

University of Toronto – Department of Sociology
SOC 243H1S: Sociology of Health and Illness
Summer 2020

Mondays & Wednesdays: 10:00 - 12:00

Instructor: Brigid Burke
Email: b.burke@mail.utoronto.ca
Office hours: Mondays 12-1pm via BB Collaborate on Quercus (or by appointment)
Course website: Access via U of T Quercus (q.utoronto.ca)
Teaching Assistant: Lei Chai

Course Description

This course will examine the social causes of illness and disease, the sociology of illness experience, and the social distribution of health. We will begin the first half of the course with an introduction to the sociology of health and illness and explore different theoretical approaches within this field. We will discuss medicalization as a process that influences how illnesses are defined and addressed and, interrogate the relevance of the sick role in delimiting the rights and responsibilities of both patients and medical professionals. We will then explore how the meanings of disease and illness may differ based on social location, paying particular attention to differences across patients and doctors, and cross-culturally. In the second half of the course we will emphasize socio-political aspects of health, beginning with a consideration of structural and political violence. We will then discuss social determinants of health, exploring how health risks and protections are distributed based on class, race, gender and sexual orientation. Our last two weeks will focus on the sociology of the body, and address how bodies are experienced and acted upon in relation to dominant ideas about health and illness. Throughout the semester we will apply several of these lenses working as a class to conduct a sociological media analysis of Covid-19 coverage.

Course Format

This is an online class. Asynchronous video lectures will be posted a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the scheduled class times. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarifications about the readings and lecture content in real time during weekly office hours, or any time via email/ the class discussion board. The instructor will post weekly communications addressing the main questions and concerns about each week's content that are raised by students across these platforms.

While lectures in this class are asynchronous, there will be ongoing requirements for synchronous student engagement. Students will meet with the course instructor in small groups at regular intervals throughout the semester to discuss their ongoing research projects and related course/outside research material. These meetings will be scheduled during posted class times, though some accommodations to the scheduling of these check-ins *may* be negotiated at the start of the semester. Students are also expected to participate in online class discussion boards on a regular weekly basis.

Prerequisites: Completion of either SOC101Y1, SOC102H1 or SOC100H1 is required to take this course. Students without prerequisites will be removed at any time without notice. In addition, it is *recommended* that students have completed SOC150H1 as preparation for this course.

GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, students will learn how to:

1. Think critically about health as a social issue, both in terms of its outcomes & antecedents.
2. Explore how understandings of health and illness can differ based on social location.
3. Interrogate the role of different axes of inequality in shaping individual/population health.
4. Engage in critical thinking, apply course and lecture materials to engage in a sociological analysis of current health issues.

ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS

1. Discussion Board Participation: Students will respond to 10 online discussion topics corresponding to the readings for classes 2-11. The goal of these exercises is to assess students' participation and engagement with the materials. As such, contributions should demonstrate knowledge of the class material as well as personal reflection/critical thought. Each post will be graded out of 1 point (0, 0.5 or 1), for a total of 10 points over the semester. Students are encouraged to write their posts in response to each other, as long as they do so in a respectful & constructive manner. The discussion boards for each class will close Friday at midnight on the week of the class (e.g. The discussion board for class 2 will close Friday July 10th at midnight, the discussion boards for classes 3 & 4 will close Friday July 17th at midnight, etc.). Submissions will not be accepted after the discussion boards are closed.
2. Research Project Check-Ins: Students will meet with the instructor in small groups to discuss their assignments. These meetings will be used to provide feedback and ongoing support, offer suggestions on integrating course/outside materials, review strategies/workplans, engage in group brainstorming, theorizing, analysis, & problem-solving, etc. Attendance at check-ins will be worth 1 point. Students are expected to attend 5 check-ins over the course of the semester, for a total of 5 points. Class groups and check-in schedules will be finalized at the start of the semester.
3. Covid-19 Media Analysis: As a class, we will work together to conduct a sociological media analysis of the Covid-19 pandemic coverage. This will be a scaffolded project, made up of smaller assignments that build on one another:
 - a) *Preliminary Data Collection:* Students will conduct research to identify 5 unique media posts (or 10 social media posts) related to the Covid-19 pandemic. They will contribute these posts to an excel spreadsheet that will be accessible to all students in the class via OneDrive. For each source added, students must provide: name(s) of author(s), name of publication/platform, hyperlink, date of publication [date edited], title, key words for topic(s)/findings, possible angle(s) of sociological analysis (point form). **Be sure to consult the spreadsheet before completing the work to ensure you*

*aren't overlapping with other students** This assignment is worth 5% and must be completed by midnight July 10th.

