

Sociology 592: Medical Sociology
Mondays and Thursdays, 10-11:50 a.m. Appleby Center 286
ALWAYS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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and by appointment; book via
<https://drdanmorrison.youcanbook.me/>
see email policy



"Ask your doctor if taking a pill to solve all your problems is right for you."

Course Description

This course examines the social, epidemiological and personal aspects of illness, disease and health care in the contemporary US. Our primary mission is to uncover answers to questions like: Who gets sick and who remains healthy? Who has a long life? Who has a short one? What is good in medical care, and what could be made better? How do doctors and other medical professionals care for/treat/cure people who are sick? What is the relationship between economic inequality and health? What issues of justice and ethics are raised by the answers to these questions? We ask these questions because we want to know the ways in which social factors influence us from the *inside* out.

This course develops students' understanding of the connections between social structure and health, at the micro and macro-social levels. The course is designed to develop students' abilities to apply sociological principles to medicine, health, illness and health care. Together, we will learn to think sociologically about health and illness, epidemiology, environmental health, patient-provider interactions, the experience of illness, bioethics and the medical profession, mental health, and the health industry. We combine our sociological interests with more humanistic and meaning-centered approaches that understand the patient as person.

Student Learning Outcomes

If we are successful in this course, you will think, feel, and act differently. The learning outcomes listed below guide my design of the course, its readings and assignments, providing focus to our efforts.

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

- Create a coherent argument regarding a health policy issue.
- Assess standardized instruments for the assessment of agitation for people with mental impairments.
- Apply the social determinants of health model to a particular case.
- Develop empathetic understanding about the lives of people with chronic illness.

Program Learning Outcomes

This course contributes to the sociology program. Specifically, at the conclusion of this course, students will have *developed* their ability to:

- “Demonstrate the use of the sociological imagination, ‘the ability to recognize the relationship between large-scale social forces and the actions of individuals.’
- “Design and conduct an empirical study that answers a sociological question.”

By taking this course, you will engage in activities that closely match the program learning outcomes listed above. For example, in this course, I require that you conduct original sociological research that demonstrates both your use of the sociological imagination, using the most current sociological thinking about health and medicine. The health policy and health provider interview projects address points 1 and 2, above.

Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

This course contributes to Pepperdine's Institutional Educational Objectives. Specifically, at the conclusion of this course, students will have advanced in their ability to:

- Demonstrate expertise in an academic or professional discipline, display proficiency in the discipline, and engage in the process of academic discovery.
- Develop and enact a compelling personal and professional vision that values diversity.
- Apply knowledge to real-world challenges.
- Think critically and creatively, communicate clearly, and act with integrity.

Email

You should only use email as a tool to set up a one-on-one meeting with me if office hours conflict with your schedule. Otherwise, office hours are open to meetings on a first-come, first-served basis. You may skip email altogether and make a booking for up to two 20-minute sessions here:

<https://drdanmorrison.youcanbook.me/>. Add a one or two-sentence description of the reason for the meeting.

If you want to email me, use the subject line "Meeting request." Your message should include at least two times when you would like to meet and a brief (one-two sentence) description of the reason for the meeting. Emails sent for any other reason will not be considered or acknowledged. I strongly encourage you to ask questions about the syllabus and assignments during class time. For more in-depth discussions (such as guidance on assignments) please plan to meet in person or call my office. Our conversations should take place in person or over the phone rather than via email, thus allowing us to get to know each other better and fostering a more collegial learning atmosphere.

Use of any device with an on/off switch is prohibited in class. I may mark students who use such devices absent, even if you are physically present in the classroom.

Readings

Two books are **required** for this course:

1. Brown, Phil. 2008. *Perspectives in Medical Sociology* 4th Edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press. ISBN-10: 1-57766-518-X ; ISBN-13: 978-1-57766-518-2 ("Perspectives" on Course Schedule)
2. Ofri, Danielle. 2008. *The Best of the Bellevue Literary Review*. New York: Bellevue Literary Press. ISBN: 978-193413-704-8 ("BLR" on Course Schedule)

These books may be purchased at the University Bookstore. However, you may find these books online and elsewhere as they are both widely available on the secondary book market.

