

**Sociology UA-414 – Sociology of Medicine
Fall 2016**

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When you walk into the doctor's office, health feels like a personal problem. You have a few worrisome symptoms – a cough and some difficulty breathing. Your doctor asks you about how you've been eating, whether you smoke, whether you've been exercising, and what you know about your family history. You admit that you've been skipping the gym. And it's true that you have been more stressed than usual at work. You walk away with orders to stop smoking and fill a prescription to calm your cough.

Doctors are interested in the immediate causes of illness that can be remedied with medical treatments. They focus on why you suffered this illness at this time. The cause of your poor health could lie deep in your past - for example, you lived in a polluted city as a child – but in their offices, doctors attempt to address the immediate symptoms rather than to consider their social causes.

Sociologists take a decidedly different approach to the study of health. First, they focus on understanding the social causes of disease within a population rather than the immediate causes of an individual's illness. Second, sociologists consider how social contexts shape individual health behaviors. Finally, while doctors generally focus on how our current day-to-day lives affect illness because those are the contexts they can influence, sociologists think about how the contexts we inhabit throughout our lives affect our health.

Supra-individual social structures clearly affect our health outcomes, but what about the role of health care? Sociologists also have something to say about how social forces affect everything from doctor-patient interaction to whether or not you choose to get a flu shot to how many medical mistakes occur in the operating room.

In this course, we will investigate how health and society are linked. In doing so, you will learn how to think like a social scientist about issues of health and conduct your own social science research project on a health-related topic you choose.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Reading Responses	22%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	25%
Paper 3	30%
Writing Process	5%
Participation	8%

Three papers (65%):

Detailed descriptions of each paper assignment will be available under the NYU Classes “Assignments” tab, and your papers will be turned in there as well. Papers are due via NYU Classes at 11:59pm on the dates noted in the “Course at a Glance.” In this class, we conduct grading blindly, so please upload your paper without your name in the document and with your N number as your document title.

Paper 1: *Literature Review*: The purpose of this assignment is to prepare you to write a literature review for your own study. Based on sources we will provide, you will write a 7-page literature review.

Paper 2: *First half of your research study*: This 10-page paper will include an introduction, literature review, and description of your data and methods.

Paper 3: *Complete research study*: This 20-page paper will include all sections of the paper: the revised Paper 2 (introduction, literature review and data and methods sections -10 pages), and the results and discussion sections (10 pages).

Writing & Revision Process (5%):

In this class, we are fortunate to be working in close partnership with the Undergraduate Writing Tutors Program. Meeting 2 times outside of class with a writing tutor is a central and required part of our course, and 5% of your final grade will come from your involvement in this process. Writing tutors are well-trained peers who will provide written and oral feedback on your papers. Their role is to support you in improving your papers and to help you become a better writer over the long term. Writing tutors are not Teaching Assistants and will not grade your papers. They will focus writing conferences with you on questions that generate both clearer writing and stronger thinking about the issues we will study. This process ultimately will lead to your writing higher-quality papers (and thus being even more successful!) in this course.

Reading responses on the course “blog” (500 words) & comments on your peers’ responses (22% total - each reading response is worth 2 points, for a total of 18%; each comment is worth .5 points, for a total of 4%.):

The “blog” (in Forums on NYU Classes) provides us with the opportunity to process what we have read, read our peers’ work, and generate questions for discussion in advance of class. These reading responses should incorporate all of the readings for the week, but we are not looking for summaries of the readings. We want you to make an argument, to critically analyze what you have read, and to identify common themes or tensions across the readings.

In most weeks, you will write a reading response, and will be responsible for commenting on at least 1 of your peers' posts. You will not have blog posts due on weeks in which papers are due.

Reading responses are due each week on Sunday by 11:59pm. Comments are due on Monday by 11:59pm. Complete the readings for the entire week before your reading response submission.

Lecture and section participation (8%):

Participation includes not only attendance at section and lecture, but active engagement with the material and with your peers.

