

SOCI 409: Social Determinants of Health

The University of Calgary, Faculty of Arts, Department of Sociology
Course Outline, Fall Semester, 2013

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Instructor Alex Bierman, Ph.D. Office: SS 902 E-mail: aebierma@ucalgary.ca <i>Please note that e-mail is the best way to reach me. I cannot guarantee that phone calls will be answered or returned.</i> Office Hours: Wednesdays, noon to 1:30. I can also meet after class most days and am available for appointments at additional times.</p> | <p>Lecture Schedule: 11:00 am - 12:15 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays SH 280</p> <p>Term Papers: Due printed November 14th in class.</p> <p>Final: Due printed in my office during the registrar-scheduled exam time.</p> |
|--|--|

Course Description

Research consistently demonstrates that the incidence of physical and mental disorder is patterned on the basis of core social statuses and individual placement within structures of social stratification. These findings show that health is not simply a result of biological processes, but is also a result of social processes. This class will focus on the fundamental social patterns of health and illness, as well as some of the most important mechanisms explaining these patterns.

Required Text

Aneshensel, Carol S., Jo C. Phelan, and Alex Bierman (Eds.). 2013. *Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health, Second Edition*. Dordrecht, NL: Springer.

NOTE: Although this is our primary text, there will be a number of additional required readings, some of which will be announced at a later date. You do not need to purchase this or any other text for the class. The course is designed so that all readings are freely available to download from the library.

Staying in Contact

Class announcements may occasionally be sent out over e-mail. It is your responsibility to ensure that the university has your correct e-mail address and that your e-mail account is in working order. Outside of office hours or pre-scheduled appointments, the best way to reach me is through e-mail. I cannot guarantee that phone calls will be answered or returned. When e-mailing, please put "SOCI 409" in the subject line of your e-mail to help me reply more efficiently to your e-mails. I will make every effort to reply to your e-mails within 24 hours, but it may take up to 24 hours to respond. I generally do not respond to e-mails after 6:00 pm until the following day.

I am happy to meet with students, but please observe the following so that I can respond to students in a way that is fair and attentive:

- 1) Except for cases in which I have instructed you to email something, I prefer that you contact me by email for administrative purposes only. For instance, you may email me to schedule an appointment outside of office hours.
- 2) Students with substantive questions should come to office hours or schedule an appointment. If you have questions related to grading or course content, see me during office hours or make an appointment.

Grade Distribution

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Oral Presentation | 15% (10% by instructor, 5% by class) |
| Evaluation of Oral Presentations | 5% |
| Paper | 40% |
| Final | 40% |

Grading System

Because grading will be based on oral presentations and papers, only letter grades will be assigned. To combine these grades into a final grade, letter grades will be converted into the **midpoint** of the range described below and the mathematical average of these three grades taken. For example, if you get a “B” on the oral presentation, this would convert to a score of 78. Please also note that assignment grades are weighted in calculating the final grade. For example, the grade of “B” on your oral presentation would contribute $(78 \cdot .15)$ 11.7 points to your grade. The weighted grades for each student will be summed and final grades will be assigned based on the system below:

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| A+ = 95 and over | B+ = 80-84.9999 | C+ = 67-71.9999 | D+ = 54-58.9999 |
| A = 90-94.9999 | B = 76-79.9999 | C = 63-66.9999 | D = 50-53.9999 |
| A- = 85-89.9999 | B- = 72-75.9999 | C- = 59-62.9999 | D- = 49.9999 and lower |

Please note that a grade of “A” indicates excellent performance, and therefore indicates a comprehensive and thorough grasp of the material. A grade of “B” indicates a strong grasp of the material. I reserve the right to use the full scale of grades available. You will not be able to negotiate a different final grade based on alternative criteria. It is unlikely that extra credit will be given. In the unlikely event that an opportunity for extra credit arises, this opportunity will be given to the class as a whole. Individual opportunities for extra credit or to make up lost points will not be allowed.

Lectures and Readings

The course setup consists of two 1 hour and 15 minute class lectures per week. The instructor’s lecture on Tuesdays will typically describe the core issues regarding the social determinant under study for the week, while the Thursday lecture will describe empirical studies in regards to this determinant. The lectures may or may not address all readings or all material from each of these readings, but students will be expected to be knowledgeable of this material for the paper, final, and presentations.

All readings, including the main text, will be available through the library website. The instructor assumes that students in a 400-level class are familiar with the library website, but feel free to see him if you need an orientation in downloading papers.

Please note that your instructor will most likely not have PowerPoint slides for his lectures and his lecture notes are likely to be relatively uninformative for students. Students missing class are therefore advised to obtain notes from another student in the class.

