10(2), 97–111
  2. Thoits, P.A. & Longest, K.C. 2012. "[Gender, the Stress Process, and Health: A Configurational Approach](#)". *Society and Mental Health* 2(3): 187-206
  3. Hatzenbuehler, M. L., McLaughlin, K. A., Keyes, K. M., & Hasin, D. S. (2010). [The Impact of Institutional Discrimination on Psychiatric Disorders in Lesbian,](#)

[Gay, and Bisexual Populations: A Prospective Study](#). *American Journal of Public Health* (1971), 100(3), 452–459.

**\*Learning Module Proposal Due**

Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>

Class 11: Biosocial stress

1. Pudrovska, T. (2013). [Job Authority and Breast Cancer](#). *Social Forces*, 92(1), 1–24.
2. Das, A. (2013). [How does race get “under the skin”?: Inflammation, weathering, and metabolic problems in late life](#). *Social Science & Medicine*, 77(Complete), 75–83.
3. McEwen, C. A., & McEwen, B. S. (2017). [Social Structure, Adversity, Toxic Stress, and Intergenerational Poverty: An Early Childhood Model](#). *Annual Review of Sociology*, 43, 445–472.

Dec 6<sup>th</sup>

TEST 2