**Sociology of Urban Health (Soc335H1S)**

Winter 2021 University of Toronto

**Course Info:** Thursdays 12-3pm (first class January 14th, 2021)
Lectures online using Microsoft Teams Video (when synchronous),
or pre-recorded and posted (when asynchronous).
Course website and links for weekly lectures found on Quercus:
https://q.utoronto.ca/courses/196950

**Instructor:** Professor Brent Berry, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto
brent.berry@utoronto.ca
Online Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:00pm & by appointment

**TAs:** TBA
Office Hours: Scheduled as needed

**Overview**
Sociology of Urban health examines the intersection of health and urbanization. This course investigates how *place and urban social context* affects health and well-being through various social features of the urban landscape and their interaction with key social identities. Health and health behaviors 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’ neighborhood 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 on these topics and discuss potential solutions for remedying exposure and vulnerability of these groups to the risks of urban settings.

This course has a third hour of weekly instruction that will be devoted to different topics – skills development, workshops, presentations of discussion groups. Students will complete an individual exercise as well as work in small groups to complete a research project. In addition to submitting a final group paper, all groups will develop a video presentation of their work.

**Evaluation**
Final marks will be based on the following—
- Weekly reaction/response papers 20%
- Individual exercise (due Mar 4th) 20%
- Group Project:
  - Paper (due April 1st) 30%
  - Video presentation (due April 8th) 20%
- Participation and attendance 10%

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. Readings listed as “supplemental” or “further reading” are optional, meaning they are not required. The instructor will sometimes post slides or discussion guide the evening before class. They are provided to benefit in-class note taking. Besides the posted lecture slides, we will incorporate a range of audiovisual materials. It is important to complete all required readings and attend class.

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.

Missing Deadlines/Submitting Late Work
Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN).
(NOTE: Because of Covid-19, students do NOT need to submit the usual documentation, i.e., medical notes or the Verification of Illness forms).

Students who miss the test or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor.

Late work will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor.

Turnitin
Students agree that, by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of those papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless students instead provide, along with their exams, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the exam they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via Turnitin) is in place because, strictly speaking, using Turnitin is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.
**Plagiarism:** Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the “Code of Behavior on Academic Matters”). If you are using someone else’s ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else’s ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference -- you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

**Accessibility Needs**
The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility.

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**COURSE OUTLINE**

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

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

**Jan 14**\(^{th}\) -- Introductory Class
Discuss course and brief overview of mutual expectations and material

**Jan 21**\(^{st}\) -- Sociology and Urban Health


**Optional Readings:**

**Video (time-permitting):** *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* 1988 (55 min)
An engaging and informative tour of the urban landscape, while exploring how it can be made more hospitable for those who must live in it. This film also shows what can be learned through systematic observation of people in urban environments.

**Jan 28**\(^{th}\) -- How is Urban Health Patterned? Some Examples
(3) James, et al 2007. Avoidable mortality by neighbourhood income in Canada: 25 years after the


Optional Readings:
For a more extensive related analysis, see this report —

Canadian Institute for Health Information, Reducing Gaps in Health: A Focus on Socio-Economic Status in Urban Canada (Ottawa, Ont.: CIHI, 2008).


Feb 4th -- Historical Sweep to the Present -- The Health Climacteric: From Material Scarcity to Social Disadvantage


Optional Readings:

Feb 11th -- Sociological and Epidemiological Explanations of Health in the Urban Context


Optional Readings:
Fitzgerald, D., Rose, N., Singh, I., (2016), 'Revitalizing sociology: Urban life and mental illness between history and the present', British Journal of Sociology

Feb 18th is Reading Week (no class)

Feb 25th -- Social Context and Urban Health: Neighbourhood Disadvantage, Risks, and Inequality


Video: Robert J Sampson ”Neighborhood Effects and the Contemporary City”; 16 minutes https://youtu.be/smuxHR_zc2Q

Optional Readings:


Curry et al 2008 Pathways to depression impact of neighborhood violent crime on inner city residents in Baltimore. Social Science and Medicine. nihms-55719

Robert Woods Johnson Foundation Report # rwjf70452 “Violence, social disadvantage and health”

March 4th -- Healthy Cities Approach: Perspectives, Methods, Measurement

**Exercise due by today**

Readings for today:

(13) Hancock, T. 2017 “Healthy Cities emerge: Toronto – Ottawa – Copenhagen” In De Leeuw, Evelyn and Simos, Jean *Healthy Cities – The Theory, Policy, and Practice of Value-Based Urban Health Planning*. Springer

Optional Readings:
Promoting Health in the Urban Context WHO Healthy Cities Papers Num 1 E87743
Oickle Clement 2019 Glossary of health equity concepts for public health action in the Canadian context

PART 2. Special Topics and Populations in the Sociology of Urban Health

March 11th -- Healthiness of Green Spaces, Walkability, Physical Design of the City

Readings for Today:


Optional Readings:


Cole HVS, Garcia Lamarca M, Connolly JYT, et al Are green cities healthy and equitable? Unpacking the relationship between health, green space and gentrification J Epidemiol Community Health Published Online First: 19 August 2017. doi: 10.1136/jech-2017-209201


March 18th -- Housing, Homelessness, and Health

Readings for today:
www.homelesshub.ca/FindingHome


Optional Readings:

Video: Sidewalk (time-permitting)

March 25th -- The Health of Urban Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities

Readings for today:


Optional Readings:


Video (time permitting)

**April 1st -- Healthy Cities for Youth, Older Adults, and Families**

**Group Project Final Papers Due today**


Optional Readings:
Morrow 2003 No ball games: children’s views of their urban environments
Gusmano Rodwin 2010 urban aging social isolation and emergency preparedness

Video: Aging in Place (12 min)

**April 8th-- The Urban Foodscape and Food Environment**

**Group Project Presentation Due today**

Readings for today:


(27) Joassart-Marcelli, P.; Rossiter, J.; Bosco, F. Ethnic markets and community food security in an


Optional Readings:


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).


“A Failed Food System in India Prompts an Intense Review” - The New York Times (8 June 2012)

Video: *The Obesity Epidemic* (5 min)

Other Course Resources

Maps: We will examine maps from two websites in class--

- Toronto Neighbourhood Profiles: [http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/neighbourhoods.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/neighbourhoods.htm)
- Toronto Community Health Profiles: [http://www.torontohealthprofiles.ca/](http://www.torontohealthprofiles.ca/)

Films: I show a number of short films that may include but not be limited to the following--

- Flemingdon Park: The global village – 2002, audiovisual library (Media commons, 3rd floor, Robarts library), videocassette #00672, 46 minutes
- The Obesity Epidemic. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [https://youtu.be/vCORDl4bqDE?list=PLWpxAkD-s7P4p_ZqBhiHLkZI8kH4OXLim](https://youtu.be/vCORDl4bqDE?list=PLWpxAkD-s7P4p_ZqBhiHLkZI8kH4OXLim)
- How more Americans are “Aging in Place” [https://youtu.be/5VqgSkN14JE](https://youtu.be/5VqgSkN14JE)
- Steven Johnson tours the “Ghost Map” [about the cholera outbreak in 1854 London and the impact it had on science, cities and modern society] (10 minutes) [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/steven_johnson_tours_the_ghost_map.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/steven_johnson_tours_the_ghost_map.html)
- Carolyn Steel on “How food shapes our cities” (15 minutes) [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/carolyn_steel_how_food_shapes_our_cities.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/carolyn_steel_how_food_shapes_our_cities.html)
- Ellen Dunham-Jones on “Retrofitting suburbia” (19 minutes) [http://www.ted.com/talks/ellen_dunham_jones_retrofitting_suburbia.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ellen_dunham_jones_retrofitting_suburbia.html)