

## Soc364H1F Urban Health

University of Toronto

Fall 2014 (Sept - Dec)

Thursdays 12-2pm

Room TBA

Course website: <https://portal.utoronto.ca> (login using your utoid)

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

Office Hours: Tuesday afternoons 2:30-4:00, and by appointment

Room 366 at the Sociology Department (725 Spadina Ave)

Teaching Assistant: Marie-Pier Joly, Doctoral Student in Sociology, University of Toronto  
[mariepier.joly@utoronto.ca](mailto:mariepier.joly@utoronto.ca)

1-3pm in Room 397 of the Sociology Department on the

following Wednesdays: Oct 8th, 15th, 22nd, Nov 19th, 26th, Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>

### Overview

Health and health behaviours 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' neighbourhood 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 to date on these topics and discuss potential solutions for remedying exposure and vulnerability of these groups to the risks of urban settings. While the area of urban health is far too vast to cover in its entirety throughout this course, my goal is to provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of how *place* affects individuals' health and well-being through various social features of the urban landscape and their intersection with key social identities.

### Evaluation

Final marks will be based on three grades. There is an in-class midterm test worth 32.5%, a final exam worth 32.5% that is not cumulative, and an independent research project worth the remaining 35%. Choice of paper topics will be discussed in class.

### **Prerequisites**

Completion of a 200 or higher level sociology course is required to take this course. Students without prerequisites can be removed at any time without notice.

### **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. The “further readings” are optional, meaning they are not required and will not be on the test. When available, lecture slides will be posted the evening before class. They are provided to benefit in-class note taking. Besides the posted lecture slides, I often incorporate a range of audiovisual material into lectures. It is important to complete all required readings and attend class because the midterm and final exam will cover both required readings and in-class material.

### **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.

### **Accessibility Needs**

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/> as soon as possible.

### **Make-Up Tests**

Students who miss a test will receive a mark of zero unless **within three days** of the missed test he/she contacts the instructor requesting special consideration and explaining why the test was missed. The instructor or TA will communicate the time and location of the make-up test. In order to take the make-up test, students must bring **proper documentation from a physician or college registrar** to the make-up test.

- In case of **illness**, you must supply a duly completed **Verification of Student Illness** or Injury form (available at [www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca](http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca)). A doctor’s note is not acceptable. The form must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted when you take the make-up test.
- If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted when you take the make-up.

### **Deadlines for Submitting Projects**

Papers are due on the due date listed in the syllabus. Late work will not be accepted without proper documentation from a student’s physician or college registrar (described above)

### **Plagiarism**

Cheating and misrepresentation will not be tolerated. Students who commit an academic offense face serious penalties. Avoid plagiarism by citing properly: practices acceptable in high school may prove

unacceptable in university. Know where you stand by reading the “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” in the Calendar of the Faculty of Arts and Science.

## COURSE OUTLINE

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

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

#### Sept 11<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to Sociology of Urban Health

(1) 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.

\***Movie Clip:** *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* 1988 (55 min)

#### Sept 18<sup>th</sup>: Patterns of Health and Fundamental Determinants in Urban Canada

(2) 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

(3) 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.

#### Sept 25<sup>th</sup>: The Health Climacteric: From Material Scarcity to Social Disadvantage

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

(5) Wilkinson, Richard G. 1994. “The Epidemiological Transition: From Material Scarcity to Social Disadvantage?” *Daedalus* 123(4): 61-77.

#### October 2<sup>nd</sup>: Sociological and Epidemiological Explanations of Health in the Urban Context

(6) 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.

(7) Kaplan, George A. 1999. “Upstream and Downstream Approaches to Inequalities in Health.” Pp. 1-11 in *Karolinska Research Lecture at the Nobel Forum*. Also, read Kaplan's Tables #1-15, Kaplan's Tables #16-30, Kaplan’s Tables #31-39

#### October 9<sup>th</sup>: Alternative Perspectives and Explanations of Urban Health

(8) 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.

(9) McKinlay, John B. and Lisa D. Marceau. 2000. “To Boldly go...” *American Journal of Public Health* 90 (1): 25-33.

