

ABRIDGED SYLLABUS

SOC4486F: Health inequalities: COVID-19 is not the great equalizer

Instructor: Kate H. Choi

Course: Tuesday 9:30-12:00

Office Hours: By Appointment

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Subject Matter:

At the onset of the pandemic, COVID-19 was thought to be the "great equalizer" – affecting the advantaged and disadvantaged alike. As time passed, we came to realize that nothing was far from the truth. Vulnerable populations – the poor, the elderly, racial minorities, and immigrants – bear the brunt of COVID-19 pandemic. We also know that inequalities in fatality and infection rates as well as steps taken to curb the pandemic (e.g., lock-down policies or closing down of the economy) may exacerbate existing inequalities.

The goal of this course is to (a) describe inequalities in infection risk of COVID-19, (b) discuss why these differences emerge, and (c) examine how COVID-19 may be exacerbating existing inequalities.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students will

- Gain insights about patterns and trends in inequalities in COVID-19 infection and fatality rates by socioeconomic status, age, race/ethnicity, and immigration status
- Identify the social mechanisms contributing to these inequalities
- Assess how policies implemented to curb the COVID-19 pandemic may exacerbate existing inequalities

Course materials

Barr, Donald. 2019. Health Disparities in the United States: *Social class, race, ethnicity, and social determinants of health*. (**Barr**)

Other papers can be downloaded from popular media websites, jstor.org, and scholar.google.com. For the last two sites, you can download the university VPN or log in through the library.

Course Prerequisites:

Enrollment in third or fourth year of one of the Honor's Specializations or Double Majors in Sociology.

Note about Prerequisites: Unless you have either all the requisites for this course or written special

permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites

Course Requirements:

There are three requirements for this course: (1) two research papers and (2) a policy paper. The specific requirements are described in greater detail below.

Lecture format

Plan A: If everything goes as planned and there are no technological issues:

- 9:30-9:39 am: Students will be e-mailed the zoom link with the password. They will use this link to login.
- 9:40-10:55 pm: 60-75-minute lecture with students asking and answering questions intermittently. There are weeks when we will watch movies and/or documentaries about pandemics. You will be asked to do this on your own instead of the lecture.
- 10:55-11:00pm: Break
- 11:00-11:45 am: Zoom discussion of a movie or popular media article for most weeks; individual meeting time to address questions about papers for other weeks.
- Weekly assignment: Students fill out *Participation Diary* in the Assignment section of OWL on their own. They must write down what they said during the discussion. If they wanted to say something else but could not, they should write that down. This cannot be a repeat of what someone else said. Must be completed by 9:30 am of the following Monday.
- Caveat: Timeline is an estimate. For example, if the lecture is 60 minutes, then break and discussion will occur 15 minutes earlier.

Plan B: If technological issues emerge,

- 60-75-minute lecture on their own.
- 9:30 am-9:39 am: Students will be e-mailed the zoom link with the password.
- 9:40-10:25 am: Zoom discussion of a movie or popular media article for most weeks. Individual meetings with students to provide feedback for papers on other weeks.
- Weekly assignment: Students fill out *Participation Diary* in the Assignment section in OWL. Students will write 1-2 paragraphs addressing a question in write 1-2 paragraphs addressing a question that I pose every week. This will affect how many extra points you can get on your papers. Must be completed by 9:30 am of the following Monday.

Method of evaluation -

- *Research Paper 1 (33%)*
 - A 1500-word paper examining the plight of a vulnerable population (e.g., Indigenous, lower-income, immigrants, racial minorities)
 - I will provide a detailed description of the topic and grading rubric at least 2 weeks ahead of time.
 - Due date: **October 27, 2020, at 9:30am**
- *Legal brief (33%)*
 - 1500-word legal brief asking students to weigh in on the Government of Ontario's debate about collecting data on the race and socioeconomic status of COVID-19 patients.

- I will provide a detailed description of the topic and grading rubric at least 2 weeks ahead of time.
- Due date: **December 8, 2020, at 9:30 am** (i.e., last day of class)
- *Policy paper (34%)*
 - 1500-word policy brief asking students to write a proposal to reduce inequalities that emerged as a result of COVID-19.
 - It can be on health, family policy, work policy, etc.
 - I will provide a detailed description of the topic and the grading rubric in the penultimate class.
 - Due date: **Ending time of final exam** (TBD by the Registrar's Office)
- Extra credit for participation
 - Students can be awarded up to 10 extra points on each assignment depending on their participation. The full syllabus will have a detailed explanation about this feature.
- Expected mean GPA: 84 percent. Expected standard deviation: 3 percentage points. I will have some discretion about the number depending on the class performance.

Important note: There are 3 components to this class. You need to complete 2 out of 3 assignments to receive a pass and/or grade. Even with proper documentation, you will need to (a) retake the class in the following term or (b) write a 5,000-word essay by a date designated by the Dean's Office. If you don't foresee being able to complete 2 out of 3 assignments, then you should consider dropping it by November 12, 2020 (i.e., the official date for dropping the course). Students are responsible for making all arrangements, including double-checking the drop/add date.