Any additional materials will be made available online via Courses. Students should read the assigned material and come to class prepared to answer questions posed during class. Students who are unwilling to do the reading or attend class will not perform well in the course, as the assignments and assessment of your learning depend on *both* the text and classroom activities.

Assessing Your Learning:

1. Medicating Seniors with Cognitive Impairments Experience and Instrument Review.

First, listen to and read the stories linked here:

<http://tinyurl.com/oqv227a>; <http://tinyurl.com/pc3cgt5>

Groups of 2 or 3 students will use Pepperdine's library to identify and evaluate up to 5 scales that purport to measure agitation in elders with cognitive impairments. We are collaborating with Dr. Suzanne Sickner in her research. Dr. Sickner aims to reduce reliance on psychoactive drugs to induce compliance in agitated seniors. Length: 1,000-1,500 words. Assigned 12 January. Due 12 February in class. 15% of final grade.

2. Comparative Essay: Students will write two reflective essays; one at the start of the course (2% of final grade). The first paper will respond to Sherwin Nuland's Introduction to the BLR text. Length: 500-700 words. Details on Courses. The second (18% of final grade) should compare at least two items from the BLR text to findings from either the Health Provider Interview or the Policy Recommendation writing projects. For example, students could select writings from the BLR on patient-provider interactions, then

compare that perspective to what they found in the Health Provider Interview paper. This second essay should persuasively interpret these texts using course concepts. Length: 1,500-2000 words. First essay assigned 12 January, due 26 January. Second essay due 30 March; 20% of final grade total.

3. Policy Recommendation: Choosing from a list of health policy problems or questions, students will research, compare and recommend a proposed health policy solution to that contemporary health care problem. Students should analyze the problem from the sociological perspective, students should collect and review relevant sociological literature within and outside the course materials. Students will discuss their paper in class. Length: 2,000-2,500 words. Assigned 12 January; Check-in 12 February, 30 March; Due 13 April; Papers discussed 23 April; 25% of final grade.

4. Health Professions Interview Paper: Each student will interview a present or future health care provider. Further details available on Courses. The class will workshop and peer review the papers, and vote to give a "best paper" prize. Length: 2,000-2,500 words. Assigned 12 January. Check-in 12 February, Check-in 30 March; Due 20 April. Papers discussed 28 April; 25% of final grade.

5. In-class writing and participation: 15% of final grade.

The Grading Philosophy:

- "A" 90%+ - exceptional performance—the class and I have learned from your thinking;
- "B" 80-89%- honorable performance—you have more to learn and have made a strong effort to do so;
- "C" 70-79% - adequate performance—you have more to learn, and have some work to do;
- "D" 60-69% - you were "shadow boxing" (you were swinging, but not connecting);
- "F" Below 60% - it appears that you will have to re-experience this class.

Specifically, the grading scale will be:

100-93 = A	82-80 = B-	69-66 = D+
92-90 = A-	79-76 = C+	65-63 = D
89-86 = B+	75-73 = C	62-60 = D-
85-83 = B	72-70 = C-	59— = F

Be mindful that no late work will be accepted.

I will calculate your final grade based on your performance on the assignments and exercises explained within this syllabus. Participation will also count, as it is a prerequisite for deep understanding. Final grades are final. Unless there has been a miscalculation, I will not change your grade once it is posted. If you are concerned about your grade at any point in the semester, I urge you to meet with me so that we can address the problem before the end of the semester.

Every semester, I receive inquiries about changing the course requirements, forgiving late assignments or allowing make-up work. These requests are burdensome and time consuming. I reserve the right to lower your final grade by up to a full letter (e.g. from a B to a C) should you send me such a request.

Final Exam: We will meet on the day of the final exam (7:30-10 a.m. on 28 April). During this period, we will assess the major paradigms in medical sociology, contrasting these with readings from the BLR text. Students will discuss their written work on this day as well.



“First, admit no harm.”

Relationship to the Pepperdine and Seaver Missions

This course promotes the mission of both Pepperdine University and Seaver College by introducing students to the history, tradition and current concerns of medical sociologists. The course goals, assessments and activities develop students' leadership potential and service-orientation through an understanding of how health and medicine work in the US, the source and value of diversity, and the nature of the health and society connection. This course also engages students' emotional and social development by encouraging empathetic understanding of the lives of people undergoing illness.

