**Sociology 475: Medical Sociology**

Units: 4.0  
Spring 2019 | MW | 3:30pm to 4:50pm  
Location: Kaprielian Hall (KAP) 113

**Professor Josh Seim**  
Office: Hazel and Stanley Hall Building (HSH) 218  
Office Hours: Mondays, 11:00am to 12:00pm, or by appointment  
Contact: jseim@usc.edu or 213-764-7930

---

**Course Description**

Welcome to Medical Sociology! This course is divided into three parts. First, we’ll examine the social roots of sickness. We’ll consider how things like class, race, and gender inequalities affect bodily health. Second, we’ll study medicine as a social institution. We’ll consider how health care is embedded in, and helps reproduce, the social world. The third part of this course will be dedicated to unique case studies on health and medicine. Each student will use course materials to examine a case of their choice. For better or worse, this class will focus primarily on the United States.

**Learning Objectives**

1. Understand the social roots of sickness and medicine as a social institution  
2. Learn key theories in the sociology of health and medicine  
3. Communicate analysis of course issues through writing and discussion

**Course Materials**

All readings are available on Blackboard.

I will post short reading and lecture summaries every week to Blackboard. You should treat these messages as supplemental text. While they cannot substitute a thorough reading of our primary text or an engaged attendance in class, these summaries should help you better understand and navigate the course.
Student Evaluation

Grading Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Exam I</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-Home Exam II</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper: Case Study</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading Responses

Each reading assignment comes with a set of questions. You are expected to submit an answer to one question from each set (due 11:00am the day of the assigned reading via Blackboard). You may either write a response (three to four sentences with specific page citations) or diagram/table a response (with specific page citations). Written responses must be submitted using the assignment text box and diagramed/tabled responses must be attached as a standard image file (e.g., JPG). All reading responses are graded on a pass/fail basis. While wrong answers will not be penalized, I may ask you to resubmit a reading response if your initial submission is obviously careless. Late reading responses will not be accepted, but you are allowed to skip two without penalty.

Take-Home Exams

Your performance on two written take-home exams will determine more than half of your grade in the course. For each exam, you will be given multiple days to answer a few questions. These exams will challenge you to bring course readings in conversation with one another. The first exam will be distributed in class on February 20th (Wednesday) and is due February 25th (Monday) at 11:00am via Blackboard. The second exam will be distributed in class on April 10th (Wednesday) and is due April 15th (Monday) at 11:00am via Blackboard. Exams turned in late will be docked one full letter grade for each day they are tardy. No exam will be accepted beyond 72 hours of its designated submission time. Additional instructions and requirements will be provided on the exam prompts.

Final Paper: Case Study

The course ends with a final paper that will challenge you to analyze a special case of your choice. For example, you may write about the social determinants of asthma attacks, employment status as a “fundamental cause” of sickness, the emergency department as a social safety net, or the politics of health insurance. The possibilities are seemingly endless, but you must make whatever case you select speak directly to the course’s major themes. All case studies must include the following: a) an adequately sourced summary of the case, b) an original examination of the case using two of the course readings, and c) a reflection on the limitations of using your selected course readings to explain your case. You will submit your case study as a short paper (five to seven double-spaced pages) by 4:00pm on May 3rd (Friday) via Blackboard. Your final paper grade is also dependent on your performance on three workshop assignments, which are due April 17th, April 22nd, and April 24th via Blackboard (all by 11:00am). Additional instructions and requirements will be detailed in lecture.


Additional Policies

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend every class. However, simply showing up will not be enough to succeed. You must also be engaged. Among other things, this means you must bring a printed or digital copy of the assigned reading to class.

Technology

Laptops and tablets are permitted in class for notetaking and/or accessing the assigned readings.

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct.

Independent Work

This is an extension of the plagiarism policy. You must complete all assignments and exams independently. That said, you are encouraged to discuss course material with your peers outside of class.

