

# SOCI 409: Social Determinants of Health

The University of Calgary, Faculty of Arts, Department of Sociology  
Course Outline, Winter Semester, 2018

<p><b>Instructor</b> Alex Bierman, Ph.D. <b>Office:</b> SS 902 <b>E-mail:</b> 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> <b>Office Hours:</b> Tuesdays &amp; Thursdays 11:00 am – noon or by appointment</p>	<p><b>Lecture Schedule:</b> 9:30 am - 10:45 am Tuesdays and Thursdays SA 245</p> <p><b>Final:</b> Due <b><u>on D2L</u></b> by noon, April 19<sup>th</sup></p>
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## Course Description and Objectives

Research has consistently demonstrated 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. At the end of the class, students should be able to describe the major social patterns in health, as well as the primary mechanisms that underlie these patterns.

## Staying in Contact

Class announcements may occasionally be sent out over e-mail, so you'll need to make sure that the university has your correct e-mail address and that your e-mail account is in working order. I am happy to meet with students, you should contact me by email for administrative purposes only unless I have specifically instructed you otherwise. For instance, you may email me to schedule an appointment outside of office hours. When e-mailing, please put "SOCI 409" in the subject line of your e-mail. I will make every effort to reply to your e-mails within 24 hours (not counting weekends), but it may take up to 24 hours to respond.

## A Brief Note on Email Etiquette

When emailing your professor, your email should always contain certain elements. First, "SOCI 409" should be in the subject line of the email. Second, your email should start out, "Dr. Bierman" or "Professor Bierman." You should then put the issue you are emailing about in the body of your email, using correct sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. You should also sign your name and include your student number. Please note that your instructor may ask that you re-send you email if it does not conform to these specifications.

## 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, but an “A” on the mid-term and final, your final grade would be  $(78+92.5+92.5)/3=87.667$ , which would be a final grade of A-.

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

If 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 points lost due to errors on an exam or essay will not be allowed. Consistent with departmental policy, class grades may be adjusted to keep with departmental norms.

## Course Format

The course setup consists of two 1 hour and 15 minute class lectures per week. After the first two weeks, each week will be focused on a different social determinant of health. Each week will be divided into two parts. The first, on Tuesday, will be a lecture by your professor that presents an overview of the determinant examined in that week. The second part, on Thursday, will be based on presentations by members of the class. Presenters will describe a collection of key empirical studies on the social determinant of interest for the given week.

## Lectures and Required Readings

The first two weeks of class will be based on lectures by the instructor that set up foundation for the class. After this, the instructor will lecture on Tuesdays, describing the core issues regarding the social determinant under study for the week. Each lecture will be accompanied by at least one “target reading” that will describe core issues for the social determinant being examined. The instructor may or may not address the target readings during the lecture, but students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of these readings for the mid-term and final.

All target articles 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 to 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.

## **Class Presentations**

Class presentations will be critical for both the individual student and the class as a whole. Each student will present 4-6 key empirical studies to the class. These presentations will be important for the class because students will need to demonstrate knowledge of these studies in the mid-term and final. Students should be aware that, in creating their own presentation, they will likely need to familiarize themselves with material in addition to the papers they are presenting. It is strongly suggested that each student meet with the instructor ***at a minimum*** of two weeks before their presentations to discuss the readings and additional material that may be informative. It would be most productive if students read the papers they are presenting before meeting with the instructor.

Class presentations should take this format: (1) The overall theme of the papers being presented, (2), central research questions, methodology, and findings of each paper, (3) what the papers overall tell us about the social determinant of focus, (4) lingering questions or weaknesses that the papers do not address (or do not address adequately), and (5) questions from the class and instructor. Students should generally expect presentations to take approximately 25-30 minutes in total. Please also be aware that each member of class in attendance will fit out a brief evaluation of each presentation.

## **Midterm and Final**

Both the midterm and final will be take-home. Papers should be 10-13 pages (12 point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, and 1.5 inch margins on all sides of the page) and turned in to the appropriate dropbox on D2L. Students will typically respond to one broad question in each exam. The midterm paper will be due on March 1<sup>st</sup> and the final will be due on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

Students may complete the midterm and final with a maximum of ***one*** partner. If students complete a midterm and/or 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 working with a partner should not discuss their exam with ***anyone else in the class***. Anything more than passing resemblance to anyone else's/group's midterm or final will be taken as evidence of academic dishonesty and will be referred to the Faculty or Arts for disciplinary purposes.