Term Papers

Term papers should focus on a specific social determinant examined in class, and should review relevant theories, empirical findings, potential weaknesses, and directions for future research. However, it is likely that the literature on a specific social determinant will be too extensive to comfortably cover in one term paper, so students will likely want to narrow their focus. For example, the research on religion and health has been growing precipitously in recent years. As a result, an entire book could easily be written on “Religion and Health” (and has). Instead, then, a student may wish to focus on a narrow slice of this research, such as “Religious Practices and Mental Health.” This is just one example, though, and other foci may be produced from this social determinant. A similar situation will exist for additional determinants. The instructor therefore encourages students to meet with him soon after the semester begins to discuss student interests and help narrow down a potential topic.

Term papers should be 20-22 pages in length, and should be double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font with 1.5 inch margins on all sides. Your papers should include appropriate grammar and spelling. All pages should be numbered. Papers should include a title page, and also a second page that presents an abstract that summarizes the paper. Neither of these pages count towards page length. The reference section also does not count towards paper length. Term papers are due on **NOVEMBER 14th in class**. E-mailed papers are not welcome without prior approval. A student handing in a paper electronically without prior approval will receive a 10% penalty to the grade of the paper. Term papers should focus on research and theory published in the major sociological journals. The instructor encourages students to consult with him regarding the major sociological journals for their topics, and also check with him if they are unclear whether a journal or paper qualifies for this standard.

All sources should be cited using ASA or APA format. If you are unclear on how to use these formats, see:

<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/guides/3asa.pdf>

<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/guides/3apa.pdf>

Papers will be graded on clarity of thought and expression, as well as the degree to which material pertaining to the the paper’s focal topic is adequately covered and evaluated.

Class Presentations

The last three weeks of class will be devoted to student presentations. Each presentation should last 20 minutes, with a few minutes after for questions from the instructor and class.

Presentation time may be shortened to suit the number of presenters. In this event, presenters will be notified at least a week before they are due to present. Students should present the relevant issues in regards to the subjects of their papers. Each presentation should include: Major topics of study, key empirical findings, current limitations, and directions for future research. Presentations will obviously not be as extensive as the material covered in the papers, and part of the task involved in this assignment involves winnowing down papers to a presentation that focuses on and encapsulates the key material. Following their presentations, **on the same day**, students should e-mail the instructor a bibliography of works cited during their presentation that will be forwarded to the class. A failure to provide this bibliography or a late provision of the bibliography will adversely affect the student's presentation grade. Bibliographies should be in ASA or APA style.

Please note that both the instructor **and** class will grade each presentation. Student evaluations will take two parts. The first will be a letter grade, while the second will be a qualitative evaluation. Forms for the letter grades and qualitative evaluations will be provided to students electronically, and students should print these forms out and bring them to class for each presenter. Presenters will receive the qualitative evaluations, which will be anonymous, but not the letter grades. Letter grades will be aggregated across evaluators and the average grade will account for 5% of the presenter's final grade.

Because student feedback is extremely important for presenters, students will also be graded on their provision of evaluations. Students may miss one day of presentations without penalty. After this, each day missed will result in a deduction of one percent to one's final grade, for a maximum of 5%. Please note that failing to provide evaluations for **all** presentations on a specific day will be considered missing that day.

Final

The final will be take-home and will be due **in the instructor's office** during the time for the final assigned by the registrar. Students may complete the final with a maximum of **one** partner. If students complete a final with a partner, partners must turn in **one** paper with both names on it. Partners will receive the same grade, regardless of the amount of work put into the assignment by each partner. Students should not discuss their exam with **anyone else in the class** besides a credited partner. Anything more than passing resemblance to anyone else's/group's final will be taken as evidence of cheating and both assignments will receive a score of zero for the **entire** exam.

Rather than waiting until the end of the semester to rush to complete the final, the instructor encourages students to work on the final throughout the semester. For this reason, students will be given the assignment in this course outline. Here is the assignment:

Your friend Ralph tells you individual physical and mental health is just a matter of biological maturation and individual responsibility. Based on what you have learned in this class, how would you respond to him?

Regardless of the position you take, your response must take into account *negative evidence*. That is, you must address material that we have covered in the class that does not support your argument. In including this negative evidence, you must attempt to account for it while still

explaining how your position is valid. Material from other classes should be used on the final very lightly, if at all.

The same rules for handing in electronic copies, formatting, spelling/grammar, and citations that are stated above for the term paper apply to the final exam. These papers should be 20-22 pages in length. A cover page is required (which does not count towards page length), but an abstract is not. The reference section also does not count towards paper length. Papers will be graded on clarity of thought and expression, as well as the extent to which the papers comprehensively cover focal class topics.

