Medical Sociology (SOCI 135)

SP 2025. MWF 2-2:50pm in PCYNH 120

Professor: Jon Ruiz ([jjr026@ucsd.edu](mailto:jjr026@ucsd.edu))

Office hours: M/W 12-1pm in SSB 474

Medicine has always been an institution that profoundly impacts people’s lives. In this class, we

will survey some of the key themes and questions that have animated medical sociologists in recent decades. Along the way, we will tend to the following questions: How did medicine become a professional field? How does human behavior become pathologized? Why are certain demographics more susceptible to illness and disease? What are the unintended consequences of public health and surveillance medicine? By the end of the course, students will be able to articulate behavior becomes medically classified and articulate the role of sociological variables such as class, race, and gender in shaping health outcomes.

**Assessment**

Assessment for the class will consist of several reading response memos, a midterm exam, and a final exam. The breakdown of final grades will be as follows:

Attendance: 10% of your grade.

Memos: 30% of your grade. Each student will submit a total of five reading response memos. You can choose which weeks to write on (the only week you cannot select is week 5). Memos must be submitted by 11:59pm the Sunday of the week you are writing on. Memos are 300-500 words, will be graded pass/fail, and are to be submitted via the Assignments page in Canvas. All memos must summarize at least one reading in the syllabus for that week and present a question, criticism, or comment for further discussion. You may also engage with other readings.

Midterm Essay: 20% of your grade. 5-7 double-spaced pages, due Sunday of week 5.

Final exam: 40% of your grade. The final will focus on the second half of the course and will be conducted in-person during finals week.

**Readings**

All texts are available on Canvas. I recommend setting up a VPN to access online readings off campus. See instructions [here](https://blink.ucsd.edu/technology/network/connections/off-campus/VPN/). Please let me know if you have trouble accessing the readings.

**Course policies**

Cheating and plagiarism:

Students are expected to do their own work and to cite sources according to established norms as outlined in the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity. The policy can be found here: [h: http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2](h:%20http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2%20). A FAQs page on what counts as cheating can be found here: [http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/faq/index.html](http://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/faq/index.html%20).

Cheaters will receive a failing grade on the assignment or exam and/or the entire course. They may also be referred for additional disciplinary action elsewhere at UCSD. If you are unsure about what is considered either plagiarism or cheating, please ask.

Missing/late exams and assignments:

Failure to turn in your take-home exams on time without a valid excuse will result the deduction of one half-letter grade for every day (or part thereof) after the deadline. Excuses communicated after the deadline will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances.

Contesting grades:

You may contest any grades by sending the assignment or exam to me. However, please be aware that this may result in a lower grade than the one given by the course TA.

Struggles with the class:

If you are having trouble with any aspect of the class, including deadlines, it is always best to contact me as soon as possible. That way we can address the problem before you have fallen too far behind or lost too many points from your final grade.

Disability accommodations:

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaisons in the Sociology Department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

**Week 1: Introduction and Health and Illness in Social Context**

*Monday (3/31) Introduction*

*Wednesday (4/2)*

Wing, S. (1994) ‘Limits of epidemiology,’ *Medicine and Global Survival* 1(2): 74-86.

*Friday (4/4)*

Foucault, M. (1972) “Introduction” in *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, London: Routledge.

**Week 2: The Professionalization of American Medicine**

*Monday (4/7)*

Starr, P. (1982) The Social Transformation of American Medicine, Basic Books. (Introduction)

*Wednesday (4/9)*

Whooley, O. (2013) *Knowledge in the Time of Cholera: The Struggle over American Medicine in the Nineteenth Century*,Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 2)

*Friday (4/19)*

Whooley, cont.

**Week 3: Medicalization**

*Monday (4/14)*

Conrad, P. (2005) ‘The shifting engines of medicalization,’ *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 46(1): 3-14

*Wednesday (4/16)*

Clarke, A.E., Shim, J.K., Mamo, L., Fosket, J.R. and Jennifer R. Fishman (2003) ‘Biomedicalization: Technoscientific transformations of health, illness, and U.S. biomedicine,’ American Sociological Review 68: 161-194. **(Pp 161-166 only!)**

*Friday (4/18)*

Clarke et al., cont.

**Week 4: Inequalities and Fundamental Causes**

*Monday (4/21)*

Link, B. and Jo C. Phelan. (1995) “Social Conditions as Fundamental Causes of Disease,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, Extra Issue: 80-94.

*Wednesday (4/23)*

Read, J.G. and Bridget K. Gorman. (2010) “Gender and Health Inequality,” *Annual Review of* Sociology, 36: 371-386.

*Friday (4/25)*

Wailoo, Keith. 2017. “Sickle Cell Disease—a History of Progress and Peril.” *N Engl J Med* 376(9):805–7

**Week 5: Review and Midterm**

*Monday (4/28): Review, no readings*

*Wednesday (4/30): Review, no readings*

*Friday (5/2): Midterm exam*

**Week 6: Patient Movements and Lay Expertise**

*Monday (5/5)*

Brown, P., Zavestoski, S., McCormick, S., Mayer, B., Morello-Frosch, R., and Rebecca Gasior Altman. (2004) “Embodied Health Movements: New Approaches to Social Movements in Health,” *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 26(1): 50-80.

*Wednesday (5/7)*

Epstein, S. (1995) “The Construction of Lay Expertise: AIDS Activism and the Forging of Credibility in the Reform of Clinical Trials,” *Science, Technology and Human Values*, 20(4): 408-37.

*Friday (5/9)*

Epstein, cont.

**Week 7: Diagnosis and Contested Illness**

*Monday (5/12)*

Aronowitz, R. (1999) Making Sense of Illness: Science, Society and Disease, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chapter 1)

*Wednesday (5/14)*

Armstrong, E.M. (1998) Diagnosing moral disorder: The discovery and evolution of fetal alcohol syndrome,’ *Social Science & Medicine* 47(12): 2025-2042.

*Friday (5/16)*

Armstrong, cont*.*

**Week 8: Public Health and Surveillance Medicine**

*Monday (5/19)*

Armstrong, D. (1995) “The Rise of Surveillance Medicine,” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 17(3):393–404.

*Wednesday (5/21)*

Timmermans, S. and Mara Buchbinder. (2012) *Saving Babies? The Consequences of Newborn Genetic Screening*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 1)

*Friday (5/23)*

Timmermans, S. and Mara Buchbinder. (2012) *Saving Babies? The Consequences of Newborn Genetic Screening*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 2)

**Week 9: Psychiatry, Biology, and Looping Effects**

*Monday (5/26) Memorial Day, no class!*

*Wednesday (5/28)*

Horwitz, A.V. (2002) Creating Mental Illness, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 3)

*Friday (5/30)*

Hacking, I. (2006) Making up people,’ *London Review of Books*, August 17, 23-26.

**Week 10:**

*Monday (6/2)*

***TBD***

*Wednesday (6/4) Review, no readings*

*Friday (6/6) Review, no readings*