SOC 6024H S -Special Topics in Sociology: Ethnoracial Inequalities in Health
Winter 2024
Department of Sociology
Classroom Location: St George, Sociology Department, Room 17146
Class Hours: Mondays, 10:10am-noon

Professor: Harvey L. Nicholson Jr., Ph.D.
Email: Harvey.nicholsonjr@utoronto.ca
Office hours: By appointment

Course overview: There are significant ethnoracial health disparities in countries like Canada and the United States. Studies have routinely documented that groups racialized as not White tend to experience worse health outcomes compared to people racialized as White. For instance, people racialized as Black experience higher rates of preventable disease and live shorter lives than Whites. Why is this the case? How should we study and think about ethnoracial disparities in health? In what ways is it challenging to study ethnoracial disparities in health? How might racialization and methods of group categorization impact research on ethnoracial health disparities? Which groups should we study, and why? Why is there less research on some groups compared to other groups? How should we go about addressing ethnoracial disparities in health? What does the future hold for research on ethnoracial disparities in health? Many, many more questions remain, all of which cannot be addressed in this class.

Researchers across numerous fields, including sociology, continue to investigate and debate about the causes of, and best ways to study and think about, ethnoracial disparities in health. This course aims to provide a broad, but critical overview of ethnoracial disparities in health, emphasizing how we should think about, understand, and address these ongoing disparities. This graduate seminar will challenge students to think critically about ethnoracial disparities in health, the taken for granted assumptions about these disparities, the forces that drive them, how we should go about studying them, and ways to address these ongoing gaps in health.

We will cover numerous topics related to the study of ethnoracial disparities in health, including the use of race and ethnicity in health disparities research; some of the problems, controversies, and challenges related to the study of ethnoracial disparities in health; the patterns of ethnoracial disparities in health; and several of the leading sociological 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 (interpersonal and structural). We will use concepts taken from sociology and other fields that examine ethnoracial disparities in health.

Reading materials: You will be assigned peer-reviewed academic articles to read before coming to each class. You must familiarize yourself with each reading and be ready to discuss them during class. All readings are available via the University of Toronto Library database. Additional readings are available upon request.
**Course communication:** You may contact me via email. Please allow me a total of 24-48 hours during regular workdays (9am-5pm, Monday-Friday) to respond. If I do not respond to you by then, you may send a follow-up email. All emails must contain proper email etiquette and “SOC 602H S– Ethnoracial Inequalities in Health” in the subject line.

**Assignments**

**Paper:** You must write a paper on a topic relevant to ethnoracial disparities in health. Papers must address ethnoracial health disparities in Canada or the United States. You may choose to: (1) write a review article of existing literature, (2) analyze data (quantitative or qualitative) you have access to prior to the start of this course (or secondary data that is publicly available), or (3) propose a study that would use quantitative or qualitative methods. Students should target their paper for submission to an appropriate peer-reviewed journal, academic conference, or some other academic outlet. Actual submission is strongly encouraged but not required. I encourage you to speak with me as soon as possible to devise a strategy that works best for you and your research. Your topic must relate to at least one of the following course themes:

- The Use of Race and Ethnicity in Health Disparities Research
- Other Issues in Research on Ethnoracial Disparities in Health
- Patterns of Disparities
- Racism and Discrimination
- Immigration and Culture
- Neighborhoods, Place, and the Environment
- Socioeconomic Status
- Mechanisms and Psychosocial Resources
- Healthcare: Patients, Providers, and Systems

The paper will consist of two stages: research topic paper and final paper. The body of your final paper must be roughly between 5000-6000 words, not including the title page, abstract (no more than 250 words), figures/tables, and list of references. The body of your research topic paper must be between 500-750 words, not including the aforementioned components. The research topic paper is separate from the final paper; it should clearly summarize your topic and defend your analytical/theoretical approach. All papers must be submitted via Quercus and will be sent to Ouriginal for a plagiarism review. The research topic paper and final paper will be graded as follows: check ++ (A+), check + (A), check (A-), and check - (other).

**Participation:** Active participation is fully expected of all students. In this seminar-style course, you must be ready to discuss the weekly readings and course themes in a lively, respectful, and intelligent manner. You must also be prepared to introduce new and innovative perspectives that logically add the course readings and class discussion. Participation will be graded as follows: check ++ (A+), check + (A), check (A-), and check - (other).
**Discussion leadership:** Each student will be assigned a week to lead class discussion. As discussion leader, students are not being asked to give a lecture; rather, they must *facilitate* class discussion. Discussion leaders must start off the class by introducing (holistically) the weekly readings for at least 15-20 minutes, and then pose at least *5 specific questions* about the readings to generate meaningful conversation. Discussion leadership will be graded as follows: check ++ (A+), check + (A), check (A-), and check - (other). Students must submit their five questions via Quercus at least one day before they will lead discussion.

**Assignment breakdown**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper Topic</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>January 26th, 2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>April 5th, 2024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Leadership</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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**COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Late/missed test & assignments**
Late work will not be accepted, unless the student can prove that the work had to be submitted after the due date because of reasons beyond their control. There are no alternative assignments for participation and discussion leadership.

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


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](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**
The use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is strictly prohibited.
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.

Equity and Diversity
The University of Toronto is committed to equity and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. As a course instructor, I will neither condone nor tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any individual in this course and wish to be alerted to any attempt to create an intimidating or hostile environment. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated.

Additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto is available at http://equity.hrlandequity.utoronto.ca.

COURSE SCHEDULE/READING LIST

January 8th (Class 1) Introductions and Course Overview

Recommended reading:


Braun, L. (2002). Race, ethnicity, and health: can genetics explain disparities?. Perspectives in Biology and Medicine, 45(2), 159-174.


PART ONE: CONCEPTUALIZATION, OPERATIONALIZATION, ISSUES, AND PATTERNS

January 15th (Class 2) Conceptualizing Ethnoracial Disparities in Health

Required reading:


**January 22nd (Class 3) The Use of Race and Ethnicity in Health Disparities Research** *

*Required reading:*


LaVeist, T. A. (1994). Beyond dummy variables and sample selection: what health services researchers ought to know about race as a variable. Health services research, 29(1), 1.

RESEARCH TOPIC PAPER DUE Jan 26th, 2024 ON QUERCUS BY 11:59PM/EST

January 29th (Class 4) Other Issues in Research on Ethnoracial Disparities in Health

Required reading:


February 5th (Class 5)  Patterns of Ethnoracial Disparities in Health *

Required reading:


PART TWO: EXPLANATIONS

February 12th (Class 6)  Socioeconomic Status *

Required reading:


**Reading Week: February 19th-23rd**

**February 26th (Class 7)  Racism and Discrimination *

**Required reading:**


**March 4th (Class 8) Mechanisms and Psychosocial Resources ***

**Required reading:**


March 11th (Class 9) Immigration and Culture *

Required reading:


March 18th (Class 10) Neighborhoods, Place, and the Environment *

Required reading:


March 25th (Class 11) Healthcare: Patients, Providers, and Systems *

Required reading:


April 1st (Class 12) The Future: Where Are We Going and What Are We Missing in Research on Ethnoracial Disparities in Health?

Required reading:
None
FINAL PAPER DUE ON QUERCUS: APRIL 5th, 2024 at 12:00pm/EST (noon)