Course Statement

Health was once defined as the absence of disease. However, the definition of health has been reconfigured to mean physical, psychological and socio-cultural wellness. This means that health encompasses the body, the mind, and the social and cultural world in which one lives. Health is an ontological condition that pertains to the quality and sustainability of one’s existence. This is the context out of which the field of medical sociology has emerged.

Medical sociology is the theoretical, empirical and applied study of the social dimensions of health, illness, disease and the provision and consumption of health care. Topics that will be covered in this course include epidemiology, social demography of health, the relationship between social stress and health, health and illness behavior, the sick role, the physician-patient relationship, the organization of health care and medical practice, and the moral and ethical aspects of health care practice and policy.

There is no better way to understand the practice of medical sociology than by directly collecting data to assess the health care needs of people living in our own community. For this reason this course will require you to serve four hours per week participating in one of two applied medical sociology research projects which I am conducting here in Memphis as part of the Rhodes COPC grant. The first project involves the piloting of a psycho-social needs assessment that will be administered to patients presenting for medical care at the Hollywood Health Loop clinic, which is located approximately one mile northwest of the Rhodes Campus. The second project involves administering a health interview study of residents living along Cypress Creek in the Hollywood/Springdale area. Cypress Creek is contaminated with dieldrin and other toxic chemicals that pose long term health threats to neighborhood residents. This study is being conducted to inform neighborhood action aimed at the remediation of the threat posed by contaminated soil along Cypress Creek.

We are focusing our applied research in the Hollywood Springdale area because its health statistics are similar to those found in “third world” countries. Why is health so poor in this community? What can be done to improve the health of people living in this area? These are the orienting questions underlying the applied research we will conduct in the community.

In this course we will also dedicate a lot of time to studying the work of Dr. Paul Farmer. Farmer views poor health as a human rights issue directly related to economic inequality and political oppression. Farmer challenges us to approach professional practice as a moral issue requiring great dedication, commitment and courage. Our goal is to draw out the implications of Farmer’s work for the practice of medical sociology in Memphis and beyond. It is possible that your intentions regarding your professional development may be shaken to the core by Farmer’s work and your experiences in this course. For this reason you should reflect on how willing you are to be problematized by experiences which may result in self change.
**Attendance**

This course will combine class discussion of course readings with ongoing fieldwork. Class attendance is mandatory, and three unexcused absences will qualify you for an automatic “F.”

**Service-Learning Fieldwork**

You are required to spend an average of four hours per week 1) administering an interview assessment tool to patients presenting at the Hollywood Health Loop, or 2) administering a health interview survey to residents living along Cypress Creek. Class discussions will routinely refer back to your field experiences, allowing us to reflect upon and integrate our service experiences with our curriculum goals.

**Evaluation**

- Participation in class discussions 10%
- Quality of submitted notes, questions and written assignments 20%
- In class, midterm exam 20%
- Quality of service in the field and reflective paper 25%
- Take home final exam 25%

**Extra Credit Option**

Research Paper: Earn up to 10 extra points toward your final grade
(Topic and research plan requires approval of professor)

**Required Texts**


**Thursday 1/13**

**The TennCare Tsunami: Welcome to Medical Sociology**

**Tuesday 1/18**

Medical Sociology: The Intersection of Natural and Social Science Discuss chapter 1 in Cockerham Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question

**Thursday 1/20**

Sociology in Medicine: A case study of applied medical -sociological research in the Shelby County Jail Discuss emailed reports on HIV prevention and care in Shelby County Jail (McGowan) Submit notes taken on readings and one discussion question
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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1/25</td>
<td><strong>Sociology in Medicine:</strong> A case study of a community health care intervention in Memphis. Discuss emailed reports on the Hollywood Health Loop’s Community initiative and needs assessment instrument. Submit notes taken on readings and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1/27</td>
<td>Health Loop field orientation and ethics training (Patricia Hipps)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>Social Demography of Health Discussed chapter 3 in Cockerham. Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Social Stress and Health Discussed chapter 4 in Cockerham. Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>Illness Behavior Discussed chapter 6 in Cockerham. Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2/10</td>
<td>The Sick Role Discussed chapter 7 in Cockerham. Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Epidemiology Discussed chapter 2 in Cockerham and emailed needs assessment report on HIV/AIDS (McGowan). Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2/17</td>
<td>The History and Epidemiology of HIV/AIDS Discussed handout (Schoub). Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>Health Behavior and Lifestyles Discussed chapter 5 in Cockerham. Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>2/24</td>
<td>Physicians Discussed chapter 10 in Cockerham. Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>Doctor-Patient Interaction Discussed chapter 9 in Cockerham. Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question.</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>In-class midterm essay exam</td>
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End Second Quarter

Spring Break

Complete *Mountains Beyond Mountains* over break:
Prepare summary of notes and questions for class discussion

Tuesday 3/15
Discussion of Farmer’s approach to medical practice
Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question

Thursday 3/17
Health Care and Social Policy in the U. S. and Abroad
Discuss chapters 14 and 15 in Cockerham
Submit notes taken on readings and one discussion question

Tuesday 3/22
Hospitals and key health science professions
Discuss chapters 12 and 13 in Cockerham
Submit notes taken on readings and one discussion question

Thursday 3/24
**Easter Break**

Tuesday 3/29
Healing Options and the Changing Role of Physicians
Discuss chapters 8 and 11 in Cockerham
Submit notes taken on readings and one discussion question

Thursday 3/31
Health care and cultural competence
Discuss article on cultural competence by Tupe and McGowan
Submit notes taken on reading and one discussion question

Tuesday 4/5
Introduction and chapter 1 in *Pathologies of Power*

Thursday 4/7
Reconfiguring Truth
Discuss *Pestilence and Restraint* (chapter 2)

Tuesday 4/12
Discuss *Lessons from Chiapas* (chapter 3) and *A Plague on All of Our Houses* (chapter 4)

Thursday 4/14
Discuss *One Physician’s Perspective on Human Rights* (chapter 6) and *Cruel and Unusual* (chapter 7)

Tuesday 4/19
Discuss *New Malaise* (chapter 8) and *Rethinking Health and Human Rights* (chapter 9) and *Afterword*

Thursday 4/21
Debriefing on Hollywood Health Loop fieldwork

Tuesday 4/26
Presentation of findings from Hollywood/Cypress Creek Survey

Thursday 4/28
Review for final exam