**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS**

**COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES–DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**SOCI 3120: SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS**

**FALL 2019**

**Professor**: Gül Seçkin, M.S.G., Ph.D. **Class Dates:** T, TH

**Office:** Sycamore Hall 288H **Class Time**: 2:30-3:20 p.m.

**Email:** [Gul.Seckin@unt.edu](mailto:Gul.Seckin@unt.edu) **Class Location**: WH 316

**Phone:** 940-369-7751 **TA:** Zoriliz Riveria

**Office Hours:** T & TR 3:30-5:00 pm \***TA Email:** zoriliz.rivera@unt.edu

or by appointment

\*For a quicker response, students are encouraged to email the course TA, Ms. Riveria.

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course provides an overview of the current state of medical sociology. State of health and illness is an individual experience that is heavily influenced by social processes (e.g., family, community, environmental factors). In this course, we will not only examine how health-related experiences unfold, but we will also consider how health is a product of a social context. The reciprocal dynamics between biomedical science and society is exposed and debated. Students will learn about how diverse factors affect health in multitude of ways, including health disparities, cumulative advantage and disadvantage across the life course, access to government services and programs.

You will be introduced to a broad spectrum of topics and issues throughout this course, which will entail a substantial amount of reading. This course draws on the rich contributions of several disciplines (e.g. sociology, psychology, demography, public health, economic, and public policy) as they shed light on the origins, scope, and dynamics of the social issues shaping individuals’ health and well-being. Key concepts, current research findings, and important policies will be discussed taking socio-historical contexts into account. The course will also challenge students to consider complex issues and their unique impact on diverse populations. Social conflict will remain a consistent theme throughout the course, with particular attention given to the stark health disparities. You will complete the readings prior to the start of class. Class sessions will be a combination of lectures and discussion. I often use the question/answer format to draw students into the discussion and to get the points across. Some of our classes will be online. By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Identify ways in which the socio-historical context and social factors shape health and illness.

2. Identify the ways in which changing social demographics, emerging social trends and scientific and technological advancements influence the development of health policies and services.

3. Critically consider the distinct challenges facing individuals of minority backgrounds

(e.g., racial/ethnic, sexual identity, gender, religious, non-traditional, family, etc.).

**COURSE TEXT BOOKS**

Conrad, P. & Leiter, V. (2018). *Sociology of Health & Illness: Critical Perspectives.* Worth Publishers.

Additional online articles will be uploaded on Canvas.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Schedule below, including the dates for online classes, and due dates for assignments, are subject to revision as deemed necessary by the professor. Make sure that you are aware of the announcements made in class and on blackboard.

Week 1:August 27

**Topics: Introduction to Sociology of Health & Illness**

**Required readings:**

1. Preface (p. ix)

2. General introduction (book pages 1-5)

3. The social production of disease and meanings of illness (book pages 7-9)

Week 2:September 3 & 5 **(online class 1**)

**Topics: The social nature of health & disease**

**Required readings (choose 3):**

1. The Impact of Disasters: Implications for the Well-Being of Older Adults (online article)

2. Early Origins of Adult Health and Aging (online article)

3. Racial and Ethnic Inequalities in Health (online article)

4. Medical measures and decline of mortality (book pages 10-21)

5. Who gets sick? The unequal social distribution of disease (book pages 24-26)

6. Social class, susceptibility, and sickness (book pages 28-32).

**Online Exercise 1 & Discussion Forum Participation 1 is due on September 5, 11:59 p.m.**

**Reaction Paper 1 is due on September 8, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 3: September 10 & 12

**Topics: Who gets sick? The unequal social distribution of disease**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Religion, Health and Aging (online article)

2. Health Inequalities among Older in Developed Countries (online article)

3.Epidemiology of Aging (online article)

4. Understanding racial-ethnic disparities in health: Sociological contributions (book pages 34-42)

5. Sex, gender, and vulnerability (book pages 45-55)

6. Disease and disadvantage in the United States and England (book pages 58-68)

**Reaction Paper 2 is due on September 15, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 4: September 17 **(online class 2**) & 19

**Topics: Our sickening social and physical environments**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Inequalities in Health and Mortality: Gender, Race, & Class (online article)

