



New Topics in Sociology
Sociology 352H1-S: Winter 2022
Comparative Social Policy and Generalized Health

Class Time: Thursdays 9:10 am-12 pm
Location: Synchronous Online using Zoom (CR403 - 100 St. Joseph Street in person)
Instructor: Matt Parbst
Email: matt.parbst@mail.utoronto.ca
Office Hours: Fridays 3-5 pm by appointment only. Please e-mail at least 24 hours beforehand to let me know you are coming.
Office hours will be held virtually on Zoom

TA: TBD
Office Hours: TBD

1. Prerequisites:

This is a program-only course specifically designed/offered to Sociology Majors and Specialists. Program requirements are that students have completed all their 200 level program requirements i.e., SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1 and two of: SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the course without notice by the department.

2. Course Overview:

This course will take a comparative social policy approach to examine the effect of social policies on both physical and mental health. To do so, this course will focus on theoretical models that explain the social determinants of health across the life course at the individual level, and map these determinants to key policy areas that intervene on generalized health at the beginning, middle, and end of the life course. In doing so, my main objective is to demonstrate how differences in health inequalities by different social statuses vary by social policy context and promote the notion that social policy is a "cause of cause's" in the social determinants of health literature. This course will combine different pedagogical approaches to achieve this and is generally structured as follows:

- a) **Tool Kit: Weeks 1 to 4 (January 13th to February 3rd):**
 - Topic area lecture: 9-11am
 - Discussion and review/application: 11am-12pm
- b) **Test on Tool Kit (February 10th)**
- c) **Application within Policy Areas (February 17th to April 7th)**
 - Mini lecture: 9-9:30am
 - Reading: 9:30 to 10am
 - Problem based learning :10-11am
 - Skill Development: 11am-12pm



3. Course Objectives:

- (1) To hone critical thinking and independence in analyzing an issue of priority to you ;
- (2) To improve skills related to writing and communication ;
- (3) To learn general policy processes and their known effects on health ;
- (4) To promote a future research agenda in policy and health.

4. Course Readings:

The course material presented by the instructor will be available on Quercus or electronically through the University of Toronto library website. Students are also encouraged to use the library and library website while engaging in their independent policy research projects. No textbook or paid materials are required for this course. Note there are two types of readings in the reading list: Readings and In-Class readings. Readings are your responsibility outside the classroom and in-class readings will be done in the second half hour starting week 6 to promote class discussion. All within class readings are short (about 10 pages). This is to ensure the class has at least one article that we can discuss and use for our Problem Based Learning weeks.

5. Course Evaluation & Requirements:

Assessment	Weight
i. Reflection Paragraphs	20%
	(8 x 2.5%)
ii. Toolkit Test (February 10 th)	25%
iii. Student Engagement	30%
a) Problem Based Learning	(7 x 1.5%)
b) Skills Development	(3 x 5%)
c) Self-Assessment	(4.5%)
iv. Final Policy Assessment	25%
Total: 100%	

5.i.: Reflection Paragraphs

You will be required to submit 8 reflection paragraphs throughout the semester. Note this means that you do not have to submit every week (i.e. 8 out of 10 possible weeks). This builds in some flexibility for students to address competing demands of life and other courses across the semester. The purpose of these reflection paragraphs is to ensure students have completed the assigned readings outside of course time and so they have questions or comments to engage in class. These paragraphs should not be mere summaries of weekly readings but rather short reflections on critical points addressed in the readings. As you are preparing these papers, some ideas you might consider for points of reflection are: (1) what are the core conceptual or theoretical perspective(s)? Did the article adequately/sufficiently test the theories proposed? (2) what are the key



findings and/or arguments of the readings? Are they consistent or in tension with each other? (3) what was particularly interesting from one or more of the readings and why? (4) what are some critical insights or reflections that would be useful to raise for class discussion and debate? (i.e., agreements/disagreements with the main points in the readings, or points the readings overlook). Please note that given space constraints, I do NOT expect your papers to address all these questions. These reflections should be between 250 and 500 words. Reflection paragraphs will be due before Thursday at 9 am every week.

