SOC 4408G: ADVANCED SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

Class meets Wednesdays 9:30-12:30 in SSC 5235

Instructor: Dr. Anna Zajacova
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Office: SSC 5330
Office hours: Wednesdays 2-5pm and by appointment.

Prerequisite(s): Enrolment in fourth year of one of the Honors Specializations or Honors Double Major in Sociology or Criminology, or the BHSc Aging.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this course, we explore the idea that health and illness cannot be understood simply as biological phenomena or individual medical problems. Instead, we must consider broad societal influences, from structural and cultural to political and economic forces.

We will study social aspects of health and illness, the roles of the patients and health care providers and their interactions and discuss the basics of Canada’s health care system and policy from a sociological perspective.

Issues surrounding health and health care are at the forefront of economic, social, and political discourse in Canada and globally today. The overarching goal of this course is to help you become a better-informed citizen with respect to health and health-care issues by analyzing these phenomena sociologically.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
At the completion of the class, students will be able to
- Provide a broad overview of the field of medical sociology
- Understand the links between social factors and health
- Appreciate how age, sex, race/ethnicity, social class, and other sociodemographic characteristics shape health and illness over the lifecourse
- Describe how health and illness are socially constructed and how this perspective helps us understand the many developments in medicine
- Explain major historical and current issues related to medical institutions, the medical professions, and health care in the United States
- Critically evaluate the how a society’s views on health and medical care fit within its broader cultural and structural perspectives.

COURSE STRUCTURE:
This senior-level seminar requires attendance during all class sessions. The classes will be heavily participation-based; therefore, students are expected to complete all required reading prior to class in order to participate and get the most out of class. Students may be asked to summarize papers, integrate their arguments or life experiences with the
discussed material, and pose questions arising from the readings. The instructor will provide lectures to supplement reading materials.

**REQUIRED BOOK:**

**GRADING:**
- **Weekly check-ins. 12%.** Almost weekly *in-class written* responses to questions related to the material, done via Tests & Quizzes tool in OWL. Reading assigned materials prior to class and active participation during class sessions are an important part of this seminar. All students are expected to contribute meaningfully to class discussions with meaningful comments and questions. I may add a bonus to these prep marks for particularly helpful or insightful contributions to class discussions or take points off for undesirable or suboptimal class contribution such as not participating, being online/using electronic devices inappropriately, or otherwise having a negative impact on the class. **Only the best 7 marks will be calculated into your final grade;** all lower marks including absences are automatically dropped. Thus, no academic accommodation is available for this part of the mark as accommodation is built into it automatically for everyone.
- **Midterm test. 32%.** – February 26 2020. Makeup exam (with academic counseling approval) Friday 3/20 at noon, in TBD.
- **Final test. 26% - April Exam period -TBA**
- **Short writing assignments (14%)** – February 12 and March 11 2020. There will be two short-ish assignments, 3-4 pages each. The first paper will be an empirical investigation using the CCHS data; the second one
- **Independent research project, presentation, and paper (16%)** – April 3 2020. Students will identify an empirical research question or a literature review topic of interest. We will begin working on the paper around mid-semester. The paper will be completed in several steps and I will provide feedback throughout the process.

For all written assignments, late submissions will be penalized 6% per day. For instance, if an assignment is 2 days late and the mark on it is 82%, then the penalized score would be 82%*(1-.12)=72%.

**Crosswalk between letter, number, and adjectival grading**
- **A+** 90-100 Exceptional work, unusual and remarkable for an undergraduate student
- **A** 80-89 Outstanding work, exceeds all or most requirements
- **B** 70-79 Satisfactory, solid performance, meets all requirements
- **C** 60-69 Competent work, meets most requirements
- **D** 50-59 Fair work, meets some requirements, minimally acceptable
F 0-50 Unsatisfactory work, fails to meet requirements

IMPORTANT DATES

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wednesday 1/8</td>
<td>First class</td>
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<td>Wednesday 2/12</td>
<td>Assignment 1 due, no-penalty grace period to Sun 2/16</td>
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<td>Wednesday 2/19</td>
<td>No class, reading week</td>
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<td>Wednesday 4/1</td>
<td>Student Research Conference, Final paper due.</td>
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SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Part I. What is medical sociology? How do we define and measure health?