If a student does not wish to complete a mid-term or final with a partner, students may mutually agree to declare a "discussant partner." In other words, you can discuss the exam with one other person (as long as you are the only person with whom that other person discusses the exam), but wish to work individually on the actual exam, and individually earn grades. In this case, you should each turn in a midterm or final, but indicate the name of your discussant partner on the front of the exam.

In the midterm and final, students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of readings, lectures, and presentations from across weeks of the class. Students who focus on the papers they presented will receive a substantially lower grade.

## **Missing Exams and Presentations**

Exams that are turned in late without being deferred will receive a 25% penalty for each day that the exam is late. The first day the exam is considered late will begin one minute after the exam is due.

Because presentations are important for not only the person presenting them, but also the rest of the class, a student missing an 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. Students who arrive late to class the day they are presenting will be considered to have missed the class for grading purposes.

## **An Important Note on Class Behavior**

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.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

Instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the faculty for adjudication and possible punishment. 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 Dr. Bierman before you take this action.

## **Grade Reappraisals**

Within two weeks of the date the exam/assignment is returned, students seeking reappraisal of examinations or assignments must either submit a written response to the instructor explaining the basis for reconsideration of one's mark, or meet with the instructor and discuss the basis for reconsideration. In the event of an in-person meeting, the instructor may not make an immediate decision regarding a change of grade. It should be noted that a re-assessed grade may be raised, lowered, or remain the same. Please note that it is Dr. Bierman, not a TA, who is responsible for all grade reappraisals.

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-5.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 Faculty 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: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>  
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 [https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred\\_termwork15\\_0.pdf](https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.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 2017-18 Students' Union VP Academic is Tina Miller (suvpaca@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/ombuds/contact>
7. Emergency Evacuation: In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at Social Science-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. Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities [ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy](http://ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy). Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

**Course Schedule (All readings marked “Handbook” are in the Handbook of the Sociology of Mental Health, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, which can be accessed online through the U of C library website).**

Tu 1/09 **READ THE COURSE OUTLINE.**  
Overview of the course: Why study health? A sociological interest.

Th 1/11 **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.

Tu 1/16 **A stress process perspective—benefits and drawbacks.**

**Target readings:**

Pearlin and Bierman. **Handbook.**

Th 1/18 **How do researchers examine the social determinants of health?**

**Target readings:**

None

1/30-2/01 **SES and Health**

**Target readings:**

Muntaner et al. **Handbook.**

2/06-2/08 **Age, Aging, and Health**

**Target readings:**

Ferraro and Wilkinson. **Handbook.**

2/13-2/15 **Gender and Health**  
**Midterm posted to class D2L.**

**Target readings:**

Rosenfield and Mouzon. **Handbook.**

Tu 2/22 **Reading week, no class**

Th 2/23 **Reading week, no class**

Tu 2/27 **No class; work on midterms.**

Th 3/1 **Midterms due on dropbox on D2L noon.**

3/06-3/08

**Race, Ethnicity, and Health**  
**Midterms Due on 2/29.**

**Target readings:**

Brown et al. **Handbook.**

Reading, Charlotte. 2015. "Structural Determinants of Aboriginal Peoples' Health." In *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social*. **This book is available through two hour reserve at the TFDL service desk.**

3/13-3/15

**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.

3/20-3/22

**Psychological Resources and Health**

**Target readings:**

Thoits. **Handbook.**

Ross and Mirowsky. **Handbook.**

Tu 3/27-3/29

**Religion and Health**

**Target readings:**

Schieman et al. **Handbook.**

4/10-4/12

**Neighborhoods, Context, and Health**

**Target readings:**

Hill and Maimon. **Handbook.**

4/03-4/05

**Family and Health**

**Final posted to class D2L.**

**Target readings:**

Umberson et al. **Handbook.**

Th 4/19

Final due **on dropbox on D2L** by noon.