These papers will be graded on the following scale out of 2 points: 0=no effort, 1.5=some effort, 2.5=good effort. These paragraphs are not expected to be polished products, there needs to be clear evidence of critical thinking. If it can be ascertained that a reasonable effort was put forward, you will receive full marks. A detailed example will be given the first lecture. These assignments are due by 9:00 a.m. before class begins.

5.ii.: Toolkit Test

The short-answer sections of tests are unique in format. Basically, types of responses vary by the type of question. Some questions are multiple choice, some are fill-in-the-blank, some ask you to choose the correct word to complete a sentence, and some require a phrase or sentence response. Questions focus on evaluating your awareness and understanding of the basic theories, concepts, hypotheses, and findings discussed **in both readings and lectures**. No short-answer questions necessitating an "opinion" to be defended will be included. An optional(to be voted on) virtual review session will be held during my office hours the week before the exam and will be recorded for study purposes.

5.iii.: Student Engagement

- a) Problem Based Learning: problem-based learning assessment will be based on handed in work sheets across the semester that are worked on during class time each week. These will be short assessments that will be supported through engaging with peers, but individually assessed. These will be graded on a pass-fail basis and begin on focused policy weeks starting February 17th.
- b) Skills Development: skills participation is determined by your contributions within the skill development portion of the class. Skills development will coincide with developing your Final Policy Assessment across the semester. As such, there are components of your Final Policy Assessment you will have to bring in order to participate in activities within the skills development workshops. You should note what is required of you to bring before class begins after Week 5. I will send out reminders of requirements on the Monday of each week something is explicitly required of you to bring (located in course schedule).
- c) Self-Assessment: Self-assessment will be done on the last day of the course. You will be asked to rate yourself across two dimensions: engagement with course and



engagement with peers. Engagement with course will focus on your own assessment of asking questions activities or raising points for discussion of material within class or during group exercises. Engagement with peers means your contribution to other's ideas or projects throughout the course.

5.iv.: Final Policy Assessment

The final policy assessment will be an application of material learned under the “tool kit weeks.” The goal of this assignment is for students to apply what they learned from the tool kit to a topic that they are passionate about or at least piques their interest. This means the final assessment can be gradually worked on across the second portion of the course. The assessment will focus on writing as a policy analyst communicating a social problem/condition that affects health of a particular demographic or group, the research that explains this social problem, possible policies (focusing on two) that could alleviate this problem, the plausible mechanisms involved in linking policy to health, and a policy recommendation to a theoretical government given the pros and cons of each assessed policy. A detailed outline of the assignment will be given Week 5.

6. Course Expectations:

This course is likely structured differently than others you have encountered at the 300 level. There are two phases of the course: the “tool kit” phase whereby you will be taught theoretical and general empirical overview of the field and an application phase whereby we will look closely at specific policies and issues while engaging in material directly within class through problem-based learning.

As demonstrated above in Section 5, this course is designed to reward student engagement with the material itself: half of your grade stems from engaging with the material, your peers and working towards the completion of your Final Policy Assessment. The other half will be determined by individual assessment across both the Toolkit Test and Final Policy Assessment. This is to encourage a more dynamic classroom setting whereby we engage in active learning versus passive knowledge retention. As such, this course will be centered on discussion and live interaction with the course material which means active participation by students as well as the course instructor.

7. Course Policies & Important Information for Students:

7-i: Quercus:

Quercus will be an important resource during this class. The syllabus can be downloaded as an electronic copy from the course site on Quercus and I will post the lecture slides on Quercus the night before each lecture. Course readings not available through the university of Toronto Library website will also be provided via Quercus in the course materials section. I will occasionally also post supplementary readings and links to online media material (videos, online PowerPoint presentations, etc.) for each topic. You are not required to review the supplementary resources, but they can provide additional help or alternative ways of understanding.



