

Social Inequalities in Health (SOCY 4052)
Summer 2019

Hours: M-F 12:45 – 2:20

Instructor: Aubrey Limburg, MA

Office: Ketchum 481

Location: ECON 205

Office Hours: Tu-Th 2:30 – 3:30 & by appt

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces upper-level undergraduates to the interdisciplinary field of social inequalities in health, with a particular focus on sociological contributions to the area. We will examine links between health outcomes and various social phenomena and social statuses such as socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. We will discuss theoretical explanations for the relationships between these factors and various health outcomes, as well as possible policy solutions. This class focuses on multiple levels of sociological analysis, from physician-patient interactions to health care systems and social structures. We will discuss health inequalities in both the U.S. and various international contexts.

Among the questions we will consider in this course are these: Why do women get sicker, but men die quicker? Why do people with low socioeconomic status have worse health than their high-status counterparts, even in countries that typically meet all citizens' health needs? How do genes interact with the social environment to influence individuals' health? How do unconscious racial stereotypes play out in doctor-patient interactions? How do social networks influence people's health behaviors such as smoking, diet, and exercise?

You are not required to be a sociology major to enroll in this course. All students should enter the class with a willingness to engage in sociological analysis and critical thinking. We will start with the basic premise that *social factors, and not just biological ones, influence people's health outcomes*. This is an upper-division course, even though there are no sociological prerequisites. You will be expected to work hard and go beyond rote memorization to apply complex and critical thinking while engaging deeply with the course material and conducting original research.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course meets every day for five weeks. Generally, each class will be a mixture of lecture and both large- and small-group discussion, encouraged by real-time electronic engagement that focuses on critical thinking and the application of real-life experiences to sociological ideas. You are encouraged to be on the lookout for real-life examples of the concepts we discuss (in the media, in your everyday interactions, etc.) and to bring these examples to class for us to talk about. We will also have a few guest speakers who will introduce us to specific research areas in health inequality.

GOALS

In this course, students will:

- Learn about population-level social disparities in health outcomes.
- Identify ways in which social class, race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, and other social forces shape people's health.
- Assess and apply theoretical explanations for these disparities and identify potential policy solutions at multiple levels of analysis.
- Understand sociological theory as a tool by which to understand complex problems related to health and wellbeing.
- Be able to apply sociological theory to their particular area of interest (e.g., educational, professional, personal).
- Think critically about their own health and the ways in which their social context and personal biography have patterned their health behaviors and outcomes.

COURSE POLICIES

Classroom climate

Creating a welcoming and safe space for students to learn is imperative to my goals as an educator. Therefore, please keep the following guidelines in mind to make the environment a respectful and enjoyable place to be:

- We critique ideas, not people.
- Speak your mind responsibly. This means knowing your words have consequences. Be willing to own that and choose how you speak.
- If you have a question, ask. If you have a concern or suggestion, share it.
- If I or another student have upset, offended, or misunderstood you in any way, let me/us know.
- Ask for help if you are not doing as well as you'd like or don't understand something.

Technology

I find technology can be helpful in the classroom for a variety of reasons and therefore encourage you to bring your tablets and laptops to class, if you wish. Please refrain from using your cell phones in class or using your laptop/tablet for things other than course-related activities. These activities are not only distracting to you but to other students in the classroom. If I find that technology become disruptive or distracting to the learning environment, I reserve the right to limit or eliminate technology use in the classroom.

Communication

Please reach out to me with questions, comments, and concerns via email (aubrey.limburg@colorado.edu). In the subject line, you must include "SOCY 4052" so that I can identify and prioritize your emails. I will respond to email within 24 hours (excluding weekends). Additionally, you are always welcome to come to office hours or schedule an appointment if you would like to meet in person – this is the best option when you are concerned about your grades.

Office Hours

Office hours are a great place to get help. This could be as simple as asking a clarifying question about lecture, but you can also use this time to get assistance with your class work. Students who email ahead of time to request an appointment will be given priority.