- b) *Topic & Group Selection:* The instructor will select 10 relevant research topics based on student interests (as expressed through the preliminary data collection process and on the discussion board), sociological promise, and feasibility. Online groups will be created for each of these topics and students can self-select into the group of their choice. N.B. Each group will be capped at 4 students. If the group for your first choice of topic is full, you will be asked to select into a different group. (More information on this process will be provided in the first class).
- c) *Literature Review:* Students will conduct a review of the sociological literature relevant to their topic, which they will later use to ground their analyses of Covid-19 media coverage. This assignment should be no more than 3 single-spaced pages (excluding bibliography). It must be uploaded to Quercus by July 24th at midnight and is worth 25 points. (Further information will be provided).
- d) *Final Paper:* Students will work in groups to conduct a media analysis based on their selected topic. Groups must propose a specific research question during check-ins and obtain approval for their question by July 31st. They will draw on their literature reviews to help them analyze Covid-19 media coverage and develop a critical reflection on their selected topic. This assignment should be no more than 8 double-spaced pages (excluding bibliography & annexes). It must be uploaded to Quercus by August 13th at midnight and is worth 30 points. Students will be graded both individually and as a group. (Further information will be provided).

- 4. Take Home Test: Students will write 1 take-home test that will assess their understanding of the course readings and lecture materials. The format will include a mix of short answer and long answer questions. This test is worth 25 points. The questions will be posted on August 17th at 6pm and answers must be uploaded to Quercus by 6pm on August 20th.

GRADING SUMMARY

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
Discussion Board Participation	10 points	Ongoing
Research Project Check-Ins	5 points	Ongoing
Prelim. Data Collection	5 points	July 10 th
Literature Review	25 points	July 24 th
Research Paper	30 points	August 13 th
Take Home	25 points	August 20 th
Total	100 points	

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. SOC243) 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

Assignments more than 1 week late will not be accepted.

In case of illness, you must declare your absence on ACORN on the day the assignment is due, in addition to contacting the instructor.

If a 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.

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.

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

This is a writing intensive course. Students are urged to seek assistance from the [University of Toronto Writing Centre](#) should they anticipate problems in this area.

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.

ENGAGING WITH COURSE PARTICIPANTS

I encourage students to engage in vibrant online 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. 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. during group check-ins, office hours, or by Quercus messages).

COURSE SCHEDULE

- July 6th Class 1: Introduction
1. Armstrong, D. (2000). Social theorizing about health and illness. In: G. L. Albrecht R. Fitzpatrick & S. C. Scrimshaw: [Handbook of social studies in health and medicine](#) (pp. 24-35). London: SAGE Publications (**recommended**)
- July 8th Class 2: Medicalization
1. Conrad, P. (1992). [Medicalization and social control](#). *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18(1): 209-232.
 2. Conrad, Peter. (2005). "[The Shifting Engines of Medicalization](#)." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 46: 3-14.
- July 13th Class 3: The Sick Role
1. Cockerham, William (2001) The Sick Role. In *Medical Sociology*. 8th ed. Pp.160-178 Prentice Hall. (**On Quercus**)
 2. Glenton, C. (2003). [Chronic back pain sufferers—striving for the sick role](#). *Social Science and Medicine*, 57(11), 2243-2252
 3. Burnham, J. (2014). [Why sociologists abandoned the sick role concept](#). *History of the Human Sciences*, 27(1), 70-87
- July 15th Class 4: Illness as Soc. Experience and Narrative
1. Kleinman, Arthur (1998) *The Illness Narratives* (Chapter 1). USA: Basic Books (**On Quercus**)
 2. Behrendt, Kathy (2017) "[Narrative Aversion: Challenges for the Illness Narrative Advocate](#)." *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 42(1):50-69.
- July 20th Class 5: Cultural and Medical Pluralism
1. Lock, M., & Kaufert, P. (2001). [Menopause, local biologies, and cultures of aging](#). *American Journal of Human Biology*, 13(4), 494-504
 2. Fadiman, A. (1997) *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (Chapters 3 and 5) (**On Quercus**)
- July 22nd Class 6: Health Discourse Research (Readings TBA)
- July 27th Class 7: Structural and Political Violence
1. Farmer, Paul (1996) "[On Suffering and Structural Violence: A view from Below](#)." *Daedalus*. 125(1): 261-283.

