

Sociology 250: Sociology of Health, Illness, and Disease

Instructor: Stefan Timmermans

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This course examines the notion that we cannot understand the topics of health and illness by looking only at biological phenomena, but, instead, we must also consider a variety of social, political, economic, and cultural forces. Sociologists of health and illness use sociological perspectives and methods to understand topics such as: social meanings of illness; patterns in the distribution of health and illness; the ways people make sense of, seek help for, and manage their illnesses; the ways doctors, nurses, and patients interact with each other, including the changing nature of health-related professions; the cultural, organizational, and economic functioning of various healthcare institutions; social movements surrounding health, including the ways some deviant behaviors are “medicalized” while others are not; and the sociological effects of public policy on health outcomes. This course is designed to provide a broad overview of the field of medical sociology. Of course, the course is necessarily selective and will miss some classics and relevant contemporary works.

Course Requirements:

- 1. Participation and Discussion Questions:** This course is designed as a graduate seminar in which participation from all students is necessary if everyone is to profit. Therefore, a portion of the final grade will be based on the quality and frequency of participation, which will be based on careful reading of all assigned materials. I have a policy of not giving everyone a passing grade just for having a pulse and showing up.
- 2. Critical Reviews:** All students in the course will share responsibility for preparing critical reviews for each of the required readings. These critiques are intended to help you help each other grasp the ideas and implications of the readings.

Components of these reviews must include: (a) a summary of the theoretical position of the author and her/his core points and arguments; (b) brief reflections on its relationship to the other material assigned for that session, and how it relates to readings encountered earlier in the course (e.g., theoretically consonant—if so, how; in disagreement—if so, how; elaboration of another’s argument; etc.); and (c) answers, based on the reading, to all those discussion questions for that session that are applicable to that reading. Depending upon the length of the reading, reviews should be 1-2 pages.

At the first class of the quarter, each of you will sign up for the readings you will review. The critical reviews must be e-mailed to all other enrolled students and

the instructor by 2PM the Thursday before the class. During class you may be asked to briefly and concisely present your review in the course of discussion.

3. **Prospectus/Outline for Final Paper:** A one-page prospectus or outline of your topic for the final paper (see below) will be due in class at week 6.
4. **Final Paper:** Length of 20 double-spaced pages, *excluding* title page, references, and the like. This paper should focus on a theoretical question related to the course or a substantive topic/health issue of interest to you. In either case, the paper must articulate a central question (or set of questions) that will serve to orient and focus the paper, as opposed to simply doing a wide-ranging literature review on a health topic or theoretical discussion of a general theme. The paper must include: (a) an introduction which frames the central question(s) for the paper and why it is significant; (b) a section in which the question(s) is/are addressed theoretically or conceptually; and (c) literature from class readings and *additional relevant sociological or social scientific material* which you have found.

The paper is due on December 15, 5 pm. I only accept paper copies.

Schedule (by week)

1. The three major issues of U.S. *health care* and the importance of health care
 - a. *Lack of access: the uninsured*
DeNavas-Walt, Carmen, Bernadette D. Proctor, and Jessica Smith. 2013. Income, Poverty, And Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2012. In *Current Population Reports*. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Census Bureau.
Also, check articles on Affordable Care Act, policies and barriers.
 - b. *The high cost of health care in the US: international and historical comparison*
Check various websites: Kaiser family, institute of medicine, WHO, etc. Cathy Schoen, Robin Ostrom, David Squires, Michelle M. Doty, Roz Pierson, and Sandra Applebaum, 2010, How Health Insurance Design Affects Access to Care and Costs, By Income, In Eleven Countries, *Health Affairs*, Vol. 29 (12), pp. 2323-2334.
 - c. *Quality of care* <http://www.dartmouthatlas.org>, look around on the website. Also, look at:
http://www.dartmouthatlas.org/downloads/reports/Prescription_Drug_Atlas_101513.pdf
 - d. *Role of health care in population health*
Cutler, David, 2004, *Your Money or Your Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 5-7. You probably should read the entire book, an easy read.

Cutler, David and Grant Miller, 2005, The Role of Public Health Improvements in Health Advances: The Twentieth Century United States, *Demography*, Vol. 42 (1), pp. 1-22.

Also strongly recommended: Abraham, Kaye Laurie, 1993, *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

2. Social Nature of disease

- a. Parsons, Talcott, *The Social System*, chapter x
- b. Rosenberg, Charles, 2007, *Our Present Complaint*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Chapter 2.
- c. Aronowitz, Robert, 1998, *Making Sense of Illness*, Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3.
- d. Greene, Jeremy A., 2007, *Prescribing by Numbers*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, chapters 5-6.
- e. Rose, Nikolas (2001) The politics of life itself. *Theory, culture & society*, 18 (6). pp. 1-30

3. Social Distribution of Disease

- a. Rose, G. 2001. "Sick Individuals and Sick Populations." *International Journal of Epidemiology* 30: 427-432.
- b. Williams, D.R., and Sternthal, Michelle, 2010, "Understanding Racial-ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol 51, pp. S15-S27.
- c. Read, Jen'Nan Ghazal, Gorman Bridget K., 2010 Gender and Health Inequality, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol 36, pp. 371-386
- d. Link, Bruce and Jo C. Phelan, 1995, Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Extra Issue, pp. 80-94.
- e. Lutfey, Karen, Freese, Jeremy, 2005, Toward Some Fundamentals of Fundamental Causality: Socioeconomic Status and Health in the Routine Clinic Visit for Diabetes, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol 110, 5, pp. 1326-1372.