7-ii: Lecture & Attendance:

Full and complete attendance (on time) is required to do well in this course. Students are responsible for being aware of what is said in class (including administrative announcements) as well as for the content presented in class. Additional content not found on the posted lecture slides will be presented during lecture and will be important to your evaluation. To do well in the course students will need to attend class and take notes to supplement the lecture slides posted on Quercus. If you miss a lecture it is your responsibility to find a fellow student willing to share notes (the instructor will not provide notes on missed lecture).

7-iii: Academic Dishonesty

University policy on academic dishonesty must be strictly followed and cheating will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an test or assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: ‘Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty’), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. You should familiarize yourself with the University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

7-iv: E-mails

Students are encouraged to e-mail the instructor with questions or problems related to the course but please strive to be professional in your e-mails. When e-mailing your instructor include “SOC352” and a brief description in the subject line, so your e-mail can be easily prioritized. E-mails will typically be answered within 48 business hours. You must use your official University of Toronto email and follow appropriate contextual e-mail etiquette—have an appropriate opening (e.g., Good morning) and closing (e.g., Thank-you, Sincerely), use proper spelling and grammar, and avoid using acronyms (e.g., ttyl, fwiw, imo, asap, etc.). NOTE: Emails that ask questions that are answered in the course syllabus or website (e.g., “how much is assignment X worth”) will not receive a response. Keep in mind that for simple questions, e-mail is the preferred method of communication. For longer questions, however, students should schedule an appointment with the instructor or attend office hours.

7-v: Late Policy

Late assignments will be subject to a 10% per day late penalty unless arrangements have been made with the instructor at least 48 hours prior to the due date. Unexpected last minute extenuating circumstances and illness are exempt from the 48-hour rule.

7-vi: Accessibility Accommodations

If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, Accessibility Services is your home base for support. It is important to contact the office as soon as possible so that accommodations for your needs are in place before classes start.



All information about your disability is confidential and won't be shared with units outside of Accessibility Services without your consent. Accessibility services can be contacted by e-mail (www.accessibility.utoronto.ca) or alternatively you can reach them by phone at 416-978-8060. If you require an accommodation, please forward the instructor your AS letter of Academic Accommodations as soon as possible.

7-vii: Illness Related Accommodations

If you miss a test or a due date for medical reasons, you must contact me (not the TA) within 2 days of the missed test or assignment and also declare your absence on ACORN on the day of the missed test or due date.

7-viii: Other Accommodations

Your college registrar's office is there to support you in the event of an illness, personal, or family related emergency or issue that is hindering your success as a student. If there is an ongoing issue that hinders your studies, please contact your registrar as they will be able to connect you with appropriate resources and supports and can provide documentation to your instructors that will aid in receiving accommodations.

8. Instructor Midterm Review (Week 6) and Topic Vote

There will be an instructor midterm review Week 6 along with a topic vote for Week 8 and 11. Due to the fact this is a new course with different pedagogical approaches, I'd like to see some feedback on my performance and what I may do to better accommodate your interests as we go through the course. I will be uploading an anonymous survey relating to what you think is going well in the course, what could improve, and other comments you might have. I have given some choice in topics in Week 8 and 11 (although others are possible) which we may vote on after Week 6. This gives us some flexibility in what topics may be more interesting to you versus what I think.

9. Tentative Course Schedule

1	January 13 th , 2021	<p>Topic 1: Introduction to the Course & Course Overview Topic 2: Social Determinants of Health Discussion and review/application <i>Readings:</i> Phelan, J. C., Link, B. G., & Tehranifar, P. (2010). Social conditions as fundamental causes of health inequalities theory, evidence, and policy implications. <i>Journal of Health and Social Behavior</i>, 51(1 suppl), S28–S40.</p> <p>Turner, R. J. (2013). Understanding Health Disparities: The Relevance of the Stress Process Model. <i>Society and Mental Health</i>, 3(3), 170–186.</p>
2	January 20 th , 2021	<p>Topic: Social Policy: Logics of Social Protection and Social Investment</p>