WEEK 1 (January 8). INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS

Core readings

Precis readings
Also access all the articles via http://somatosphere.net/2010/50-years-of-medical-sociology.html/
Which article topics do you find most intriguing, and why?
How does Parsons conceptualize health and illness within the social system? What is the role of the physician?

In the press/media
Optional readings

What is the key idea here, and how is it connected to sociology of health and illness?


PART I. SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH.
WEEK 2 (January 15). SOCIAL FACTORS & POPULATION HEALTH: FOUNDATIONS

Core readings

Skip the Health Belief Model, Health Lifestyles Theory, and the Stress Process (pp 36-39)

Precis readings

After reading Strohshein and Weitz’ summary of the Fundamental Cause Theory, read this article to solidify the basics of the theory and read about empirical evidence supporting it.

Spend no more than 10 minutes on this article. What is the take-home message?

Spend no more than 5-10 minutes on the article. I am assigning because many students in this class intend to go to a law school, and this piece links law and public health. How are law and population health linked?

In the press/media
Optional readings


Focusing on the ideas in the propositions, especially 2 and 4, summarize the process of epidemiological transition and its causes.


WEEK 3 (January 22). KEY DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH: AGE, GENDER, MIGRATION, AND RACE/ETHNICITY/ABORIGINAL STATUS. PART I.

Core readings


Precis readings


Dean, Jennifer Asanin and Kathi Wilson. 2010. ""My Health Has Improved Because I Always Have Everything I Need Here…": A Qualitative Exploration of Health Improvement and Decline among Immigrants." *Social Science & Medicine* 70(8):1219-28

Read the section on understanding health status among immigrant population closely; otherwise: what factors did the respondents perceive as influencing their health?

In the press/media

Optional readings
Focus on the multiple links between masculinity and health (behaviors).
Focus on pages 9-13. How do the lifecourse principles relate to health?

WEEK 4 (January 29). KEY DEMOGRAPHIC DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH: AGE, GENDER, MIGRATION, AND RACE/ETHNICITY/ABORIGINAL STATUS. PART II.
Instructor out of town. Please read instructions in announcement on OWL posted January 23 for this week’s class.

Core readings
Section on Aboriginal Health p. 133-145.

Precis readings
What was the aim of the study? What were the key findings? What do they tell us about the impact of different dimensions of racism on health of Canadian adults?

From the press/media

Video assignment
Watch the segment “When the Bough Breaks” and “Not Just a Paycheck” from the series Unnatural Causes available via https://uwo.kanopy.com/video/unnatural-causes-series. Answer questions on the documentary guides posted under Resources Class 4; also take notes on other aspects of the two segments that interested you or where you had questions.
WEEK 5 (February 5).  SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS IN HEALTH AND HEALTH BEHAVIORS

Core readings

Precis readings

In the press/media

Optional readings

WEEK 6 (February 12).  SOCIAL STRESS, SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS, AND HEALTH

Core readings


Precis readings

Using the headings and subheadings, summarize the main arguments.

What was the aim of the study? What are the main findings?

In the press/media

Optional readings
February 20: NO CLASS, SPRING READING WEEK

WEEK 7 (February 27). EXPERIENCING ILLNESS, AGING, AND DYING

Midterm during the first 60 minutes of class.

Core reading -- book

Precis readings

WEEK 8 (March 6). SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF HEALTH AND ILLNESS, MEDICALIZATION

Core readings

Precis reading

In the press/media

Optional

**WEEK 9 (March 13). PATIENTS, PHYSICIANS, POWER**

**Core readings**

**Precis readings – focus on gender**

**In the press/media**

**Optional readings**

**WEEK 10 (March 20). HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS**

**Core readings**
https://www.who.int/contracting/documents/QandAUHC.pdf?ua=1
https://www.who.int/contracting/documents/QandA_UHC_post-2015.pdf?ua=1
https://www.who.int/health_financing/universal_coverage_definition/en/

**Precis readings**

**WEEK 11 (March 27). HEALTH CARE ISSUES IN CANADA**

**Core readings**

**WEEK 12 (April 3). STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

Students present findings from independent research projects.
SOC 4408 FAQs

What if I have questions about the class?