Course Evaluations: The evaluation period opens on 18 April and closes at midnight on the Sunday preceding the start of final examinations, 26 April. Evaluations are online. I take these evaluations seriously and will do my best to improve my teaching and your learning on the basis of a mid-semester evaluation.

Disability Services: Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office (Main Campus, Tyler Campus Center 264, x6500) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <http://www.pepperdine.edu/disabilityservices/> for additional information.

Academic Integrity: Academic Integrity is the expression of intellectual virtue in human beings as a result of their creation in God's image. It represents the convergence of the best of the human spirit and God's spirit, which requires personal, private and community virtue. As a Christian institution, Pepperdine University affirms that integrity begins in our very created being and is lived out in our academic work.

In order for the code to be effective, the community must maintain its health and vitality. This requires a genuine sense of maturity, responsibility, and sensitivity on the part of every member. In particular, each member of the Seaver College community is expected to pursue his or her academic work with honesty and integrity.

Academic integrity is a core value for this university, and for our classroom. Any and all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, or deception, will earn the student a zero on the assignment, and possibly removal from the course and referral to the Academic Ethics Committee. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask. I will provide you with guidelines on correct citations. It's really upsetting and depressing for everyone involved when this kind of dishonesty occurs; it's especially embarrassing for the student, and it results in a very bad grade. Plagiarism is stealing, so cite, do not steal.

This Course is Intellectual Property: Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor, are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person. Electronic devices (e.g., laptops, cell phones, PDAs, calculators, recording devices) are not to be used during lectures or exams without prior permission of the instructor.

Withdrawing from the Course: The date for withdrawal from a course with a grade of "W" (16 March) and the date for withdrawal from a course with a grade of "WP" or "WF" (17 April).

Course Schedule

*The course should proceed as outlined below. However, I reserve the right to employ the technique of **improvisation** as the students, the class, and the course demand. Such revisions may involve an extra (short) reading. This is the nature of the academic enterprise—you may not know in advance what you need to know in order to do your work well.*

W	Date	Themes; Questions	Read	Tasks
1	12 Jan.	Introduction to Course; Big Questions in Medical Sociology; Central Themes		Four course papers assigned; Schedule meeting with Dr. Morrison here: https://drdanmorrison.youcanbook.me/
	15 Jan.	Theme: Connecting Health to Social Inequality Consider: Can being poor, a minority, or a woman, cause illness?	pp. vii-23 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; Introduction in <i>BLR</i>	
2	19 Jan.	MLK Holiday; no classes meet.		
	22 Jan.	Theme: Race, Gender and Health; Theories of Health and Medicine Consider: What roles do social factors play in getting sick and staying sick?	Chs. 2, 3 in <i>Perspectives</i> Optional: ch. 4, esp. intro &	

			conclusion	
3	26 Jan.	Consider: How do sociologists explain disease and illness? Is a genuinely sociological explanation of sickness possible? What might it look like? Guest: Dr. Suzanne Sickner	Chs. 5, 6 in <i>Perspectives</i>	DUE: short essay on <i>BLR</i> intro
	29 Jan.	Themes: Theories of Health; The Environmental Factor Consider: Are sociologists really claiming they know why people get sick?	Chs. 7, 8 in <i>Perspectives</i>	
4	2 Feb.	Consider: How are causal arguments in very complex circumstances created and supported?	Chs. 9, 10 in <i>Perspectives</i>	
	5 Feb.	Themes: Recognizing Illness, Seeking Treatment, Becoming a Patient; Women and illness Consider: What counts as illness? How do we decide when to seek treatment? How different are acute and chronic illness?	Chs. 11, 12, 13 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; "The Facts" by Mark Rigney; "The Absolute Worst Thing" by Seth Carey in <i>BLR</i>	
5	9 Feb.	Consider: Women's experiences of Illness	Chs. 14, 15 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; "Sentence" by Barbara F. Lefcowitz in <i>BLR</i> ; "Women and Medicalization..." by Barbara Riessman. Courses.	
	12 Feb.	Themes: People as Patients, Health Professionals as Providers Consider: What do patients expect when they go to the doctor? How do doctors and patients negotiate the medical encounter? How are power and trust created and used in the hospital?	Chs. 17, 18, 19 in <i>Perspectives</i>	DUE: Agitation instrument analysis Health Provider Interview Paper Check-in
6	16 Feb.	Consider: What kinds of oversight should doctors have? What limits might we place on experimentation and human knowledge?	Ch. 20 in <i>Perspectives</i> Optional: Watch "Miss Evers' Boys" Movie (HBO, 1997) or read the play. We may watch some of this in class.	
	19 Feb.	Themes: Bioethics and the Limits of Medicine Consider: Where do we draw the line between	Ch. 21 in <i>Perspectives</i> ;	

		experiment and treatment?	“The Global Traffic in Human Organs” by Scheper-Hughes on Courses.	
7	23 Feb.	Consider: How did DNA come to be understood as <u>the</u> key to understanding human life? What can genetic diagnostics tell us, and what remains unknown?	Chs. 22, 23 in <i>Perspectives</i>	
	26 Feb.	Ethics and Environmental factors	Ch. 24 in <i>Perspectives</i>	
		Spring Break March 2-6		
8	9 Mar.	Theme: Informed Consent; Healthcare decision-making; Our Healthcare system Consider: What is informed consent? Who should decide?	Background material on “Ashley X”; “Religion, Conscience, and Controversial Clinical Practices”; Responses to “Religion, Conscience...” on Courses. This NPR story: http://tinyurl.com/nragpvo	
	12 Mar.	Consider: How is our healthcare system organized? Who benefits and who doesn't from this system?	Ch. 25 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; Other reading(s) possible, TBA	
9	16 Mar.	Theme: The US Healthcare System, continued	Ch. 26 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; Other reading(s) possible, TBA	
	19 Mar.	Theme: The Pharmaceutical Industry	Ch. 27 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; Other reading(s) possible, TBA	
10	23 Mar.	Theme: Comparing the US to other cultural contexts; Mental Health Consider: How do conditions change in different cultural contexts?	Excerpt from <i>Illness Narratives</i> by Arthur Kleinman, Courses; “Research on culture-bound syndromes: New directions.” By Peter J.	

			Guarnaccia, Lloyd H. Rogler. Courses.	
	26 Mar.	Consider: How might taking drugs for mental health conditions be significantly different from taking drugs for other chronic conditions?	Excerpt from <i>Is it Me or My Meds?: Living with Antidepressants</i> by David Karp. Courses.	
11	30 Mar.	Theme: The Sociology of Mental Health	“The role of sociology in the study of mental health... and the role of mental health in the study of sociology.” by Blair Wheaton. on Courses. TBA from <i>Handbook for the Study of Mental Health</i> . on Courses.	DUE: Second part of Comparative Essay assignment Health Provider Interview Paper Check-in
	2 Apr.		“An Overview of Sociological Perspectives on the Definitions, Causes, and Responses to Mental Health and Illness” by Alan Horwitz on Courses; TBA from <i>Handbook for the Study of Mental Health</i> . on Courses.	
12	6 Apr.	Themes: Mental Health; Delivery of Healthcare	Excerpts from <i>Speaking of Sadness</i> by David Karp on Courses.	
	9 Apr.	Consider: Where does healthcare happen? What happens to patients in the hospital?	Ch. 28 in <i>Perspectives</i> ;	

			excerpt from <i>The Hospital</i> by Jan de Hartog on Courses.	
13	13 Apr.	Theme: Contexts of Healthcare delivery: the ICU, dying Potential guest speaker re: Hospice.	Ch. 30 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; "Breathing" by Cortney Davis in <i>BLR</i>	DUE: Health Policy Recommendation Paper
	16 Apr.	Themes: Healthcare Providers Consider: What are the characteristics of healthcare providers? How did doctors grow powerful? How might they heal people and diseases? Potential guest speaker re: Hospice.	Chs. 31, 32 in <i>Perspectives</i> ; Find a reading from the BLR text that speaks to medical authority or narrative medicine.	
14	20 Apr.			DUE: Health Provider Interview Paper. Be prepared to share your BLR reading in class.
	23 Apr.		Chs. 33, 34 in <i>Perspectives</i>	
		Final Exam 28 April, 7:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. During this time, we will share our health provider interview projects, health policy papers, and recap the major themes from the course.		

Please remember to complete online course evaluation forms