See also: “List of Support Systems” at the end of this syllabus.
Abbreviated Schedule (*RR = Reading Response, *WA = Workshop Assignment*)

### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/07</td>
<td>Syllabus</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part I: Sickness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/09</td>
<td>Durkheim’s Legacy</td>
<td>Durkheim</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/14</td>
<td>Engels’ Legacy</td>
<td>Engels</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/16</td>
<td>Du Bois’ Legacy</td>
<td>Du Bois</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/23</td>
<td>Fundamental Causes</td>
<td>Link and Phelan</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/28</td>
<td>Relative Positioning</td>
<td>Marmot</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/30</td>
<td>Social Ecology</td>
<td>Klinenberg</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/04</td>
<td>Race and Sickness</td>
<td>Williams and M.</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/06</td>
<td>Gender and Sickness</td>
<td>Bird and Rieker</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/11</td>
<td>Embodiment</td>
<td>Krieger</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/13</td>
<td>The Violence Continuum</td>
<td>Holmes</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/20</td>
<td>Review / Distribute Exam I</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/25</td>
<td>Exam I Due / In-Class Video</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Exam I by 11am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part II: Medicine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>02/27</td>
<td>Medical Roles</td>
<td>Parsons</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/04</td>
<td>Clinical Gaze</td>
<td>Foucault</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/06</td>
<td>Medical Irony</td>
<td>Waitzkin</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/18</td>
<td>Medical Authority</td>
<td>Starr</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/20</td>
<td>Capitalist Medicine</td>
<td>Navarro</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/25</td>
<td>Medicalization</td>
<td>Conrad</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/27</td>
<td>Race and Medicine</td>
<td>Feagin and B.</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/01</td>
<td>Gender and Medicine</td>
<td>Lupton</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/03</td>
<td>Care Work</td>
<td>Rodriguez</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/08</td>
<td>Carceral Medicine</td>
<td>Sufrin</td>
<td>RR by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/10</td>
<td>Review / Distribute Exam II</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/15</td>
<td>Exam II Due / In-Class Video</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Exam II by 11am</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part III: Case Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04/17</td>
<td>Case Study Workshop 1</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>WA by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/22</td>
<td>Case Study Workshop 2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>WA by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/24</td>
<td>Case Study Workshop 3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>WA by 11am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/03</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Final Paper by 4pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Detailed Schedule

INTRODUCTION

Monday, January 7\textsuperscript{th} | Syllabus

No reading.

PART I: THE SOCIAL ROOTS OF SICKNESS

Wednesday, January 9\textsuperscript{th} | Durkheim’s Legacy


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What are the differences in suicide rates between Catholics and Protestants?
B) What is the difference between egoistic and altruistic suicide?
C) What is the difference between fatalistic and anomic suicide?

Monday, January 14\textsuperscript{th} | Engels’ Legacy


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is social murder?
B) What are the roles of education, law, and medicine?
C) Why is “the insecurity of his position” so “demoralizing” for the working man?

Wednesday, January 16\textsuperscript{th} | Du Bois’ Legacy


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) Detail some factors that help explain the death rate of blacks in Philadelphia?
B) What might Du Bois say to Durkheim?
C) What might Du Bois say to Engels?

Wednesday, January 23\textsuperscript{rd} | Fundamental Causes


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is Link and Phelan’s critique of epidemiology and Western culture?
B) What are “risk of risks” and why are they important?
C) What constitutes a “fundamental cause” of disease?
**Monday, January 28th | Relative Positioning**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*

A) What is the “status syndrome”?
B) What is the association between autonomy and the gradient in health?
C) What is the association between social participation and health?

**Wednesday, January 30th | Social Ecology**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*

A) What is a “social autopsy” and how does Klinenberg use this method?
B) Detail the ecological differences between North Lawndale and Little Village
C) What is the author’s critique of the CDC investigation?

**Monday, February 4th | Racism and Sickness**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*

A) How does institutional racism affect health?
B) How does cultural racism affect health?
C) How does racial discrimination affect health?

**Wednesday, February 6th | Gender and Sickness**

Bird and Rieker. 2008. *Gender and Health: The Effects of Constrained Choices and Social Policies.* (pp. 16-45, 57-73)

*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*

A) What are Bird and Rieker’s critiques of biology and sociology?
B) What is the relationship between gender roles and health?
C) What are “constrained choices” and how do they affect gendered health differences?

**Monday, February 11th | Embodiment**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*

A) What is embodiment?
B) How can embodiment inform our understanding of health inequality?
C) What might happen if researchers do not take embodiment seriously?
Wednesday, February 13th | The Violence Continuum

Holmes. 2013. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States.* (pp. 89-110)

*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) How is Abelino’s knee injury an embodiment of structural violence?
B) How is Crescencio’s headache an embodiment of symbolic violence?
C) How is Bernardo’s pain an embodiment of political violence?