2. Biosocial Interactions in the Construction of Late-Life Health Status (online article)

3. Health and Aging: Early Origins, Persistent Inequalities? (online article)

4. The health politics of asthma: Environmental justice and collective illness experience in the United States (book pages 81-92)

5. Social Relationships and health (book pages 93-101)

6. Dying alone: The social production of urban isolation (book pages 102-115)

7. Greater equality: The hidden key to better health and higher scores (book pages 117-122)

**Online Exercise 2 & Discussion Forum Participation 2 is due on September 17, 11:59 p.m.**

**Reaction Paper 3 is due on September 22, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 5:September 24 & 26

**Topics: The social and cultural meaning of illness**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Sociocultural Perspectives on Ageing Bodies (online article)

2. Mental Health and Aging: A Life-Course Perspective (online article)

3.Aging with HIV/AIDS (online article)

4. Morality and health: News media construction overweight and eating disorders (book pages 127-143)

5. Illness meanings of AIDS among women with HIV: Merging immunology and life experience (book pages 146-157)

6. Whose deaths matter? Mortality, advocacy, and attention to disease in the mass media (book pages 158-173)

**Reaction Paper 4 is due on September 29, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 6: October 1 **(online class 3**) & 3

**Topics: The experience of illness**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Obesity: A Sociological Examination (online article)

2. Religious Involvement, Health Status, and Mortality Risk (online article)

3. Ageing and Health among Hispanics/Latinos in the Americas (online article)

4. Immigration, Aging, and Health in the United States (online article)

5. Electronic support groups, patient-consumers, and medicalization: The case of contested illness (book pages 180-193)

6. The meaning of medications: Another look at compliance (book pages 197-207)

7. The remission society (book pages 209-211)

**Online Exercise 3 & Discussion Forum Participation #3 is due on October 1,11:59 p.m.**

**October 6: Movie paper due by 11:59 p.m.**

Week 7: October 8 & 10

**Topics: The social organization of medical care**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. From quackery to complementary medicine: The American medical profession confronts alternative therapies (book pages 282-295).

2. From Lydia Pinkham to Queen Levitra: Direct-to-consumer advertising and medicalization (book pages 301-310)

3. The pinking of Viagra culture: Drug industry efforts to create and repackage sex drugs for women (book pages 312-319)

4. The end of the golden age of doctoring (book pages 234-256)

5. Countervailing power: The changing character of medical profession in the United States (book pages 260-268)

6. A caring dilemma: Womanhood and nursing in historical perspective (book pages 272-280)

**Reaction Paper 5 is due on October 13, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 8: October 15 **(online class 4**) & 17

**Topics: Health care reform and the patient-doctor relationship**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Sociology of health care reform: Building on research and analysis to improve health care (book pages 357-365)

2. Rationing: Theory, politics, and passions book pages 367-372)

3. Historical and comparative reflections on the U.S. national health insurance reforms (book pages 373-378)

4. The struggle between the voice of medicine and the voice of the lifeworld (book pages 382-393)

5. Cultural brokerage: Creating linkages between voice of lifeworld and medicine in cross-cultural clinical settings book pages 394-406).

6. Social death as self-fulfilling prophecy (book pages 409-422)

7. The language of case presentation (book pages 425-441)

**Online Exercise 4 & Discussion Forum Participation 4 is due on October 15, 11:59 p.m.**

**Reaction Paper 6 is due on October 20, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 9:October 22& 24

October 22: Midterm review

**October 24: Midterm**

Week 10: October 29 **(online class 5**) & October 31

**Topics: Dilemmas of medical technology**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. MRI as cultural icon (book pages 448-456)

2. God help you. You are on dialysis (book pages 460-468)

3. A mirage of genes (book pages 468-476)

4. State-specific obesity prevalence among adults: United Sates 2009 (book pages482-486)

5. Risk as moral danger: The social and political functions of risk discourse in public health (book pages 487-493)

6. Population Ageing, Health Systems, and Equity: Shared Challenges for the United States & Canada (online article)

**Online Exercise 5 & Discussion Forum Participation 5 is due on October 29**

**Reaction Paper 7 is due on November 3, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 11:November 5 & 7

**Topics: The medicalization of American society and the Internet**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Medicine as an institution of social control (book pages 497-506)