Laptops and other digital devices:

A large and growing body of research has documented the many ways in which multitasking – which is inevitable in the presence of digital devices - can interfere with learning, engagement, comprehension, and performance. After an interruption, it takes an average of 25 minutes to return to the original task, and multiple studies have found declines in learning and performance in the presence of multitasking.

For these reasons, we ask that you do not use laptops or other digital devices during lecture or section. To ensure that you don't miss anything on the slides by virtue of writing rather than typing, I will post them to NYU Classes at the end of every week. If you require accommodation, please come to my office hours to discuss your needs.

Policy on lateness:

Late blog posts, comments, or papers will not be accepted.

Office hours for Prof. Jennings (at Think Coffee on Mercer Street):

I strongly encourage all of you to visit my office hours at least once during the semester. To help minimize the time you spend waiting and to help me gauge whether I need to schedule additional office hours in a given week, I have set up an appointment system that you can access via NYU Classes.

*****You don't need to make an appointment to come to office hours***.** You are welcome to just show up, and I will first see those who have scheduled appointments. If the office hour times conflict with your schedule, please let me know and we can arrange another time to meet.

Books to Purchase (all other readings will be posted on NYU Classes):

- 1) Tracey Kidder. *Mountains Beyond Mountains*.
- 2) Steven Johnson. *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic – and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World*.

Course at a Glance

<u>Week</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Deadlines</u>
1-2	9/7, 12, 14	How are Health and Health Care Distributed? How Should They Be?	RR due S 9/11; C by M 9/12
3	9/19-21	Approaching Health as a Social Scientist: The Social Scientific Study of Health	RR due S 9/18; C by M 9/19
4	9/26-28	The Organization of Medical Care in the US and the Challenge of Health Care Reform	RR due S 9/25; C by M 9/26
5	10/3-5	Socioeconomic Status, Race, Stress, and the Intergenerational Transmission of Health	No RR or C <i>Paper 1 Due, F 10/7</i>
6	10/12	Wild Card Topic #1	<i>Short Project Proposal due F 10/14</i>
7	10/17-19	The Effect of Social Contexts on Health Behaviors: The Case of Obesity	No RR or C <i>Paper 1 Revision Due, M 10/24</i>
8	10/24-26	The Social Dimensions of the Diagnosis of Illness: Medicalization, Pharma, and Stimulant Use among College Students	RR due S 10/23; C by M 10/24
9	10/31-11/2	The Social Dimensions of Medical Knowledge: The Vaccine Debate	RR due S 10/30; C by M 10/31
10	11/7-9	Doctor-Patient Interaction: Death, Dying, and End-of-Life Care	No RR or C <i>Paper 2 Due, F, 11/11</i>
11	11/14-16	An Obligation to Reduce Suffering? Dilemmas of Contemporary Humanitarianism	RR due S 11/13; C by M 11/14
12-13	11/21,28, 30	Changes in Modern Medicine: Evidence-Based Medicine and the Case of Screening	No RR or C due 11/20; <i>Paper 2 Revision Due, W 11/23</i> RR due S 11/27; C by M 11/28
14	12/5-7	Changes in Modern Medicine: Quality Improvement and Medical Mistakes	RR due S 12/4; C by M 12/5
15	12/12, 13, 14	Wild Card Topic #2 and Wrap Up	RR on "Take-homes" due S 12/11 <i>Paper 3 (includes Paper 2 Revision + Paper 3) Due, M 12/19</i>

RR=Reading Response; C=Comment on reading response; all deadlines are 11:59pm

Weeks 1-2: September 7th, 12th, 14th

How are health and health care distributed? How should they be? *Is health different than other goods? Is health a human right? Is it an individual or collective responsibility? Is health care a scarce resource that should be rationed to maximize the health of the population, or something to which everyone should have access?*

Hiatt, Howard. 1975. "Protecting the Medical Commons: Who is Responsible?" *New England Journal of Medicine* 293(5): 235-241.

Kidder, Tracey. 2009. *Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World*.

Singer, Peter. 2009. "Why We Must Ration Health Care." *New York Times*, 19 July.

