**SOCIOLOGY OF HEALTH & ILLNESS**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the social, cultural, political, and economic context of health and illness. The first part of the course focuses on the structural aspects of health and health care. The second part highlights professional socialization, patient-physician interactions, and the personal narratives of illness and disability. The course offers a critical perspective on health and illness and highlights the connection between social justice, social transformation, and health and illness.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. To introduce students to key concepts in sociology and their relevance for understanding the experience of health and illness.
2. To provide students with a broad introduction to the social, economic, and political factors that shape health, sickness and disease.
3. To introduce students to contemporary debates in health and social policy, including proposals for health care reform.
4. To develop students understanding of the cultural meanings associated with health and illness and how social and cultural factors influence patient-provider interactions.
5. To understand how the experience of illness and disability influences the self and relationships with others.
6. To develop critical thinking skills to analyze ethical disputes concerning the use of medical treatments and technologies and the role of activists in the health care system.
7. The course is designed to be interactive; lectures will be augmented with class discussions and presentations from guest speakers. In order to fully participate, students should finish the assigned readings by the date listed in the syllabus.

**Grade breakup:**

Class participation and attendance 10%

Quizzes 20%

Mid-term exam 30%

Final Exam 40%

**Required Readings:**

Chambliss, Daniel. Beyond Caring: Hospitals, Nurses, and the Social Organization of

Ethics. University of Chicago Press.

Landsman, Gail. Reconstructing Motherhoood and Disability in the Age of “Perfect”

Babies. Routledge

Additional readings will be emailed, uploaded on Moodle or distributed in the class.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**(Week 1-2) The Social Context of Health and Illness**

**A. Introduction to Medical Sociology**

**A Sociological Perspective on Health, Illness and the Body**

**Medical and Sociological Models of Illness**

Readings: (April 1)

Shipler, D. 2005. “Body and Mind”. Chapter 8 (p.201-230) in The Working Poor: Invisible in America e-res

Epstein, H. 2003. “Enough to Make You Sick?” New York Times Magazine e-res

Wangsgaard Thompson, B. “A Way Outa No Way: Eating problems among African-

American, Latina and White Women” e-res

**(Week 3-4 Social Epidemiology: The Social Distribution of Health and Illness**

**The Social Sources of Illness**

**Social Class, Race/Ethnicity, Gender**

**Neighborhoods and Social Capital**

Readings: (April 6)

Klinenberg, E. 2002. “Dying Alone: The social production of isolation” Chapter 1 (p. 37-78) in Klinenberg. E. Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago.

Farmer, P. 2005. “On Suffering and Structural Violence” Chapter 1 p.29-50 in Pathologies of Power: Health, human rights and the new war on the poor. e-res

**(Week 5-6) The Health Care System)**

**A. The Financing of Care**

**B. Access and Quality**

Medical Director of the Motion Analysis Laboratory and Center for Human Performance at Rady Children’s Hospital San Diego.

Abraham, L.K. 2002. “Fitful Primary Care Fails Mrs. Jackson” in Ratcliff, K.S.

Women and Health: Power, technology, inequality and conflict. e-res

Starr Sered, S. and R. Fernandopulle. 2007. “Young, Sick and Part-Time: The

Vulnerability of youth and the new American job market.” Chapter 7 in Uninsured in America: Life and Death in the Land of Opportunity.

Heymann, J. 2000 “Special needs: The experience of particularly vulnerable children and their families”. Chapter 4. in The Widening Gap.

Reid, T.R. 2009. “France: The vital card” Chapter 4 in The Healing of America: A global quest for better, cheaper and fairer health care”.

**(Week 7-8) On-Going Challenges**

**A. Needs, Endless Needs: The Challenge of Rationing**

**B. Medicalization: Infertility Intersexuality**

Callahan, D. 1999. “On the Ragged Edge: Needs, Endless Needs”

Singer, P. 2009. “Why We Must Ration Health Care” New York Times Magazine,

Chase, C. 2003 “Hermaphrodites with Attitude: Mapping the emergence of Intersex political

activism”.

Gilleard and Higgs. 2008. “Aging, Alzheimer’s, and the Uncivilized Body”. In

C. Malacrida and J. Low (eds) Sociology of the Body

**Mid Term Exam**

**(Week 9-10) Health Care Providers and the Organization of Care**

**A. The Profession of Medicine**

**Professional Socialization**

**Managing Uncertainty**

Readings: (May 4)

Gawande, A. “Piecework” p. 112-29. From Better: A Surgeon’s Notes on Performance.

B. Hospitals, Nurses and the Social Organization of Ethics.

Readings: (May 6)

Chambliss, D. Beyond Caring p. 1-119

**C. Patients and Providers: A Clash of Perspectives**

Readings: (May 11)

Chambliss, D. Beyond Caring p. 120-187

**(Week11-12) V. The Social Meanings of Illness and Disability**

**A. Chronic Illness Living with HIV/AIDS**

Frank, A.W. 2002. “Mourning What is Lost” and “The Body as Territory and as

Wonder” in Frank, A.W. At The Will of the Body: Reflections on Illness.

Charmaz, K.1997. “Immersion in Illness” Chapter 4 p.73-104 in Good Days, Bad Days:

The self in chronic illness and time.

Grove, K.A., D.Kelly, J. Liu. 1997. “But Nice Girls Don’t Get It”: Women, symbolic capital and the social construction of AIDS”

**(Week 13) Disability**

Readings:

Landsman, G. H. 2009. Reconstructing Motherhood and Disability in the Age of ”Perfect” Bodies. Chapters 1-5

Professor, School of Administration, Rehabilitation, and Post-Secondary Education. Co-Director, Interwork Institute, SDSU

**(Week 14). Disability Rights and Full Inclusion (Final Project Presentatiobn)**

Landsman, G.H. 2009. Reconstructing Motherhood and Disability in the Age of

“Perfect” Bodies”. Chapter 6

D. Reflections: Health and Social Justice

**Week 15: Final Term**