**First, check the syllabus.** Students often find that the syllabus provides answers to many questions about the class.

**Second, ask your instructor.** I strongly encourage you to ask in class or email me as soon as questions or issues arise so we can work together to get your question answered or issue resolved. You can generally expect replies within 24 hours during regular work days or 48 on weekends. I will aim to answer faster than that if possible.

Please write “SOC 4408” in the subject line – otherwise it’s easy for your email to get lost in the slew of incoming messages. The “SOC 4408” in the subject line makes your email a priority for me.

How do I write good emails?

You rightfully expect that your instructors treat you with respect and in a professional manner. We expect the same from you. Please make sure your email communication is professional and tend toward a bit formal. Emails to your instructors are NOT like texting your friends. Please be professional and use proper salutation and correct spelling and grammar. For instance, your college instructors should be addressed “Professor XYZ” or “Dr. XYZ,” not “Hey there” or “Hi Jane” or “Dear Mrs. Green.”

What if I miss a class?

If you are absent from a class, two rules apply:

1. **You do not** need to email me. However, if there is something going on in your life that could affect your class performance in a significant way and/or over an extended period of time, please let me know ASAP we can work together to get you back on track.

2. **Do get notes and all information from your classmates** – if you know you will miss a class, it’s a good idea to ask them beforehand to take notes for you.

Do I need to attend classes?

Regular class attendance is essential to learning at the university level, especially in a course like this where substantial learning occurs in the process of class discussions. Attending classes AND doing all assigned readings is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for earning a high grade in this class.

You are responsible for all announcements, lecture notes, and activities we cover in class even if you have a valid reason to miss a class. **If you miss a class, please contact your classmates to get all information about what we did, as well as lecture notes.**

What’s expected of me in class?

Appropriate professional and respectful behavior is expected of all students, in order to facilitate a supportive learning environment. Any activities not related to the class material must be conducted outside of the classroom, including any social media or in-person communication. Cell phones should be on silent and no conversation or texting is acceptable. **If your behavior does not abide by these basic rules, you may be asked to...**
leave the class. Please understand I do not wish to use this policy but it is disruptive to other students if someone near them is online or texting.

**How do I contribute to class discussion?**

You should have completed all readings prior to class and taken notes. The notes should include summaries of readings, but also references to specific pages and sections, ideas you found particularly insightful and meaningful or, in contrast, unclear or confusing. You should also note questions that the readings inspired, whether clarification questions or deep meaning questions.

Talking in class off the top of your head without preparation is not helpful to the class discussion. Even “I don’t understand” with respect to specific sections or readings is a meaningful and valuable addition to our discussions.

**What is the policy on electronics in class?**

Laptops are permitted in class for note-taking although I strongly encourage you to take notes by hand. (See a fascinating article on note-taking by hand vs. electronically [here](#). However, texting, browsing the web, or social media use are tremendously disruptive. Even if you feel you can follow the class while networking/browsing/texting, such behavior makes it difficult to those around you to pay attention.

**Missed the midterm?**

With academic counseling approval, makeup is 3/20 at noon. If another academic counseling approval is obtained for the makeup, we will apply final exam score also to the midterm but I will re-weight the items to pre-midterm material has more points.
GENERAL UNIVERSITY-WIDE POLICIES

Note Regarding Plagiarism

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (www.turnitin.com).

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

Students who are seeking academic consideration for missed work during the semester may submit a self-reported absence form online provided that the absence is 48 hours or less and the other conditions specified in the Senate policy are met. Two important exceptions to this rule: SRAs will not be allowed for final examinations or assessments worth more than 30% of a given course.

Students whose absences are expected to last longer than 48 hours, or where the other conditions detailed in the policy are not met (e.g., work is worth more than 30% of the final grade, the student has already used 2 self-reported absences, the absence is during the final exam period), may receive academic consideration by submitting a Student Medical Certificate (for illness) or other appropriate documentation (for compassionate grounds).

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.

https://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/having_problems/Self_Reported_Absence.html

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar’s website:

www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html
Scholastic Offences
Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:
www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Mental Health
Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health @Western (http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.

Please note: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus during the semester