Medical sociologists work in diverse settings (e.g. NGOs, hospitals, public health organizations, academic departments at universities, etc.). Research in the field also employs many different methods and theoretical orientations. This course surveys select aspects of the broad field of medical sociology with an emphasis on illness etiology, distribution, and the experience of illness. We start out by examining historical trends in epidemiologic patterns in relation to medical and public health practices, and medicalization. Both progress (e.g., global reductions in child mortality), and iatrogenesis (e.g., increased mortality among large population segments due to over-prescription of opiates) can be observed, and this has implications for the requisite complexity of theory. We then consider health and illness over the life course. Emerging findings from research that investigates how biological and psychosocial factors are intertwined begs questions about the relation between causal models, paradigms, theories, and policies. Policies (under liberalism) are often loosely related to action, so we focus in particular on the material bases for action. Some action is governmental, some is extra-governmental though political, and some is private or situational. With respect to the latter, we will consider the argument that new individualized forms of health-related practices (e.g., “disciplinary projects of the self”) reflect broader shifts in the construction of what it means to be human, and agentic. Illness can shape human agency, as well as portend the end of agency. In the final sessions, we will consider these issues by focusing on the self, and the phenomenology of illness experience, in both physical and mental manifestations.

Summary of Evaluation:

Reaction Papers (5-6 pages, for 5 classes @ 8% each) - 40%

Final Paper (about 17 pages, excluding references & cover) - 40 %

Attendance - 9%

Verbal Participation – 11%

Detailed Description of Evaluation

Attendance: Attendance at all classes is expected. There will be no deduction for missing one class without documentation (e.g., illness verification), but after that there will be a deduction of 1 point per class. If you have to miss class, it is good form to notify the instructor in advance.
Verbal Participation: Participation marks will be determined by your ability to respond knowledgeably to questions about the readings when asked, give your opinion about issues raised in the readings, and ask questions that reflect engagement with the ideas under discussion. Presentation about your final paper at the end of the course will be weighted relatively heavily.

Reaction Papers: For five of the classes that you will write about 6 pages that present your reflections about theoretically or methodologically relevant topics raised in two or more of the assigned readings, and address questions that I will pose. Penalty for late submission is 1 point per day (out of the 6 allotted).

Final “Research Connections” Paper: There is not enough time in this compressed course to expect you to write a decent 25-page research paper, but it is important for you to try to connect some of the material in the course to a topic you hope to pursue. Topics must be approved after an individual meeting. Marking: The main criteria for marking will be logical coherence and innovation or insight. However, part of the credit will be allocated on the basis of technical aspects of writing (i.e., grammar, sentence structure, references, etc.) Part of the credit will also be allocated on the basis of ability to draw upon or build upon the assigned readings, or topics raise in the assigned readings. Penalty for late submission is 1 point per weekday.

Illness: Please note that the following is “boilerplate”: Requests for medically based exemptions from deadlines must be accompanied by a duly completed Verification of Student Illness or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). A doctor’s note is not acceptable. The original form must be given to me in person, with the opportunity for me to make a hard copy. Forms that are scanned or copied may not be accepted. The university will accept documentation of medical matters only on the U of T Verification of Illness or Injury form, which may only be completed only by a physician, surgeon, nurse practitioner, dentist or clinical psychologist.

Reading List & Course Schedule
The following is a tentative reading list.
1. Broad Trends in Health & Mortality

Week 1. Class 1
Overview & Introductions

Week 1 class 2:
Epidemiology, Public Health, Medicine & Medicalization


World Health Organization “Summary, & Road Traffic Injuries” pp 173-181 in Health in 2015: from MDGs to SDGs in “Chapter 8: Injuries & Violence”.


II. Life Course & Health in Context

Week 2, class 3:
Lifecourse & Illness: Micro to Macro Issues


**Week 2, Class 4**

**“Social Determinants of Health”:**

**Social Positions, Mediation & Moderating Processes & Health**


Bradley R Crammond & Gemma Carey. 2016 "What Do We Mean by ‘Structure’ when We Talk About Structural Influences on the Social Determinants of Health Inequalities?". *Social Theory & Health*:1-15.


Week 3, class 5
Politics, Governance & Health: A Sampling of Levels & Contexts


Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English. from "Complaints & Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness." Pp 11-24


Week 3, Class 6:
Integration & Discussion

We will “catch up”, take stock, further integrate readings, discuss final paper topics, and discuss take-home test.

III. Cultural & Structural Considerations in Relation to Embodiment & Agency

Week 4, class 7
Sociomateriality & Practices: Body Parts, Medicines, Cigarettes, Lifestyles, Health & Illness Behaviors, etc.


Week 4, class 8:
**Health, Healthiness, Healthism: Regulating Health & Fitness**


Week 5, class 9
**Self, Symbolic Interaction, and Illness Experience: From to Cultural Discourse, and Back**


**Week 5, class 10:**

**Issues related to Mental Health**

A separate course focuses on mental health. These readings represent a select sampling of issues that resonate with some previously readings from previous weeks.


Week 6, class 11
Integration, Discussion & Final Paper Presentations

Catch up with discussion of material we were not able to adequately discuss previously.

Discuss Final Papers

Discuss Teaching of Sociology of Health & Illness

Week 6, class 12
Final Paper Discussion & Future Directions

Finish Discussion of Final Papers