Missing/Late Papers, Presentations, and Finals

Exams and papers that are turned in late without being deferred will receive a 25% penalty for each business day that the exam and/or paper is late. The first day the exam is considered late will begin one minute after the exam is due. Similarly, the first day the paper is considered late will begin at 12:16 p.m. the day the paper is due.

Because presentations are important for not only the person presenting them, but also the rest of the class, a student missing his or her assigned day of presentation will be considered quite stringently. Deferrals will be granted on the same basis as exams. Every class that is missed without deferral will result in a 25% penalty to one's presentation grade. Students who arrive late to class the day they are presenting will be considered to have missed the class. Please note that the schedule for presentations is likely to be quite tight. Consequently, students will be expected to present on their assigned day and cannot be guaranteed a day to make up this presentation. A failure to present will result in a loss of 15% to one's final grade.

Please see below for the standard policies regarding deferrals.

Two Notes on Class Behavior

To facilitate cordial discussion, if you have a question when your instructor is lecturing or would like to respond to another student's comment, please raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking. This policy is not a commentary on you, or any other student at the University of Calgary, but is based on your instructor's own experiences as a student. He has found that classes in which people are encouraged to consider their words before speaking, and do not simply blurt things out, often achieve a more sophisticated level of discussion. Again, though, I want to encourage discussion in this class. Please feel free to raise your hand at any time when I am lecturing. I am happy to stop any lecture to discuss an interesting or confusing point. The class is also encouraged to ask student presenters questions. However, because class presentations can often be an anxiety-provoking experience, the class (and, usually, the instructor) should wait until the question and answer period to ask student presenters questions.

Because of the pressure that students often feel when presenting, it is strongly encouraged that members of the class do not come to class late when students are presenting. It can often break the flow of a presentation or a presenter's train of thought when someone comes into class late. Everyone in this class will be required to give a presentation, and you will appreciate this consideration when you present.

Laptops and Computer Use

Laptops should be used for taking notes and other class work only. If a student is observed using a laptop during class for instant messaging, e-mailing, work for other classes, or surfing the internet more than once, he or she will lose the right to use a laptop during class.

Academic Dishonesty

Instances of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the assignment or exam in which the cheating occurs. Using work which is not your own is academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty of this type includes: Having someone else do work and claiming the work as your own, or copying other students' work. Other types of academic dishonesty include gaining access to materials before they are given. This is not an exhaustive list of activities which may fall under the category of academic dishonesty. If you are not sure whether an action would be academic dishonesty, please ask before you take this action.

How are Grade Disputes Handled?

Students are encouraged to resolve grade disputes by discussing the situation with the instructor. Please do so in person. At this meeting, the student's arguments will be carefully considered and, hopefully, a resolution attained that meets with mutual satisfaction. A student seeking reappraisal of graded exams or papers must discuss this work with the instructor within two weeks of the date the exam is handed back. However, please note that, consistent with Faculty of Arts regulations, the entire exam or paper will be remarked and the mark may be raised, lowered, or remain the same.

Course Notes:

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. Academic Misconduct: Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>
3. Protection of Privacy: The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. "If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment."
4. Ethical Research: Students are advised that any research with human subjects--including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation--must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.
5. Deferrals: If possible, please provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student. If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a "make up" test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a "make up" test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology. Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar's Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:
http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/Sp_Su_DFE_App.pdf
Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/defTW.pdf>
Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).
6. Student Representation: The 2013-14 Students' Union VP Academic is Emily Macphail; email: suypaca@ucalgary.ca. The Faculty of Arts has four SU representatives who may be contacted at any of the following email addresses: arts1@ucalgary.ca, arts2@ucalgary.ca, arts3@ucalgary.ca, and arts4@ucalgary.ca. You may also wish to contact the Student Ombudsperson for help with a variety of University-related matters: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds/role>
7. Emergency Evacuation: In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at Education Block - Food Court. Please check these assembly point locations for your other classes at:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>
8. Safewalk: The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.
9. Academic Accommodation: Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, must register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 293, phone 403-220-8237). Please provide academic accommodation letters to the instructor as early in the semester as possible and no later than two weeks after the course begins.

Course Schedule

Please note that additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester. This schedule is tentative and may change according to the pace of the class.

Tu 9/10

READ THE COURSE OUTLINE.

Overview of the course: Why study health? A sociological interest. HB Chapter 1 (Aneshensel et al.). Kessler in HB.

