

University of Toronto – Department of Sociology  
**SOC 363H1S: Sociology of Mental Health & Mental Disorders**  
**Summer 2021**

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### **Course Description**

This course provides an overview of the link between social inequality and inequality in distress, focusing on differences in mental health across social groups and the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences. Sociological approaches to mental health and mental disorders reveal how inequitable social conditions have important consequences on mental and emotional well-being. In the first half of the course, we will examine key conceptual issues and theoretical models in the field, as well as the impact of coping resources in helping individuals negotiate the experience of mental stress, distress and disorder. In the second half of the course, we will explore patterns in the social distribution of mental health, paying special consideration to how mental health varies across different axes of inequality, including: race, gender and sexuality. We will also evaluate the impact of neighbourhood, as a social context influencing exposure and vulnerability to stress and mental health consequences. Lastly, we will review efforts to carry out social control of mental disorders via chemical restraints.

### **Goals & Learning Outcomes**

1. Acquire knowledge of relevant sociological theories and apply these to examine the role of stress and coping resources in explaining group differences
2. Interrogate how social inequality shapes the social distribution of mental health/ disorders
3. Engage in critical thinking and apply course and lecture materials to develop a sociological analysis of current issues in the sociology of mental health and mental disorders
4. Critically examine the social construction of mental health in the media and its implications for how we approach mental health interventions.

### **Course Format**

This is a fully virtual class. Two asynchronous pre-recorded video lectures will be made available each week via *BB Collaborate/MyMedia*. Students are expected to watch these videos and stay on top of the weekly material. Verification of weekly reading will be assessed via class memos in which students are expected to discuss 1 main concept from each class. Students will have the opportunity to ask questions and receive clarifications about the class material or assignments during weekly office hours, or any time via email/the class discussion board.

**Prerequisites:** The prerequisite to take this course is 1 sociology FCE at the 200+ level. Please note, students without this prerequisite will be removed any time they are discovered and

without notice. Students who have already complete SOC334H1 are not permitted to take this course. The class prerequisites and exclusions are firm and cannot be waived.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS

1. Class Memos: The goal of the class memos is to ensure that students stay on top of the readings, to allow students to grapple with and think about the assigned material in a critical manner, and to reflect on their outside applicability. All class memos should be 1-2 double-spaced pages each must be uploaded to Quercus (emailed submissions will not be accepted).

In total, students are expected to complete 8 class memos. Of these, 5 memos will be graded pass/fail. These will be worth 1% each, making up 5% of the final grade. N.B. submitting a memo does not guarantee a passing mark. A failing mark might be given if the memo is incomplete or shows little evidence of engagement with the material.

Three of the class memos will be randomly selected for grading based on a percentage score. These will make up 45% of the final grade. In recognition that there will be a learning curve as students adjust to the course expectations, the first memo selected for full grading is worth 10%, the second memo is worth 15% and, the remaining memo is worth 20% of the final grade. This grading scheme is designed based on the expectation that students take into account feedback received on earlier memos in writing the later memos.

Class memos must be submitted to Quercus by midnight on the Sunday following the corresponding classes. Full details on grading are provided in the Class Memo instruction sheet posted on Quercus.

2. Mental Health Media Analysis: Students will select a mental health issue that has been covered in news media in the last 5 years and apply course and outside literature to analyse how this mental health issue has been socially constructed in media. Students will present their findings in a 5-7 page report including: overview of topic selected, literature review, research methods, findings and analysis. Reports should demonstrate critical thinking about the social construction of mental health and reflect on the implications for the design and potential of corresponding mental health interventions. The media analysis is worth 25% of the final grade and all reports must be uploaded to Quercus by July 29<sup>th</sup>.
3. 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 10th at 12pm and answers must be uploaded to Quercus by 6pm on August 13<sup>th</sup>.

## GRADING SUMMARY

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
5 Pass/Fail Class Memos	5 points	Ongoing
3 Percentage-Graded Class Memos	45 points	Ongoing
Mental Health Media Analysis	25 points	July 29 <sup>th</sup>
<u>Take Home</u>	<u>25 points</u>	<u>August 10<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup></u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 points</b>	

## 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. SOC363) 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

### **Work more than 7 days late will not be accepted without supporting documentation.**

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 health, 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.

Given the current pandemic, I understand students may experience additional difficulties in completing coursework. My priority is on you, your wellbeing and your learning *as people*, and in supporting you to get through the semester. 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

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

All participants in the class, including students and teaching staff are expected to conduct themselves professionally and engage with each other in a respectful manner. While unfortunately the asynchronous class format limits the possibilities for class interaction, the expectations for professionalism and respect hold for all other interactions, including: discussion board posts, office hours, Quercus messaging, etc. It is important to recognize that we each approach the material and assignments from a different standpoint, and as such may hold different perspectives. If confronted with an opposing idea, my expectation is for students to engage in dialogue with each other to build understanding around these differences. Each person in the class has valuable insights to contribute and students' learning in the class will be maximized when we each commit to sharing with and listening to each other as openly as possible.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