Week 3: September 19th and 21st:

Approaching Health as a Social Scientist: The Social Scientific Study of Health and Medicine. *What is distinctive about the way that social scientists approach health? In this week, we consider the birth of modern epidemiological studies through the case of the London cholera epidemic. You will learn the analytic tools you need to be sophisticated consumers of both social science research and health information presented in the media.*

Johnson, Steven. 2007. *The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic – and How It Changed Science, Cities, and the Modern World*. (Skip the Epilogue)

Week 4: September 26th and 28th

The Organization of Medical Care in the United States and the Challenge of Health Care Reform. *Why is America so different than the rest of the world when it comes to health care access? What are the major problems facing American health care, and how has the Affordable Care Act attempted to address them?*

Rosenthal, Elizabeth. 2013. "The 2.7 Trillion Dollar Medical Bill." *New York Times*.

Starr, Paul. 2011. *Remedy and Reaction: The Peculiar American Struggle Over Health Care Reform*. Pp. 1-72, 239-266.

Week 5: October 3rd and 5th

Socioeconomic Status, Race, Stress, and the Intergenerational Transmission of Health. *Why are people of lower socioeconomic status more likely to get and stay sick? What role do health care vs. non-health care factors play in affecting socioeconomic and racial differences in health? Can events that happen in utero and during early childhood have long-term effects on health? If so, through what pathways do these effects operate, and what are the implications for efforts to improve population health?*

Chandra, Amitabh. 2009. "Who You Are and Where You Live." *Medical Care*.

Link, Bruce G., Richard M. Carpiano, and Margaret M. Weden. 2013. "Can Honorific Awards Give Us Clues about the Connection between Socioeconomic Status and Mortality?" *American Sociological Review*.

Sapolsky, Robert M. 2004. *Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers*. (Chapter 1 (p. 1-18); Chapter 6 (p. 92-119))

Shonkoff, Jack P., W. Thomas Boyce, and Bruce McEwan. 2009. "Neuroscience, Molecular Biology, and the Childhood Roots of Health Disparities: Building a New Framework for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 301 (21): 2252-2259.

Week 6: October 12th (No class on October 10th for fall break)

Wild Card Topic #1. *No reading; we will vote on a topic that is of collective interest to the class.*

Week 7: October 17th and 19th

The Effects of Social Contexts on Health Behaviors: The Case of Obesity. *What factors explain the rise of obesity in the last few decades? How have state efforts to address obesity fared, and what is the appropriate role of the state in managing individuals' eating and exercise choices? More broadly, what role should public health versus health care interventions play in our efforts to improve health?*

Brownell, Kelly D., Rogan Kersh, David S. Ludwig, Robert C. Post, Rebecca M. Puhl, Marlene B. Schwartz, and Walter C. Willett. 2010. "Personal Responsibility and Obesity: A Constructive Approach to a Controversial Issue." *Health Affairs* 29: 379-387.

Christakis, Nicholas and James Fowler –*Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*. Chapter 1 (pages 3-32) and Chapter 4 (95-134).

Week 8: October 24th and 26th

The Social Dimensions of the Diagnosis of Illness: Medicalization, the Pharmaceutical Industry, and Stimulant Use among College Students. *How do personal problems become medical problems? What are the costs and benefits of medicalization, and how do they differ when we take the perspective of the individual versus society? Has the pharmaceutical industry contributed to increasing medicalization and changes in the treatment of disease?*

Conrad, Peter. 2005. *Medicalization of Society* – Chapters 1, 7, and 8.

Cohen, Roger. 2013. “The Competition Drug.” *New York Times*.

Greely, Henry, Philip Campbell, Barbara Sahakian, John Harris, Ronald C. Kessler, Michael Gazzaniga, and Martha J. Farah. 2008. “Towards Responsible Use of Cognitive Enhancing Drugs by the Healthy.” *Nature*: 702-705.

Schwarz, Alan. 2013. “Drowned in a Stream of Prescriptions.” *New York Times*.

Chen, Pauline. 2012. “Are Doctors Too Wary of Drug Companies?” *New York Times*.