		<p>Discussion and review/application</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Kuhnle, S., & Sander, A. (2010). The Emergence of the Western Welfare State. In F. G. Castles, S. Leibfried, J. Lewis, H. Obinger, & C. Pierson (Eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of the Welfare State</i>. Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Kvist, J. (2015). A framework for social investment strategies: Integrating generational, life course and gender perspectives in the EU social investment strategy. <i>Comparative European Politics</i>, 13(1), 131–149.</p>
3	January 27 th , 2021	<p>Topic: The Global Burden of Disease 1 hr Video Watched in Class: Murray, Christopher JL. Measuring the Global and Local Burden of Disease. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WkqgtwFoC9w</p> <p>Discussion and review/application</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Harper, K., & Armelagos, G. (2010). The Changing Disease-Scape in the Third Epidemiological Transition. <i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i>, 7(2), 675–697.</p> <p>Omran, A. R. (1971). The Epidemiological Transition- A theory of the Epidemiology of Population Change. <i>The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly</i>, 49(4), 509–538.</p>
4	February 3 rd , 2021	<p>Topic: Generalized Welfare State and Health: Methods and Findings <i>Skills Workshop: Reading Academic Articles for Policy Reports</i></p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Beckfield, J., & Bambra, C. (2016). Shorter lives in stingier states: Social policy shortcomings help explain the US mortality disadvantage. <i>Social Science & Medicine</i>, 171, 30–38.</p> <p>Mackenbach, J. P. (2012). The persistence of health inequalities in modern welfare states: The explanation of a paradox. <i>Social Science & Medicine</i>, 75(4), 761–769.</p> <p>Optional: Mid Term Review During Office Hours Friday 3-5PM</p>
5	February 10 th , 2021	<p>Test During Class Time Skills Development: Inspiration, Topic Choice, and Development <i>Readings: No Readings</i></p> <p>Requirement: Choose two policy areas and a social determinants of health (i.e. SES, gender, race)</p>



6	February 17 th , 2021	<p>Topic: Early Education</p> <p><i>Readings:</i> Black, M. M., Walker, S. P., Fernald, L. C. H., Andersen, C. T., DiGirolamo, A. M., Lu, C., ... Grantham-McGregor, S. (2017). Early childhood development coming of age: Science through the life course. <i>The Lancet</i>, 389(10064), 77–90.</p> <p>Sabol, T. J., & Hoyt, L. T. (2017). The long arm of childhood: Preschool associations with adolescent health. <i>Developmental Psychology</i>, 53(4), 752–763.</p> <p><i>In class Reading:</i> Campbell, F., Conti, G., Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Pungello, E., & Pan, Y. (2014). Early Childhood Investments Substantially Boost Adult Health. <i>Science</i>, 343(6178), 1478–1485.</p> <p>Skills Workshop: Learning to Research, Writing to Learn Instructor Midterm Review and Class Vote</p>
<i>February Break- No Classes</i>		
7	March 3 rd , 2021	<p>Topic: Family Policy</p> <p>Skills Workshop: Pre-Writing</p>
8	March 10 th , 2021	<p>Choice Topic: Social Assistance (or Sickness/Incapacity or Housing)</p> <p>Skills Workshop: Writing 1</p>
9	March 17 th , 2021	<p>Topic: ALMPs and Unemployment</p> <p>Skills Workshop: Writing 2</p>
10	March 24 th , 2021	<p>Topic: Old Age</p> <p>Skills Workshop: Editing Ideas (Peer Evaluation)</p> <p>Requirement: Rough Draft Part 1</p>
11	March 31 st , 2021	<p>Choice Focused Topic: Race (or Intersectionality or Race and COVID-19)</p> <p>Skills Workshop: Editing Writing (Peer Evaluation)</p> <p>Requirement: Rough Draft Part 2</p>
12	April 7 th , 2021	<p>Focused Topic: COVID-19</p> <p>Requirement: Final Policy Assessment Due</p>