Attendance, absences, and participation

Attendance will be taken on a daily basis. You must be on-time and present in order to earn full attendance points for that day. Please see course schedule and grading scheme for more details. Additionally, you are responsible for all material presented during classroom time even if you are absent. This means that you are also responsible for retrieving the work that you missed from your fellow classmates, NOT the instructor. Additionally, in terms of participation, I expect you to feel confident being able to discuss and demonstrate critical thinking in regard to the course materials in a variety of contexts (e.g. discussion groups, class discussion, reflection papers, formal research papers). Reliance on taking detailed, verbatim notes will not be as useful as active engagement in classroom discussion.

Late work

Late work may be accepted in extenuating circumstances (e.g. severe illness, death- or dying-related situations, jury duty, court appearance) with a point deduction. Points will be deducted as follows: 15% deduction for <24 hours after assignment due date; 30% deduction for 24-48 hours; 50% deduction for 48-72 hours; assignments will not be accepted after 72 hours (3 days).

Grades

For every credit hour, you are expected to spend at least 2 hours of time outside of class reading or doing class work. This course will be much more fast paced than a normal 16-week class. In a given week, we will spend over 7 hours just in class. It is your responsibility to come to class prepared to discuss the readings and engage in class activities. Students who do not spend at least 15 hours of time outside of class on class work on a weekly basis will find it challenging to receive an A in this course. Additionally, a 4000-level course requires a higher level of independent thinking, organization, and self-discipline than you may be familiar with. Please keep this in mind throughout the course and do not hesitate to reach out to me if you are struggling. Finally, due to FERPA regulations, I am unable to discuss grades via email. If you are concerned about your grade, please see me as soon as possible.

The following scheme is how I will calculate your overall grade in the course:

A	94 – 100	B	84 – 86	C	74 – 76	D	64 – 66
A-	90 – 93	B-	80 – 83	C-	70 – 73	D-	60 – 63
B+	87 – 89	C+	77 – 79	D+	67 – 69	F	< 59

REQUIRED READINGS

There is one required text book for the course:

Cockerham, Social Causes of Health and Disease. 2013 (2nd edition), paperback. Publisher: Polity/Wiley. ISBN: 9780745661209.

All additional readings will be posted on Canvas. **You are responsible for completing all readings before the class for which they are assigned, with the exception of the first day of class.** Keeping up with the readings as they are assigned is a very serious course requirement because of the largely discussion-based nature of this class. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is in this class (and for your grade) for you to keep up with the readings.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS ¹

Assignment	Total Points
Attendance & Participation (22)	110
Reading Checks (11)	110
Critical Analysis of Health	150
Healthy People 2020 Group Project	230
Total	600

Attendance: Attendance and participation are very important to your success in this class and are therefore required. Each class will be worth five (5) points. However, you will not be penalized for missing up to two (2) classes. These need to cover both your excused and unexcused absences except in unusual cases of extended and documented illnesses, lengthy jury duty, or similar situations. Any further absences beyond two absences will lower your overall attendance grade. Additionally, this course requires active participation. You are not required to *always* have something to say, but in order to get full credit for your participation, you must attend regularly, show up on time, stay for the duration of the class (e.g. not leave early), be prepared to discuss required readings (e.g. bring annotated readings), and participate regularly in class discussions and small group discussions.

Reading Checks: This course is designed to be a 16-week course condensed into 5 weeks. Therefore, in order to ensure that you are keeping up with and adequately engaging with the material outside of class, you will be required to complete thirteen (13) reading checks. Reading checks are due every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 12:45 pm prior to the class in which the reading was assigned for. Reading checks will vary in the format and will include short answer, multiple choice, and reflective essays. Please note that you will have sixty (60) minutes to complete reading checks once you begin. At the end of the term, your two (2) lowest reading check grades will be dropped.

Critical Health Reflection²: This assignment will function as a critical analysis/reflection of the relationship between health and your own body as situated in social context. You may approach this assignment in any number of ways but be sure that you engage an honest and critical discussion that explores how your body is more than a strict biological “given” but a socially constructed and dynamic entity. I will post a PDF of Judith Ortiz Cofer’s essay “The Story of My Body” for you to use as a guide and a model (but not a recipe!). This project is due July 23rd at the start of class. Additional details related to this project will be available on Canvas.