Week 9: October 31st and November 2nd

The Social Dimensions of Medical Knowledge: The Vaccine Debate. *Why have higher fractions of families opted out of childhood vaccines or advocated for an alternative vaccine schedule? What are the individual and collective considerations surrounding these decisions? And why are US rates of HPV vaccination so much lower than other industrialized countries?*

Charo, R. Alta. 2007. “Politics, Parents, and Prophylaxis: Mandating HPV Vaccination in the United States.” *New England Journal of Medicine* 356 (19): 1905-8.

Offit, Paul. 2012. *Deadly Choices: How the Anti-Vaccine Movement Threatens Us All*. Prologue and Introduction (ix-xviii), Chapter 11 and Epilogue (191-214).

Offit, Paul. 2014. “Let’s Not Talk About Sex.” *New York Times*, August 20.

Week 10: November 7th and 9th

Doctor-Patient Interaction: Death, Dying, and End-of-Life Care. *How do social factors affect interaction and treatment at the end of life?*

Butler, K. 2010. What Broke My Father’s Heart: How Putting in a Pacemaker Wrecked My Family’s Life. *New York Times Magazine*, June 18, p. 39-43.

Christakis, Nicholas. 1999. *Death Foretold: Prophecy & Prognosis in Medical Care*. 1-134.

Week 11: November 14th and 16th

An Obligation to Reduce Suffering? Dilemmas of Contemporary Humanitarianism. *Ongoing conflicts in some regions of the world have led to large internally-displaced and refugee populations. What are our individual and collective obligations to these people, and what does the social science literature tell us about the promise and perils of intervention?*

Agrawal, Arun et al. 2010. *In the Name of Humanity: The Government of Threat and Care*. edited by I. Feldman and M. Ticktin. Durham NC: Duke University Press Books. [Selections]

Calhoun, Craig. 2004. "A World of Emergencies: Fear, Intervention, and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Order." *Canadian Review of Sociology* 41(4):373–95.

Cole, Teju. *The White Savior Industrial Complex* (The Atlantic, March 2012).

Fassin, Didier. 2011. *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. University of California Press. [Intro and Ch. 1]

Fassin, Didier and Estelle D'halluin. 2005. "The Truth from the Body: Medical Certificates as Ultimate Evidence for Asylum Seekers." *American Anthropologist* 107(4):597–608.

Ticktin, Miriam. 2006. "Where Ethics and Politics Meet." *American Ethnologist* 33(1):33–49.

Week 12-13: November 21st, 28th, and 30th

Changes in Modern Medicine: Evidence-Based Medicine and Preventative and Predictive Health Screening. *Is more screening always a good thing? For whom? More generally, how has "evidence-based" medicine transformed medical practice? How do clinicians attempt to balance clinical knowledge and research knowledge?*

Aronowitz, Robert. 2009. "Addicted to Mammograms." *New York Times* 20 November.

Jolie, Angelina. 2013. "My Medical Choice." *New York Times*. 14 May.

Kramer, Peter. 2015. *Ordinarily Well: The Case for Antidepressants*. [Selections.]

Timmermans, Stefan, and Mara Buchbinder. 2010. "Patients-in-Waiting Living between Sickness and Health in the Genomics Era." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51, no. 4: 408-423.

Welch, H. Gilbert, Lisa M. Schwartz, and Steven Woloshin. *Over-diagnosed: Making People Sick in the Pursuit of Health*. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 6.

Week 14: December 5th and 7th

Changes in Modern Medicine: Medical Mistakes and Quality Improvement Efforts.

How can hospitals, doctors, and nurses improve their patients' outcomes? Are medical mistakes to be expected in a complex profession, and if so, how should medical mistakes be regulated?

Bosk, Charles. 2003 (2nd ed.) *Forgive and Remember: Managing Medical Failure*. p. 2-70.

Gawande, Atul. 2008. *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*. Picador. "On Washing Hands" (pp. 13-28) and "The Bell Curve" (pp. 201-230).

Gawande, Atul. 2007. "The Checklist." *The New Yorker*. December 10.

Week 15: December 12th, 13th, and 14th: Wild Card Topic #2 and Wrap Up.

Based on a class vote, we will explore a topic that is of collective interest to the class.