2. The shifting engines of medicalization (book pages 507-516)

3. Illness, medicine, and the Internet book pages 519-521)

4. Illness and internet empowerment: Writing and reading breast cancer in cyberspace (book pages 522-533)

5. Untangling the web: Patients, doctors, and the Internet (book pages 536-538)

6. Social Dimensions of Anti-Ageing Science and Medicine (online article)

**Reaction Paper 8 is due on November 10, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 12: November 12 & 14

**Topics: Toward alternatives in health care**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Comparative health policies (book pages 539-541)

2. Comparative models of health care systems (book pages 543-556)

3. Health care reform: Lessons from Canada (book pages 558-563)

4. Continuity and change in the British national health service (book pages 565-577)

5. Organization and financing of health care (Online article)

6. End of life planning and health care (online article)

**November 14: Current Event Paper due by 11:59 p.m.**

Week 13:November 19& 21

**Topics: Deviance and medicalization**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Deviance, definitions, and the medical profession (online article)

2. From badness to sickness: Changing designations of deviance and social control (online article).

3. Medical model of madness: The emergence of mental illness (online article)

4. Children and medicalization: Delinquency, hyperactivity, and child abuse (online article)

5. Homosexuality: From sin to sickness to life-style (online article)

6. Medicine and crime: The search for the born criminal and the medical control of criminality (online article)

7. A theoretical statement on the medicalization of deviance (online article)

**Reaction Paper 9 is due on November 24, 11:59 p.m.**

Week 14: November 26

**Topics: Prevention, movements, and social change**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Prevention, movements, and social change (book pages 580-582)

2. A case for refocusing upstream: The political economy of illness (book pages 583-593)

3. Politicizing health care (book pages 596-600)

4. Embodied health movements: Uncharted territory in social movement research (book pages 600-613)

5. Sickness and health in America: The role of public health in the prevention of disease (online article)

6. Hidden arguments: Political ideology and disease prevention policy (online article)

7. 5. Doctoring as a business: Money, markets, and managed care book pages 337-344)

Week 15:December 3 & 5

**Topics: The patient status beyond the sick role, social construction of disease, and de-medicalization**

**Required readings (Choose 3):**

1. Neurasthenia: Weakness and exhaustion in the United States and China (online article)

2. Women and medicalization: A new perspective (online article)

3. Turkey-baster babies: The de-medicalization of artificial insemination (online article)

4. Bringing the social back in: A critique of the biomedicalization of dementia (online article)

5. Misdiagnosis of senile dementia: Denial of care to the elderly (online article)

6. How short is too short? Marketing human growth hormone (online article)

**Reaction Paper 10 is due on December 3, 11:59 p.m**

**December 12: Final (1:30 p.m. -3:30 p.m.)**

**ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING**

**I. Attendance & Class Participation** (15 attendances X 15 points = 225 points possible)

In order for you and your fellow classmates to benefit from this course, attendance and active participation are expected. Students should read carefully so that they come to class with both insightful comments and questions. The instructor will note your level of participation and you can earn your points for regularly attending and actively participating in class discussions and activities. One’s participation grade reflects being present and participation in class activities. Class activities will be an opportunity for you to earn your attendance/participation points and serve as foundation for your assignments.

**II. Reaction Papers** (10 papers X 25 points = 250 points possible)

In order to encourage critical thinking about the assigned readings and to stimulate classroom discussions, all students are expected to write reaction papers based on assigned readings. These papers are expected to show thought and critical engagement with the readings. Essentially, students will be asked to critically reflect on the course content. These papers are to be two to three pages in length. You will upload your papers on Blackboard and hand in hard copies in class. In your reaction papers, you should evaluate what you have read and respond by discussing the following:

1. What are the important points discussed in the chapter?
2. Can these important points be generalized to individuals of diverse backgrounds with respect to gender, ethnicity, culture, spirituality, or sexual orientation? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. What questions do you feel the reading should have addressed, but did not?
4. Overall, what do you believe are the implications?
5. What are the primary findings of the article and how did the author(s) come to these conclusions?
6. Given the data and methods, do you agree with the conclusions drawn by the author(s)?
7. Taking all of the above discussion into account, what actions are now called for?
8. If you were to complete a follow-up research project that built on the findings of this article, what would you study and how would you study it?
9. What contributions (if any) does this reading provide that the other required readings did not cover?
10. Propose two questions based on your readings for class discussion.

