SOCIOLOGY 191

HEALTH, COMMUNITY & SOCIETY: THE SOCIOLOGY OF ILLNESS

Introduction:

This course focuses on sociological aspects of health and illness (mostly the latter). Since other Sociology (19Ob) or HSSP (HS 104) courses will focus on an analysis of the medical system and the social organization of medical care, these topics will not be examined here.

The course readings are listed below and are divided into sections. Read the articles with a critical eye, trying to understand and evaluate the author's thesis. I expect you to have read the appropriate readings for a section by the time we begin discussing it. This will make the course a richer experience for all, especially since we will most likely be a small group. Should you wish to explore a topic further, ask your professor for suggestions in recommended books and other sources.

There will be two take-home essay exams (mid-term and final) and two short "fieldwork" assignments (to be distributed later). The take-home exams will be based on readings, lectures and class discussion, while the "fieldwork" assignments should allow you to use your creativity and sociological imagination. In terms of grading, each take-home essay and the two "fieldwork" assignments will each count about one-third.

NOTE: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

NOTE: Academic Integrity is expected in this class and breaches (e.g. plagiarism) will be reported to the Dean’s Office per the university’s academic honesty protocol found which is printed in the 2009-2010 student handbook.
Required Readings:

Readings will be drawn from the following books and articles. The books are available for purchase at the university bookstore and the articles will be placed on LATTE.

Required Books:


Articles: (available on LATTE)

Two articles on Global AIDS available on LATTE: Paul Farmer’s & 1 from *NEJM*, 2004
Course Outline and Readings

I. Illness and Society
   A. Disease and Illness: Historical Insights
   B. Sociological and Sociomedical Approaches to Illness
   C. Limitation of Modern Medicine
   D. Shifting Patterns of Disease and Illness

Readings
Dubos, *Mirage of Health* (all)
SHI, pp. 1-19

II. The Social Production of Disease
   A. Social Epidemiology
      1. Gender
      2. Social Class
      3. "Stress" and Life Events
   B. Occupational Health and Disease
   C. Stress and Social Support

Readings
A. SHI, pp. 20-87
B. SHI, pp. 102-07
   Berman, "Why Work Kills" (LATTE)
C. Tesh, *Hidden Arguments* (Chapter 5)
   (SHI, 78-87)

III. Death, Community and Society
   A. Social Autopsy of Excess Deaths
   B. The Social Construction of a Disaster

Readings
A. Kleinenberg, *Heatwave* (1-184)
B. Kleinenberg, *Heatwave*, (185-242)

IV. **Politics of Prevention**
   A. The "Wellness Revolution:" Lifestyle and Prevention Reconsidered
   B. Refocusing Upstream

   **Readings**
   Tesh. *Hidden Arguments* (Chapters 1-4)
   SHI, pp. 438-48, pp. 575-91

V. **Illness in Culture and Community**
   A. Culture, Illness and Care
   B. Intervening in Cultural Worlds

   **Readings**
   Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You* (all)

VI. **The Social Meaning of Illness**
   A. The Sexual Politics of Illness
   B. The Cultural Resonance of Illness
   C. Medicalization of Society

   **Readings**
   SHI, pp. 108-52
   Sontag, *Illness as a Metaphor* (all but focus on first essay)
   Conrad 7 Potter, "From Hyperactive Children to Adult ADHD:…,"
     (LATTE)
   SHI, pp. 468-92, 287-96

VII. **The Experience of Illness: The Social Psychological Level**
   A. Symptoms and Defining Illness
   B. Subjective Experience of Illness
   C. Illness Careers and Coping
   D. Treatments and "compliance"

   **Readings**
VIII. Disease in a Global Perspective: HIV/AIDS
   A. Film: Global AIDS
   B. Paul Farmer’s perspective

Readings:
NEJM article, 2004 (LATTE)
Paul Farmer, “Structural Violence.” (LATTE)

IX. Self-care and Its Challenges
   A. The Rise of Self-help Movements
   B. Types of Self-help: Supportive, Transforming and Political
   C. Self-care: Autonomy or Abandonment

Readings:
Borkman, "Self-help Groups at the Turning Point" (LATTE)
Humphreys, “Individual & Social Benefits of Mutual Aid Self-Help Groups,”
   (LATTE)
Kronenfeld, "Self-care as a Panacea for the Ills of the Health Care System,"
   (LATTE)
SHI, pp. 503-33
SHI, pp. 592-604