2. Willen, S. S. (2012). [Migration, "illegality," and health: Mapping embodied vulnerability and debating health-related deservingness](#). *Social Science & Medicine*, 74(6), 805-811

July 29th

Class 8: Social Determinants of Health I

1. Raphael, Dennis (2004) Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health. Pp. 1-17 In. *Social Determinants of Health: Canadian Perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. **(On Quercus)**
2. Link & Phelan (2005) Fundamental Sources of Health Inequalities. In: Mechanic, D. (Ed) *Policy challenges in modern health care*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press. **(On Quercus)**

Aug 3rd

Civic Holiday (no class)

August 5th

Class 9: Social Determinants of Health II

1. Williams, David R & Michelle Sternthal. (2010). [Understanding Racial-ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions](#). *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. Vol. 51 Pp 15-28
2. Bird, C. E., & Rieker, P. P. (1999). [Gender matters: An integrated model for understanding men's and women's health](#). *Social Science & Medicine*, 48(6), 745-755
3. Logie, C. (2012) [The case for the world health organization's commission on the social determinants of health to address sexual orientation](#). *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(7), 1243-6.

August 10th

Class 10: Embodied Health

1. Charmaz, K. (1995). [The Body, Identity, and Self: Adapting to Impairment](#). *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36(4), 657-680
2. Gimlin, D. (2007). [Accounting for cosmetic surgery in the USA and Great Britain: A cross-cultural analysis of women's narratives](#). *Body & Society*, 13(1), 41-60
3. Andreescu, F. C. (2018). [Opening up bodies for harvest: Embodiment and global capitalism](#). *Theory & Event*, 21(2), 411-433.

August 12th

Class 11: Health Practices & Interventions

1. Clark, S. L. (2018). [Fitness, fatness and healthism discourse: Girls constructing 'healthy' identities in school](#). *Gender and Education*, 30(4), 477-493
2. Firth, J. (2012). [Healthy choices and heavy burdens: race, citizenship and gender in the 'obesity epidemic'](#). *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 13(2), 33+
3. Nichols, Shaun, and J. Eric Oliver (2006) Chapter 9 in: [Fat Politics : The Real Story Behind America's Obesity Epidemic](#), Oxford University Press, Inc.

August 17th

Online review session during class time via BB Collaborate (no readings)

Calendar of Tasks (July & August)

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
05	06	07	08	09	10	11
	Class 1 (no posts)		Class 2 Discussion Post		Preliminary Data Collection Due	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Class 3 Discussion Post	Self-Selection into Groups	Class 4 Discussion Post Check-in 1			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	Class 5 Discussion Post Check-in 2		Class 6 Discussion Post Check-in 2		Literature Review Due	
26	27	28	29	30	31	01
	Class 7 Discussion Post Check-in 3		Class 8 Discussion Post Check-in 3		Get Sign-Off on Research Question	
02	03	04	05	06	07	08
	Civic Holiday		Class 9 Discussion Post Check-in 4			
09	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Class 10 Discussion Post Check-in 5		Class 11 Discussion Post Check-in 5	Final Research Paper Due		
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	Class 12: Live Review via BB Collaborate Take Home Test Starts 6pm			Take Home Test Due 6pm		