Wednesday, February 20th | Review / Distribute Exam I

No reading.

Monday, February 25th | Exam I Due / In-Class Video

No reading.

PART II: MEDICINE AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

Wednesday, February 27th | Medical Roles


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is the sick role?
B) What is the role of the therapist?
C) What is the relationship between the sick person and his/her therapist?

Monday, March 4th | Clinical Gaze


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What are the key differences between Pomme and Bayle?
B) What does the clinical/medical gaze do?
C) What are the stages of the “medicine of the sick organs”?
**Wednesday, March 6th | Medical Irony**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is the irony of medicine?
B) What is the role of ideology and control in medicine?
C) What is consent and why is it important for understanding medical encounters?

**Monday, March 18th | Medical Authority**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is the difference between social and cultural authority?
B) What explains the growth of medical/professional authority?
C) What are some contemporary threats to medical authority?

**Wednesday, March 20th | Capitalist Medicine**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is the dual function of medicine?
B) What is the relationship between class struggle and medicine?
C) What is the difference between socialist and capitalist medicine?

**Monday, March 25th | Medicalization**

Conrad. 2007. *The Medicalization of Society: On the Transformation of Human Conditions into Treatable Disorders.* (pp. 3-19, 146-64)

*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What explains medicalization?
B) What are some consequences of medicalization?
C) What does Conrad say about resistance to medicalization?
**Wednesday, March 27th | Race and Medicine**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) How is the history of American medicine and public health governance racist?
B) Why do the authors consider bias, prejudice, and similar concepts to be weak?
C) Why is a theory of “implicit bias” insufficient in explaining differential racial treatments?

**Monday, April 1st | Gender and Medicine**

Lupton. 2003. *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease, and the Body.* (pp. 142-6, 149, 158-67)

*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is the relationship between gynecology and women’s oppression?
B) What is the relationship between medicalized childbirth and women’s oppression?
C) What is the relationship between prenatal screening and women’s oppression?

**Wednesday, April 3rd | Care Work**

Rodriquez. 2014. *Labors of Love: Nursing Homes and the Structures of Care Work.* (pp. 1-19, 115-37)

*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is care work according to Rodriquez?
B) What are some of the constraints placed on nursing home workers?
C) What is Rodriquez’s critique of Hochschild?

**Monday, April 8th | Carceral Medicine**


*Reading Response (select one and submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)*
A) What is jailcare?
B) What is the broader relationship between the carceral net and the safety net?
C) How does Sufrin advance our understanding of “care” more generally?

**Wednesday, April 10th | Review / Distribute Exam II**

No reading.

**Monday, April 15th | Exam II Due / In-Class Video**

No reading.
PART III: CASE STUDIES

Wednesday, April 17th | Case Study Workshop 1: Researching Your Case

No reading.

Workshop Assignment 1 (submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)
Submit a one-paragraph summary of your case. No need to include outside sources at this point. Simply summarize the case for a reader who knows nothing about it. Come to class prepared to discuss your case with others. (Remember: select a case that you can envision yourself analyzing using one or more of the course readings).

Monday, April 22nd | Case Study Workshop 2: Analyzing Your Case

No reading.

Workshop Assignment 2 (submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)
Submit a three-paragraph proposal. Be sure to include the following: a) a re-written summary of your case, b) a brief reflection on at least one case-relevant text from outside the course, and c) a loose plan for how you intend to use one or more of the course authors to analyze your case. Come to class prepared to discuss your case and outside text(s) with others.

Wednesday, April 24th | Case Study Workshop 3: Concluding Your Case

No reading.

Workshop Assignment 3 (submit by 11:00am via Blackboard)
Submit a detailed bullet-point outline of your final paper. Be sure to clearly indicate how you will address the following portions of the case study: a) an adequately sourced summary of the case, b) an original examination of the case using two of the course readings, and c) a reflection on the limitations of using your selected course readings to explain your case. Come to class with your outline and be prepared to discuss it with others.

Final Paper. Due 05/03 (Friday), 4:00pm via Blackboard.
List of Support Systems

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255
Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center
For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086
Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support
Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs
Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710
Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC
Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information
Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety
UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.
Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu