

SOC 389: Social Causes and Consequences of Health Inequities

Department of Sociology

Emory University

Spring 2024 Syllabus

Time and Location TBD

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Virtual office hours by appointment: [sign up here](#).

Teaching Assistant:

Email:

Course Description

Inequalities in social life determine how long people live, how often they get sick, and whether they can receive medical care. We will apply sociological theories to examine paths that lead social inequities to health disparities and how poor health, in turn, can reinforce social disadvantage. Our readings and discussions will cover how inequities cycle between health and social status, which creates a system of injustice that can echo throughout the life-course and across generations.

The course is organized by dimensions of social inequality—social capital, education, gender, social networks, race/ethnicity, neighborhood, and immigration status. Each dimension is vastly complex and is worthy of numerous years of study. This semester-long course aims to introduce you to the major themes, theories, and empirical findings in inequality and health.

We will practice applying sociological tools to real-life situations. We will explore how social standing affected health outcomes during notable events such as pandemics, natural disasters, and policy changes. By the end of the semester, you will be able to engage in public discourse that would expand our knowledge on how health and social status can influence each other.

Your active participation is critical to you and your classmates' success. We will dedicate about 50 percent of lecture time to student-led discussions based on assigned readings. You will work in small groups to complete in-class tasks as well as a semester-long project. Your unique backgrounds, experience, and perspectives is an essential component of this learning environment.

Course goals

1. Generate awareness of the relationship between social processes and health outcomes.
2. Foster thoughtful and compassionate communicators on issues of social and

health inequity.

3. Create inspiration to serve as leaders and advocates for social and health justice.

Learning objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, you will be able to:

1. Apply sociological theories to articulate connections between social and health inequities
2. Critique empirical evidence that document social and health disparities
3. Analyze major events such as policy changes, natural disasters, and public health crises through a sociological lens
4. Disseminate your views to a broader audience

Technology Requisites and Expectations

Canvas course site

I will make course announcements through Canvas and update due dates on the Canvas calendar. Please submit all assignments through Canvas. I will post all required readings and links to media in the Module section of Canvas.

Office hours on Zoom

I will hold weekly office hours on Zoom. You can schedule a time to meet using this link: <https://calendly.com/heejusohn/soc389-spr23>.

- Guide to get started on zoom: <https://canvas.emory.edu/courses/74713/pages/zoom-user-guide-for-students>
- Zoom tips and etiquette: <https://canvas.emory.edu/courses/74713/pages/zoom-tips-and-etiquette/>

Email

I will aim to respond to emails within two business days. Please include the course number in the subject line. Please submit all assignments through Canvas and not via email.

Required Readings

- Handbook of Medical Sociology, Sixth Edition. 2010. Editors Bird, Chloe E., Conrad, Peter, Fremont, Allen M., and Timmermans, Stefan. Vanderbilt University Press. ISBN 0826517226 (**BCF 2010**)
- McDonough, J. E. (2012). Inside National Health Reform, University of California Press. (**McDonough 2012**)
- Sered, S. S. and R. Fernandopulle (2007). Uninsured in America, Updated: Life and Death in the Land of Opportunity, University of California Press. (**Sered & Fernandopulle 2007**)

- Starr, P. (2011). *Remedy and Reaction: The Peculiar American Struggle Over Health Care Reform*, Yale University Press. (**Starr 2011**)

N.B. Most of these books are available online through Emory Libraries, and the required readings only cover a handful of chapters from each book. I will also provide additional required readings and links to media on Canvas.

Resources

Resources for Inclusive Learning

We all learn differently, and sometimes we need accommodations. Please let me know if any aspect of the course prevents you from learning or being fully engaged. If you need official accommodations for accessibility or alternative course materials, please utilize the University's services through the Department of Accessibility Services. Link to Emory's Accessibility Service: <http://accessibility.emory.edu/index.html> The site also has an informative section for self-advocacy. (<http://accessibility.emory.edu/students/new-to-oas/self-advocacy.html>)

Emory Writing Center

The Writing Center can help you with idea development, structure, use of sources, grammar, and word choice. The Center also has tutors who support the literacy needs of English Language Learners. You can make appointments at writingcenter.emory.edu.

Honor Code

We will follow Emory's code for academic integrity and conduct in this course. Please read Appendix I for properly paraphrasing and quoting another writer. All written submissions will be examined for plagiarism using Turnitin. You can also see common forms of misconduct in Appendices II and III. Please ask if you have any doubts about whether something will violate the policy. Link to Emory's Honor Code: <http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

Course requirements and grading

Summary

Description	Frequency	Percent of Grade
Attendance and participation	Weekly	20
Reflection assignments	Weekly	20
Topic proposal	Once	5
Annotated bibliography	Once	10
Opinion editorial (op-ed)	Once	20
Peer review of op-ed	Once	5
Midterm Examination	Once	10

Community Engagement Project	Once	10
Total		100

Weekly Requirements

Attendance and participation You are expected to attend and actively participate during class. Lectures will be opportunities for active discussion and sharing of ideas. During class time, you will be assigned into teams to complete group tasks, and you will be required to submit them onto the Canvas website. You may also be called upon summarize your team’s discussion to the entire class.

Attendance and participation are required for this course and will account for 20 percent of your course grade. I also understand that circumstances may make it difficult for you to attend class. You will be allowed to miss two classes without consequence; please use them wisely. Please reach out to me if you need to miss more than two during the semester.

Reflection assignments On most weeks, you will assigned an online quiz that will 1) test your understanding of the week’s readings and lectures, and 2) ask you to write a short paragraph that reflects your observations and insight. You may be called upon during class to share your reflection. The quiz portion may be in multiple-choice, short answer, and paragraph answer forms. I will post these assignments online.

One-time Deliverables and Examinations

You will be asked to choose a topic (a health crisis or phenomenon, a disease, health behavior etc.) at the beginning of the semester. Your course deliverables will be centered around your chosen topic and will be staged over the course of the semester. A detailed description of each assignment will be posted on Canvas.

Topic proposal You must submit a brief description of your project and a justification on how it would be related to health and social inequities.

Annotated Bibliography You will be asked to submit an annotated bibliography containing five peer-reviewed empirical studies published in the social sciences. The studies must be relevant to your topic of interest.

Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed) Your semester assignment will include writing an op-ed on your chosen topic. You will use the annotated bibliography you created at the beginning of the semester to support your argument.

Peer Review of Op-Ed After submitting your Op-Ed, you will be asked to review the op-ed of one of your classmates.

Examinations There will be one in-class midterm during the semester.

Community Engagement Project For your end-of-semester assignment, you will find a volunteering opportunity at one of Clarkston, GA's organizations that serve its large refugee population. During the visit, you will test the sociological theories you learned in the classroom by collecting stories from the people who live and work there. Working in small groups, you will communicate your findings through a podcast or a short video that you will present to the class at the end of the semester.

<https://www.clarkstonga.gov/volunteering-opportunities>
<https://clarkstoncommunitycenter.org/get-involved/>

Late submission policy

Your score will be reduced by 20% for any late submission. For example, if you submit an assignment after the due date and time, and you received 9 out of 10 possible points, you will receive $9 \times 0.8 = 7.2$ points. You have until the last day of class to submit any late assignments.

Spring 2024 Overview

Preliminary and subject to change: refer to Canvas for most up-to-date schedule

Weekly reflection assignments are generally due before class on **Mondays**. (Week 1 is an exception).

One-time assignments are generally due before class on **Wednesdays**.

Week	Weekly Topic	Day	Date	Notes	Reading
0	Course introduction				
		WED	11-Jan		
1	Introduction to social determinants of health	MON	16-Jan	No Class: MLK	
		WED	18-Jan		BCF 2010. Chapter 1, Chang+Lauderdale 2009, SF2007 Intro
2	Social capital and health	MON	23-Jan		BCF 2010. Chapter 2 Social Capital and Health, Fried et al 2004
		WED	25-Jan		
3	Education, socioeconomic status, and health	MON	30-Jan		BCF 2010. Chapter 3 Why Education Is the Key to Socioeconomic Differentials in Health, Link et al 2013, SF Ch1-2
		WED	1-Feb		
4	Workshop by Emory Libraries + Resources for Podcasting/Video making	MON	6-Feb	Guest Lecture: Dr. Melissa Hackman	
		WED	8-Feb		
5	Gender and health	MON	13-Feb		BCF 2010. Chapter 4 Understanding Gender and Health: Old patterns, new trends, and future directions; Harnois et al 2018; SF 2004 ch3-4
		WED	15-Feb		
6	Social relationships, networks, and health	MON	20-Feb		BCF 2010. Chapter 5; Umberson et al 2010
		WED	22-Feb		
7	Midterm Review and Exam	MON	27-Feb	Midterm review	
		WED	1-Mar	In-class exam: Weeks2-7	
8	SPRING BREAK	MON	6-Mar	SPRING BREAK	

		WED	10-Mar	SPRING BREAK	
9	Race, ethnicity, and health 1: Patterns of inequity	MON	13-Mar		Williams + Sternthal 2010; IOM2003 Summary
		WED	15-Mar		
10	Race, ethnicity, and health 2: Structural contributors	MON	20-Mar		Sohn 2014
		WED	22-Mar		
11	Immigration and health	MON	27-Mar		Goldman et al 2014; Bacong + Sohn 2020; Andrasfay + Goldman 2020
		WED	29-Mar		
12	Life-course approach to health	MON	3-Apr		Lynch + Davey Smith 2006; Almond 2006
		WED	5-Apr		
13	U.S. Health policy	MON	10-Apr		S+F ch 5-8, 11; Starr 2011 ch 8-9; McDonough ch 5-6
		WED	12-Apr	No Class	
14	Community Engagement Project Presentations	MON	17-Apr		
		WED	19-Apr		
15	End of semester review	MON	24-Apr		
Final	FINAL EXAM	WED	3-May	11:30a	