- July 6<sup>th</sup>            Class 1: Introduction &
1. Aneshensel, Carol S., Jo E. Phelan, and Alex Bierman. 2013. "The Sociology of Mental Health: Surveying the Field." Pp. 1-22 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Springer.
- July 8<sup>th</sup>            Class 2: Concepts, Measurements & Outcomes
1. Aneshensel, Carol S., Carolyn M. Rutter, and Peter A. Lachenbruch. 1991. "Social Structure, Stress, and Mental Health: Competing Conceptual and Analytic Models." *American Sociological Review* 56:166-78.
  2. Mirowsky, John and Catherine E. Ross. 2002. "Measurement for a Human Science." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43:152-70.
  3. Wheaton, Blair. 2007. "The Twain Meet: Distress, Disorder and the Continuing Conundrum of Categories (comment on Horwitz)." *Health* 11(3):303-319.
- July 13<sup>th</sup>            Class 3: Modeling Mental Health: The Stress Process
1. Wheaton, Blair, Marisa Young, Shirin Montazer, and Katie Stuart-Lahman. 2013. "Social Stress in the Twenty-First Century." Pp. 299-324 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Springer.
  2. Pearlin, Leonard I. and Alex Bierman. 2013. "Current Issues and Future Directions into the Stress Process." Pp. 325-340 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: Springer.
  3. McLeod, Jane D. 2012. "The Meanings of Stress: Expanding the Stress Process Model." *Society and Mental Health* 2:172-186.
- July 15<sup>th</sup>            Class 4: Psychosocial Resources

1. Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2013. "The Sense of Personal Control: Social-Structural Causes and Emotional Consequences." Pp. 379-404 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Springer.
2. Taylor, S. E., & Stanton, A. L. (2007). Coping resources, coping processes, and mental health. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 3 , 377–401.
3. Thoits, P. A. (2011). Mechanisms linking social ties and support to physical and mental health. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 52 , 145–161.

July 20<sup>th</sup>

Class 5: Social Patterns of Mental Health

1. Kessler, Ronald. C. 2013. "Overview of Descriptive Epidemiology of Mental Disorders." Pp. 169-82 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, New York: Springer.
2. Turner, R. Jay, Blair Wheaton, and Donald A. Lloyd. 1995. "The Epidemiology of Social Stress." *American Sociological Review* 60: 104–25
3. Schieman, Scott., Karen van Gundy, and John Taylor. 2001. "Status, Role, and Resource Explanations for Age Patterns in Psychological Distress" *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 42(1): 80-96.

July 22<sup>nd</sup>

Class 6: Race, Discrimination and Police Violence

1. Brown, T. N. et al. 2013. "Race, Nativity, Ethnicity, and Cultural Influences in the Sociology of Mental Health." Pp. 255-276 in *The Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., New York: Springer.
2. Taylor, J. & Turner, R.J. 2002. "Perceived Discrimination, Social Stress, and Depression in the Transition to Adulthood: Racial Contrasts." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 65:213-225.
3. Auger, M., Crooks, C. V., Lapp, A., Tsuruda, S., Caron, C., Rogers, B. J., & van der Woerd, K. (2019). [The essential role of cultural safety in developing culturally-relevant prevention programming in First Nations communities: Lessons learned from a national evaluation of Mental Health First Aid First Nations](#). *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 72(Complete), 188–196.

July 27<sup>th</sup>

Class 7: Gender

1. Rosenfield, Sarah and David Mouzon. 2013. "Gender and Mental Health." Pp. 277-296 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.
2. Simon, Robin. 1995. "Gender, Multiple Roles, Role Meaning, and Mental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 36:182–194.
3. Thoits, P.A. & Longest, K.C. 2012. "Gender, the Stress Process, and Health: A Configurational Approach". *Society and Mental Health* 2(3): 187-206

July 29<sup>th</sup>

Class 8: Sexuality

1. Caplan, Z. 2017. "The Problem with Square Pegs: Sexual Orientation Concordance as a Predictor of Depressive Symptoms". *Society and Mental Health* 7(2): 105-120
  2. Green, A. I. 2008. "Health and Sexual Status in an Urban Gay Enclave: An Application of the Stress Process Model", *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 49:436-451
  3. Hsieh, N. 2014. "Explaining the Mental Health Disparity by Sexual Orientation: The importance of Social Resources". *Society and Mental Health* 4(2):129-146
- \*Media Analysis Due**

Aug. 3<sup>rd</sup>

Class 9: Neighbourhoods

1. Aneshensel, CS, Sucoff CA. 1996. "The neighborhood context of adolescent mental health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*. 37:293-310
2. Turney, K., Kissane, R. & Edin, K. 2012. "After Moving to Opportunity: How Moving to a Low-Poverty Neighborhood Improved Mental Health Among African American Women". *Society and Mental Health* 3(1): 1-21
3. Young, M., & Wheaton, B. (2013). The Impact of Neighborhood Composition on Work-Family Conflict and Distress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 54(4), 481-497.

Aug. 5<sup>th</sup>

Class 10: Mental Disorders and Social Control

1. Kilty, Jennifer. (2012). "[It's Like They Don't Want to Get Better: Psy Control of Women in Carceral Contexts.](#)" *Feminism & Psychology*, 22(2): 162-182
2. Fitzgerald, T. D. (2009). "[Controlling the Black School-Age Male: Psychotropic Medications and the Circumvention of Public Law 94-142 and Section 504](#)". *Urban Education*, 44(2): 225–247.
3. Freundlich, Naomi. (2011). "["Atypical" Antipsychotics Misused As "Chemical Restraints" For Youthful Offenders](#)". Health Beat (online)
4. Schweikart, Scott. (2019). "[April 2018 Flores Settlement Suit Challenges Unlawful Administration of Psychotropic Medication to Immigrant Children](#)". *AMA Journal of Ethics*, 21(1): E67-72

Aug. 10<sup>th</sup>

Class 11: Review Class (No Readings)

Aug. 12<sup>th</sup>

Final Test Due