

Health, Community, and Society: The Sociology of Health and Illness (tentative)

Course Description:





This course will explore some of the central themes in contemporary medical sociology. In so doing, a framework for understanding and analyzing health, illness, and health care will emerge which will allow critical discussion of the issues and concepts at both the individual and societal level. It is the goal of this course to enable greater insight into health and illness through the use of sociological concepts and perspectives and to foster a broader vision of the field as we discuss the issues collectively.

Health and illness will be approached from a number of directions. Specifically, we will examine the social production and causes of disease, the social definitions and meanings of health and illness, as well as the experience of illness. Attention will then turn to an examination of the health care industry, including the socialization and role of physicians and other health care workers, health care systems, and the ever-present call for reform. Finally, some of the emerging areas of sociological inquiry in health and illness will be presented, such as medicalization, medications, medical technology, and risk.

Instructor:

Chris Gillespie (617) 627-9371
Office:
Hours:
e-mail: gillespie@brandeis.edu

If you desire assistance outside of class, I will be available during the office hours listed above. In addition to this, it may be possible to make arrangements to meet with me at other times. **The best way to reach me is via e-mail.**

- Texts:**  Conrad, Peter. (2009). *The Sociology of Health and Illness: Critical Perspectives*, 8th edition. Worth Publishing.
-  Fadiman, Anne. (1998). *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.
-  Tesh, Sylvia. (1988). *Hidden Arguments: Political Ideology and Disease Prevention Policy*. Rutgers.
-  Selected Readings

Course Requirements:

- ✓ Readings. The Readings for this course come from a number of sources: the SHI reader by Conrad, books by Fadiman and Tesh, as well as articles that will be posted on LATTE which are relevant to the topics to be discussed. These authors are writing from philosophical perspectives, personal experiences, or research-based inquiry. This breadth enables a rich understanding of health and illness. It is expected that the readings for each day will be completed prior to class and that each student will come prepared to discuss the readings collectively. Class participation in these discussions will be an important consideration in grading. Therefore, being prepared to discuss the readings is imperative.
- ✓ Assignments. Each student will write a weekly reaction paper. These papers will draw upon selected readings to discuss a particular topic or concept. Reaction papers are intended to be brief, not more than 3 pages. Please be aware that additional assignments may also be given, at the instructor's discretion, if they are deemed necessary.
- ✓ Presentations. Each student will be required to make 2-3 presentations to the class. More specifically, the student will be required to lead a discussion of one of the assigned readings. It will be the student's responsibility to read the material and prepare at least 3 discussion questions which will guide the class in the discussion. This will allow us to evaluate each reading individually and to assess its applicability and implications for the week's topic, as well as to the broader goals of the field. Sign-up sheets will be circulated the first week so students can decide which readings they would like to be responsible for. Presentations may begin the second week. *It is important to remember that you will not be responsible for summarizing or presenting the readings, simply for leading the discussion of the readings.*
- ✓ Class Participation. Participation in class discussions is a very important aspect of learning. Consequently, this will be a consideration in grading. In order to participate appropriately, it is important that each student comes prepared, having read the assigned material. This will enhance the experience of all involved. This is particularly important in a summer session course, as class size is reduced.
- ✓ Final Exam. The final paper will be in the form of a take-home exam which will be due July 3, 2009. The questions and format for the exam will be available well in advance in order for you to begin working on it as early as possible.

Grading:

Papers	50%
Presentations	15%
Participation	15%
Final Exam	20%
	100%

“Incompletes” will not be given except in the most extreme circumstances. Please remember that Brandeis University strictly prohibits plagiarism (copying without attribution). Cheating on either assignments or exams will not be tolerated (of course) and appropriate action will be taken in such cases.

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations due to a documented disability, please contact me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made.