Also recommended: Stefan Timmermans and Steven Haas, 2008, Towards A Sociology of Disease, *Sociology of Health and Illness*,

4. Medical Profession-Professionalization

- a. Becker, et al. *Boys in White*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, pp. 189-365.
- b. Fox, Renee, 1957, Training for uncertainty, in *The Student Physician*
- c. Light, Donald, 1979, Uncertainty and Control in Medical Education, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol 20 (4), pp. 310-322.

- d. Timmermans, Stefan, and Alison Angell. 2001. Evidence-Based Medicine, Clinical Uncertainty, and Learning to Doctor. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 42 (4): 342-359.
- e. Bosk, Charles, 2003, *Forgive and Remember*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chapter 2. Strongly recommended to read the entire book.
- f. Katherine Kellogg, 2011, *Challenging Operations: Medical Reform and Resistance in Surgery*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (or you can get by with her 2009 AJS article)
- g. Light, Donald, 2004, Ironies of Success: A New History of The American Health Care "System," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 45, pp. 1-45.

Very strongly recommended: Starr, Paul, 1982, *The Social Transformation of Medicine*, New York: Basic Books.

5. Illness experience and patient-doctor interaction

- a. Bury, Michael, 1982, Chronic Illness as Biographical Interruption, *Sociology of Health and Illness*, Vol. 4, pp. 168-182.
- b. John Heritage and Doug Maynard, (2006) "Problems and Prospects in the study of physician-patient interaction: 30 years of research." *Annual Review of Sociology* 32:351-74.
- c. Kravitz et al., 2005, Influence of patients' requests for direct-to-consumer advertised antidepressants: a randomized controlled trial, *JAMA*, 293 (16), pp. 1995-2002.
- d. Kristin K. Barker. 2005. *The Fibromyalgia Story: Medical Authority and Women's Pain*. Temple University Press. Chapter 3.

Also strongly recommended: Fadiman, Anne, 1997, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, New York: Noonday Press.

6. Medicalization, biomedicalization, and genetization

- a. Clarke, A., Shim, J. K., Mamo, L., Fosket, J. R., and Fishman, J. R. 2003. "Bio-medicalization: Technoscientific transformations of health, illness, and U.S. biomedicine," *ASR*, 68: 161-194.
- b. Conrad, Peter, The Shifting Engines of Medicalization, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol 40, pp. 5-14,
- c. Rabinow, Paul, 1996, "Artificiality and Enlightenment: From Sociobiology to Biosociality," in *Essays on the Anthropology of Reason*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- d. Pescosolido, Bernice, et al., 2008, Under the Influence of Genetics: How Transdisciplinarity led us Rethink Pathways to Illness, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 114, pp. 171-201.

- e. Timmermans, Stefan and Mara Buchbinder, 2010, Patients-in-Waiting: Living Between Illness and Disease, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol. 51 (4), pp. 408-423.
7. Patient health movements and social networks
 - a. Epstein, Steven. 1995. "The construction of lay expertise: AIDS activism and the forging of credibility in the reform of clinical trials." *Science, Technology and Human Values* 20(4): 408-37.
 - b. Klawiter, Maren. 1999. "Racing for the cure, walking women, and toxic touring: mapping cultures of action within the Bay Area terrain of breast cancer." *Social Problems* 46(1) 104-26.
 - c. Brown, Phil, Stephen Zavestoski, Sabrina McCormick, Brian Mayer, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Rebecca Gasior Altman. 2004. "Embodied health movements: new approaches to social movements in health." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 26(1): 50-80.
 - d. Christakis, Nicholas, Fowler, The Spread of Obesity in a Large Social Network over 32 Years, *New England Journal of Medicine* Vol 357 (4), pp. 370-379.
 - e. Pescosolido, Bernice, 2006, Of Pride and Prejudice: The Role of Sociology and Social Networks in Integrating the Health Sciences, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol 47 (3), pp. 189-208.
8. Health Policy: national and international
 - a. Quadagno, Jill, 2004, Why the United States Has No National Health Insurance: Stakeholder Mobilization Against the Welfare State, 1945-1996, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Vol. 45, pp. 25-44
 - b. Reich, Adam, 2014, *Selling Our Souls: The Commodification of Hospital Care in the United States*, Princeton, Princeton University Press. (introduction, chapter 1, 4, and 7)
 - c. Paul Farmer, 2005, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and The New War on the Poor*, Berkeley, University of California Press. Chapters 1, 6-7.
 - d. Didier Fassin, 2007, *When Bodies Remember*, Berkeley, University of California Press. Chapter 2-3
9. Medical Knowledge production
 - a. Annemarie Mol, 2002 *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*, Duke University Press. Chapters 1-2
 - b. Petryna, Adriana, 2009, *When Experiments Travel*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, chapters 2-3
 - c. Epstein, Steven, 2007, *Inclusion*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, chapters 2-5.
10. TBD

Journals you should read regularly

Big three medical sociology:

Social Science and Medicine

Journal of Health and Social Behavior

Sociology of Health and Illness

Also bookmark:

JAMA

New England Journal of Medicine

Health Affairs

Occasionally good articles in:

Health; Milbank Quarterly; Social Theory and Health; Qualitative Health Research;

ASR; AJS; SSS; STHV; Demography; Medical Anthropology; Medical Anthropology

Quarterly; Perspectives on Biology and Medicine; Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry;

Medical History

Organizations to join

Medical sociology section of ASA, also look for the occasional US-UK medical sociology conferences (next year in Iceland)

Join Medsoc mailing list (US): listserv@listserv.brown.edu

Join Medsocnews mailing list (UK): To join or subscribe to MedSocNews, send an email to jiscmail@jiscmail.ac.uk with the message (leave the subject line blank and do not include a signature): SUBSCRIBE medsocnews firstname lastname