Healthy People 2020 Group Project: The largest part of your grade will be a collaborative project with your peers focused on a health disparity based on the [Healthy People 2020 guidelines](#). Although this project will account for a large portion of your overall grade, you will have numerous opportunities to earn points with your group throughout the semester that should also help keep you on track. Additional details related to this project will be available on Canvas.

¹ This syllabus is subject to change during the course of the semester. However, total workload will not increase if changes are made.

² This prompt was graciously borrowed from Dr. Chris Bobel.

Project Schedule:

Due	Assignment	Points
Class 4	Select into groups and identify a topic of interest (you must be present to receive these points)	5
Class 9	Turn in a “project concept”	15
Class 14	Turn in detailed outline/draft	25
Class 19	Final group meeting (you must be present to receive these points)	5
Class 23	Turn in evaluation form	30
Class 23	Group presentation	50
Class 24	Final materials	100
		230 points

Extra Credit (15 points): You will have one opportunity for extra credit in this course in the form of a syllabus quiz. The syllabus quiz is only available the first week of class and will be due at 11:59 pm on July 11th. Please note you will have 10 minutes to complete this quiz so be sure to have reviewed the syllabus in its entirety prior to beginning.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES**Accommodation for Disabilities**

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course

instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, you should notify me at least two weeks in advance to request special accommodation if you have a conflict. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	CLASS	TOPIC	READINGS	ASSIGNMENT
Week 1				
7-9	1	Course Introduction	No readings!	
7-10	2	Health Disparities	1 – US Life Expectancy	1 – RC #1
7-11	3	Health Theories	1 – Cockerham; Chapter 2	1 – Syllabus quiz (EC)
7-12	4	Morality & Health	1 – Epidemiology of Overweight/Obesity 2 – Morality and Health	1 – RC #2 2 – Group Selection (in class)
Week 2				
7-15	5	Health Behaviors	1 – SES Disparities in Health Behavior	1 – RC #3
7-16	6	Health Lifestyles	1 – Cockerham; Chapter 3	
7-17	7	Access to Care	1 – Social Foundations of Health Care Inequality and Treatment Bias 2 – ACA	1 – RC #4
7-18	8	SES	1 – Cockerham; Chapter 4	
7-19	9	SES	1 – Cockerham; Chapter 5	1 – RC #5 2 – Project Outline Due
Week 3				
7-22	10	Mental Health	1 – Meanings and Expressions of Depression	1 – RC #6
7-23	11	Race/Ethnicity	1 – Understanding Racial-Ethnic Disparities in Health: Sociological Contributions	1 – Critical Analysis of Health
7-24	12	Nativity/Migration	1 – Waning Hispanic Health Paradox	1 – RC #7
7-25	13	Gender	1 – Gender and Health Inequality	
7-26	14	Trans Health	1 – Barriers to Health Care for Transgender Individuals	1 – RC #8 2 – Project Draft Due
Week 4				
7-29	15	Sexual Orientation	1 – Health and Health Care of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adolescents	1 – RC #9
7-30	16	Social Relationships	1 – Cockerham; Chapter 8	
7-31	17	Environment	1 – Fishing in Dangerous Waters 2 – Cockerham; Chapter 7	1 – RC #10
8-1	18	International Context	3 – Sex in Geneva, Sex in Lilongwe, and Sex in Balaka	
8-2	19	*EXTRA*	Time to work in groups! No reading due.	1 – RC #11 2 – Group Meeting (in class)
Week 5				
8-5	20	Political Economy	1 – Drug Treatment in the U.S. 2 – The Political Economy of Illness	1 – RC #12
8-6	21	Policy	1 – Washington Post 2 – Health Affairs	
8-7	22	Social-Biological Interactions	1 – Trends in Genetic Influence on Smoking	1 – RC #13
8-8	23	Presentations	No reading!	1 – Project Evaluation Due
8-9	24	Wrap Up	1 – Slow Ideas 2 – Cockerham; Concluding Remarks	1 – Final Materials Due