**III. Current Event Paper** (1 paper X 50 points =50 points possible)

The issues addressed in this class relate to contemporary problems, and often appear as headlines in the local and national media. This course requires you to look critically at the ways in which issues impacting health and well-being are conceptualized, represented and addressed by society. To assist you in this process, you are required to write a current event paper in which you locate an article that relates to the course content. News articles (*not* op-ed articles) may be selected from one of many state or national newspapers (e.g. New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, LA Times) or one of the following news magazines: Time Magazine, U.S. News & World Report, The Economist or Newsweek). You may use the online searchable archives of these publications to locate an article; however, your news article must be dated from January 1, 2015 up to the present day. This paper is to be not less than two and not more than three pages in length (title and reference notincluded in page length). It will be graded as follows:

1. Briefsummary of article. (No longer than one paragraph)

2. How is the issue under consideration portrayed by the author of this news article?

3. Thinking back to what you have learned so far in course readings and lecture, what do you feel are the strengths of this article? Weaknesses?

4. How accurate is the author’s portrayal of the issue and why?

5. How does this article contribute to your understanding of the social context in which health and disease factors are situated?

**IV. Movie Paper** (1 paper X 75 points = 75 points possible)

My goal in assigning this paper is to engage the student in thinking sociologically beyond the text and the classroom. I believe it makes sociology more meaningful when students recognize that it is everywhere and appreciate that learning extends well beyond the academic environment. The paper should be 2-3 pages (title and reference notincluded in page length). Cite from your class materials where appropriate. Make it evident that you identified themes/content from the movie that reflects key concepts from the course. Keep in mind that many of these films may reinforce, as well as question stereotypes or biases. Please use the following as your outline:

1. Summarize the movie. (This should be one paragraph. Be succinct.)

2. What is the main theme?

3. How is the particular sociological theme or concept, related to the course content, addressed in the movie?

4. Conclude with an evaluation of the movie. Did you enjoy it? Why or why not

**V. Online Exercises** (5 discussion exercises x 50 points = 250 points + 5 discussion forums X 20 = 100 points. Total 350 points possible).

In order to encourage critical thinking, you are required to respond to discussion questions presented in online assignments. Essentially, you will critically reflect on the course content. Your answers should make up approximately two to three pages (total, nor per question). You will upload your answers on blackboard. Each assignment will be 50 points. There will be five assignments, each of which is 50 points. This means that you will have a chance to earn 250 points (5x50). You will also be required to participate in online discussion boards. Each student will (a) post their answers on discussion forum and (b) respond to two of their classmates’ posts. You will participate in online discussion forums 5 times, each of which will be 20 points. This means that you will have a chance to earn 100 points (5x20).Because this is a 300 level course, I expect your responses to be meaningful, substantial and lengthy enough (not like-I agree with you!)

**VI. Exams-Midterm & Final** (Each exam is 150 points X 2 exams = 300 points possible)

There will be two exams, which will cover material from the readings, class lectures, videos, and class discussions. The final examination will not be comprehensive. Detailed instructions about the exams will be provided as the semester progresses.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Missed Assignments**

Success in this class is assessed by the degree to which students demonstrate effort, understanding, and critical analysis of the subject matter. All course assignments are to be submitted no later than due date specified on the course syllabus. Students who have a legitimate reason for submitting a late assignment should contact the instructor PRIOR to due date. The instructor reserves the right to determine whether a late assignment can be submitted without point penalty and/or whether you can make-up a missed in-class assignment. Unapproved late assignments will be marked down three points for each day they are late. The University attorney advises faculty members to notify students that the syllabus is not a contract and is therefore subject to change. We will try to adhere to the schedule provided, but it is important to note that changes may be necessary to meet unforeseen needs and events.

**Written Assignments**

Written assignments must be completed in APA format, including the following:

• Cover page including title, name, date submitted, course number, course title

• One-inch margins

• 1.5 spaced

• Times New Roman, 12-point font, and references.

**Grade Distribution**

Total points you can earn in this class is 1250, which will be added and converted to 100 metric system via Blackboard course grade calculation as follows: A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 59 or below

**Additional Policies**

I recommend you to refer to UNT Policies (regarding withdrawals, student accommodation with health challenges, absence due to athletic events, student misconduct, academic dishonesty and the services). Information is found at the following websites:

<https://disability.unt.edu/>;

<http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>;

<http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/withdrawals>