

An/Soc 303: Medical Sociology (Fall 2007)

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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 therefore *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.

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 and Participation

This class will be conducted as a discussion/lecture course. **YOU MUST COMPLETE YOUR READINGS**, and each class meeting will begin with a brief discussion of the essay you have prepared in response to the question assigned for the week. We will then launch into a discussion about the reading(s) in relation to the day's specific learning objectives. It should be clear, then, that preparation (reading) and participation (actively joining in class discussions) are absolutely crucial to the quality of outcomes in this class. For this reason, preparation, participation and class attendance are mandatory. Three unexcused absences will qualify you to receive an automatic "F" in this class, and poor participation will be reflected in your course grade.

Preparatory Writing Assignments

In preparation for each week of class you will write a brief essay in response to an assigned question. The questions are provided on the syllabus and your response essay must be submitted each Tuesday at the conclusion of class. Papers will be graded and returned to you the following Thursday. Your work should reflect a minimum of three hours of preparation, reflection and/or secondary research (in addition to the time spent reading the assignment.) Your written response to the question(s) should be single spaced (12 point Times New Roman font) and edited so as not to exceed one page in length.

Community Service Requirement

You are required to spend 20 hours over the course of the semester volunteering with the Rhodes Hollywood Springdale Partnership (RHSP). The partnership is an outgrowth of the recently completed Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) project, which included a community health component. Dorothy Cox, RHSP program manager, will assist you with scheduling and monitoring your volunteer service. Service opportunities will include 1) assisting with Healthy Thursdays at the Shasta Central RHSP community office (2375 Shasta Street), 2) assisting at a community health fair, 3) assisting with a community needs assessment (conducting interviews, assisting with other research tasks) and 4) assisting with community events (such as the annual Halloween Party). The purpose of these service activities is to provide you with first hand experience working within a community that suffers from structural violence, thereby giving you an experiential reference for making sense of course concepts. Each time you serve in the community you will write a reflective journal entry that 1) documents and describes your experience and 2) relates the experience to course concepts. Reflective journals will be submitted at midterm and at the end of the semester for evaluation.

Exams

There will be two exams in this course - a midterm exam and a final exam. Both will be essay exams taken under exam conditions. They are worth a total of 50% of your final grade.

Evaluation

Preparatory writing assignments	25%
Community service and reflective journal	25%
Midterm exam	20%
Final exam	25%

Required Texts

Medical Sociology (9th edition), 2004. William Cockerham. Pearson: Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Mountains Beyond Mountains, 2003. Tracy Kidder. Random House: New York, NY.

Pathologies of Power, 2003. Paul Farmer. University of California Press: Berkeley, CA.

Thursday	8/23	Course overview, objectives and a primer on sociology.
Tuesday	8/28	Social structure: Sociology's unit of analysis <i>Weekly Question: What is "structural violence" and in what sense is it an inherently sociological concept?</i> Discuss the Introduction and Chapter One in Farmer's <i>Pathologies of Power</i> .
Thursday	8/30	Sociology as science: Positivism and paradigmatic alternatives Discuss excerpt from Durkheim's <i>Rules of Sociological Method</i> , and Part I of <i>Mountains Beyond Mountains</i> .
Tuesday	9/4	What is medical sociology? <i>Weekly Question: Is Farmer's work an example of sociology "in medicine" or sociology "of medicine?"</i> Discuss chapter 1 in Cockerham.
Thursday	9/6	Social Demography of Health Discuss chapter 3 in Cockerham
Tuesday	9/11	Epidemiology and the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS <i>Weekly Question: What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?</i> Discuss chapter 2 in Cockerham and chapter two in Farmer's <i>Pathologies of Power</i> .
Thursday	9/13	Local HIV/AIDS epidemiology and consumer needs Discuss the 2007 Memphis Metro Area HIV/AIDS Needs Assessment (McGowan).
Tuesday	9/18	Health and the problem of meaning Discuss chapter 4 in Cockerham <i>Weekly Question: Based on your readings, in what sense is the interpretation of meaning a key variable related to the health and behavior of people and the practice of medical care by practitioners?</i>
Thursday	9/20	The sick role Discuss chapter 7 in Cockerham and the handout on G. H. Mead
Tuesday	9/25	Illness behavior, self-care and medical adherence <i>Weekly Question: What sociological variables affect the illness behavior and medical compliance of people in need of care?</i> Discuss chapter 6 in Cockerham
Thursday	9/27	Pragmatic solidarity, shared experience and cultural competence Discuss Part II of <i>Mountains Beyond Mountains</i> .
Tuesday	10/2	Cultural competence and medical adherence

*Weekly Question: What is “cultural competence” and how does it
Discuss chapter 6 in Pathologies of Power and article by Tupe and*

Thursday	10/4	The social construction of American physicians Discuss chapter 10 in Cockerham
Tuesday	10/9	Doctor-Patient Interaction <i>Weekly Question: How would you interpret the findings reported</i> Discuss chapter 9 in Cockerham and article by McGowan.
Thursday	10/11	Student reports on HIV testing experiences and review of course topics and themes
Tuesday	10/16	Fall Break
Thursday	10/18	In class midterm exam
Tuesday	10/23	Preferential Option for the Poor <i>Weekly Question: What is meant by a “preferential option</i> Discuss Part II and chapter 5 in <i>Pathologies of Power</i> .
Thursday	10/25	A report from the field: Preliminary findings from McGowan's Discuss CDC report on STD research in Florida (handout).
Tuesday	10/30	The emergence of the hospital as a social institution Discuss chapter 13 in Cockerham <i>Weekly Question: What does Foucault observe about the</i>
Thursday	11/1	Health Care and Social Policy in the U. S. and Abroad Discuss chapter 14 in Cockerham
Tuesday	11/6	Health care and social policies outside of the U. S. Discuss chapters 15 and 16 in Cockerham <i>Weekly Question: What lessons might we learn from different health care systems around the world. What opportunities and barriers exist in this country that weigh on the possibility of changing our national health care system?</i>
Thursday	11/8	Health care on the island of Cuba Discuss article by Tupe
Tuesday	11/13	Tuskegee and the ethics of biomedicine and positivism Discuss chapter 8 in <i>Pathologies of Power</i> . <i>Weekly Question: What did the Tuskegee experiment involve and what was its purpose? Were the rights of the human subjects involved in the experiment protected? What do you think the</i>

impact of Tuskegee has been on African-American attitudes towards health care and scientific research? What is Farmer's main point regarding ethics and practice in developing countries?

Thursday	11/15	Crime, health and punishment Discuss chapter 7 in <i>Pathologies of Power</i> and two studies of HIV Care and Prevention needs in the Shelby County Jail (McGowan).
Tuesday	11/20	Making difficult decisions in health care practice <i>Weekly Question: Summarize Farmer's thesis pertaining to health and human rights. Identify at least two examples of the practical</i> Discuss chapter 9 in <i>Pathologies of Power</i> and the <i>Afterword</i> ; and Part V in <i>Mountains Beyond Mountains</i>
Thursday	11/22	Thanksgiving
Tuesday	11/27	Postmodernism and the bio-medical model <i>Weekly Question: What are some of the main points of post-</i> Discuss article by Foucault (handout).
Thursday	11/29	Healing Options and the Changing Role of Physicians Discuss chapters 8 and 11 in Cockerham
Tuesday	12/4	Review for Final Exam