Th 9/12

Measurement and methods in the sociological study of health.

Target readings:

Mirowsky, John and Catherine Ross. 2002. "Measurement for a Human Science." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43:152-170.

Kessler, Ronald C. 2002. "The Categorical versus Dimensional Assessment Controversy in the Sociology of Mental Illness." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43:171-188.

Horwitz, Allan V. 2007. "Distinguishing Distress from Disorder as Psychological Outcomes of Stressful Social Arrangements." *Health* 11:273-289.

Schwartz, Sharon. 2007. "Distinguishing Distress from Disorder as Psychological Outcomes of Stressful Social Arrangements: Can We and Should We?" *Health* 11:291-299.

Tu 9/17

Reading and interpreting research in the study of the social determinants of health.

Target readings:

None.

Th 9/19

A stress process perspective—benefits and drawbacks.

Target readings:

Pearlin and Bierman from HB. Wheaton et al. from HB.

Tu/Th 9/24-9/26

A life course perspective: What is its relevance for research on health?

Target readings:

George from HB.

O'Rand, Angela M. 2006. "Stratification and the Life Course: Life Course Capital, Life Course Risks, and Social Inequality." Pp. 145-162 in *Handbook of the Aging and the Social Sciences, Sixth Edition*, edited by R. H. Binstock and L K. George. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

The O'Rand reading can be downloaded from the library website. Make sure to look for the sixth edition of this text.

Tu/Th 10/01-10/03

Age, Aging, and Health

Target readings:

Ferraro and Wilkinson from HB.

Herd et al. 2011. "Health Disparities Among Older Adults: Life Course Influences and Policy Solutions." From: *Handbook of the Aging and the Social Sciences, Seventh Edition*, edited by R. H. Binstock and L K. George. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Please note that this is the Seventh Edition, not the Sixth Edition. This text can also be downloaded from the library.

Tu/Th 10/08-10/10

SES and Health

Target readings:

McLeod from HB.

Ross, Catherine E. and John Mirowsky. 2010. "Why Education Is the Key to Socioeconomic Differentials in Health." Chapter 3 in: Chloe E. Bird, Peter Conrad, Allen M. Fremont, and Stefan Timmerman. *Handbook of Medical Sociology, Sixth Edition*.

Link, Bruce and Jo C. Phelan. 2010. "Social Conditions and Fundamental Health Inequalities." Also in the Sixth edition of the *Handbook of Medical Sociology*.

Please note that both reading from the *Handbook of Medical Sociology* are available from the library's website. Please make sure to look for the sixth edition of this text.

Tu/Th 10/15-10/17

Race, Gender, and Health

Target readings:

Brown et al

Rosenfield and Mouzon in HB.

Read, Jen'nan Ghazal and Bridget K. Gorman. 2010. "Gender and Health Inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36:371-386.

Courtenay, Will H. 2000. "Constructions of Masculinity and their Influence on Men's Well-Being: A Theory of Gender and Health." *Social Science and Medicine* 50:1385-1401.

Williams, David R. and Michelle Sternthal. 2010. "Understanding Racial-ethnic Disparities in Health : Sociological Contributions." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 51:S15-S27.

Tu/Th 10/22-10/24

Social Support, Social Integration, and Health


Target readings:

Thoits, Peggy A. 2011. "Mechanisms Linking Social Ties and Support to Physical and Mental Health." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 52:145-161.

Umberson, Debra, Robert Crosnoe, and Corinne Reczek. 2010. "Social Relationships and Health Behavior Across the Life Course." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36:139-157.

Kawachi, Ichiro. 2006. "Social Capital and Health." Pp. 18-162 in *Handbook of the Aging and the Social Sciences, Sixth Edition*, edited by R. H. Binstock and L K. George. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

The Kawachi reading can be downloaded from the library website. Make sure to look for the sixth edition of this book.

Tu/Th 10/29-10/31 

Psychological Resources and Health

Target readings:

Thoits in HB.

Ross and Mirowsky in HB

Baumeister et al. 2003. "Does High Self-Esteem cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?" *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4:1-44.

[Feel free to skim the Baumeister et al paper just to get the general overview]

Tu/Th 11/05-11/14

Religion, Family, and Health (No class Tuesday the 12th of Nov.)

Target readings:

Schieman et al. in HB.

Umberson et al. from HB.

Sloan, R. P., E. Bagiella, and T. Powell. 1999. "Religion, Spirituality, and Medicine." *The Lancet* 353:664-667.

Carr, Deborah, and Kristen Springer. 2010. "Advances in Families and Health Research in the 21st Century." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72:743-761.