(10) Wakefield, Sarah, et al. 2007. “Growing Urban Health: Community Gardening in South-East Toronto.” *Health Promotion International* 22(2): 92-101.

October 16<sup>th</sup>: *Urban Context and Sociology of Mental Health*

- (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.
- (12) 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.

*\*Supplementary*

- Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2009. "Neighborhood Disorder, Subjective Alienation, and Distress." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 50:49-64.

October 23<sup>rd</sup> – **Midterm test in class today** [covers all text and lecture/discussion materials to date]

**PART 2. Special Populations and Problems in Urban/Suburban Contexts**

October 30<sup>th</sup> : *Housing, Homelessness, and Health*

- (13) Hwang, Stephen W. 2001. "Homelessness and Health." *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 164(1): 229-33.
- (14) Berry, Brent. 2013. "Sociology of Housing". In *Urban Canada: Sociological Perspectives*, Third Edition, edited by Harry H. Hiller. Oxford University Press.

*\*Movie Clip: Sidewalk*

*\*Supplementary*

- 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

November 6<sup>th</sup>: *The Health of Urban Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities*

- (15) 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.
- (16) 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.

*\*Movie Clip* (time permitting): *Jane Finch Again*. 1997.

November 13<sup>th</sup> Exploring Gender and Urban Health through the Social Milieu of City Life

We will watch one of two films

Dreams of a Life (2011)

- In 2003, Joyce Vincent died in her bedsit in North London. Her body wasn't discovered until three years later, surrounded by Christmas presents she had been wrapping, and with the TV still on. Nobody – no friends or family – had noticed she'd gone. In *Dreams of a Life*, filmmaker Carol Morley attempts to understand this profoundly disturbing news story. Using a combination of talking-heads interviews and creative dramatisation (Joyce is played magnificently by Zawe Ashton), the documentary starts to piece together a picture of a vibrant but enigmatic woman. *Dreams of a Life* is a sensitive, utterly haunting film that probes the dark side of life in

the city, asking: how can you be surrounded by so many thousands of people, and yet be completely alone?  
[95 minutes]

#### When a Woman Ascends the Stairs (1960)

- Considered by many to be the masterpiece of Japanese filmmaker Mikio Naruse. The film subtly exposes the cruelly impossible situation of a single woman trying to get by in postwar Tokyo. Each evening, Keiko (played by Hideko Takamine) climbs a steep flight of stairs to reach the bar where she works as a hostess, serving drinks and “entertaining” businessmen. Keiko’s ascent is both a metaphor for her aspirations and the uphill struggle she faces in having them realised. Naruse exposes postwar Tokyo as a city tightly regulated by unwritten rules delineating the places of men and women. [111 minutes]

Other recommended Films for exploring gender and urban health – Satyajit Ray’s *The Big City* (1963), *A Taste of Honey* (1961), *Cléo from 5 to 7* (1962), *10* (2002, Director Abbas Kiarostami), *Vivre sa vie* (1962), *Chinatown* (1974), *Sunshine State* (2002)

#### November 20<sup>th</sup>: Special Populations: Youth, Older Adults, and Families with Young Children

- (17) Aneshensel, CS, Sucoff CA. 1996. "The neighborhood context of adolescent mental health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 37:293-310.
- (18) 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.
- (19) 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.

**Papers are due today. Turn it in class or to the 300-level drop boxes in room 225 of the Sociology Department (725 Spadina Ave).**

#### November 27<sup>th</sup> -- The Urban Foodscape, Eating, and Physical Activity in the City

- (20) 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).
- (21) French, SA, M Story, and RW Jeffery. 2001. “Environmental Influences on Eating and physical activity,” *Annu. Rev. Public Health* 22:309–35
- (22) 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.
- \*Supplementary
- Berry, Brent. 2007 “Disparities in Leisure Time Inactivity: Trends and Explanations” *Sociological Perspectives* 50(2) Summer: 166-199.

**Final Exam will take place during the exam period (Dec 8-19)  
\*\* Date, Time, and Location to be announced \*\***