

SOCIOLOGY 298.20: Sociology of Health
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY, Winter 2020
Dr. Riley Chisholm

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Office Hours:

Mondays 1-2

Tuesdays 11:30-1:30

Thursdays 10-12

Class Times: Tuesdays 9:45-11 am and Thursdays 8:15-9:30 am

Classroom: Coady 120

In this class, students will approach the study of human health from an intersectional, critical sociological perspective that emphasizes the links between social and environmental justice. Beginning with an understanding of the distinction between biomedicine and the social determinants of health, the class will explore some of the dominant sociological debates and approaches to the study of health and illness and how these can best be used as instruments for health and climate justice.

University and Classroom Policies

Plagiarism: Familiarize yourself with the university plagiarism policies and punishments. You are responsible for understanding them and abiding by them. The StFX library has links, tutorials, and definitions at this site: <http://sites.stfx.ca/library/plagiarism>. The StFX calendar outlines the procedures concerning and penalties for committing plagiarism.

StFX Equity Policy: Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space—both face-to-face and online—that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity. These values and practices are in accord with the StFX Discrimination and Harassment Policy which can be found at <http://www.mystfx.ca/campus/stu-serv/equity/>. Please feel free to talk to me about your questions or concerns about equity in our classroom or in the StFX community in general. If I cannot answer your questions or help you address your concerns, I encourage you to talk to the Chair/Coordinator of the Department/Program or the Human Rights and Equity Advisor.

Electronics: Although electronic technologies have the potential to enhance learning in certain contexts, recent studies suggest that the use of personal computers and other electronic devices can be detrimental to students' learning. See:

<https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/technology-and-student-distraction>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/laptop-use-lowers-student-grades-experiment-shows-1.1401860>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/04/28/why-students-using-laptops-learn-less-in-class-even-when-they-really-are-taking-notes/>.

For this reason, phones and computers should be turned off and away while class is being held. Some students genuinely require supportive technologies, for instance, a computer to take notes (where handwriting notes is not an option)—in such instances, students should let me know.

Course grades and lecture policy: I do not use PowerPoint in class and do not post/provide my lectures to students. Students who miss classes are responsible to get missed lecture notes from another student in the class. I also, do not discuss or provide grades over email.

Required Reading:

1. Germov, J. and J. Hornosty. 2013. *Second Opinion: An introduction to health sociology*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press.
2. Where possible, online links have been made available throughout this outline, otherwise, readings will be sent to you via email.

Evaluation:

- A. Reflection Journal: 30% Due February 13th
- B. Outreach Assignment: 30%: Due March 5th
- C. Final Exam: 40%

Long Description of Assignments:

A. Reflection Journal: (/30): Due February 13th

Suggested length: 5 typed double-spaced pages
Students are required to submit a journal composed of three ‘interacting’ reflections. These reflections must consider the themes examined during three different weeks of the course (You get to pick which three weeks you focus on). The goal of the assignment is for you to select and then bring into conversation, relevant details that you would like to highlight from within these themes/ideas. Resources or information external to the course are not necessary and should not be the primary focus.

Here’s how to approach the Reflection Journal:

Using all of the resources examined during the week –the readings assigned, lecture material, guest speaker, class discussion, audio/video etc..., respond to the following:

1. Describe which 3 weeks you have selected and explain the main message you are concerned with, from each.
2. Then, bring these three threads together and show how they interrelate by carefully considering what you feel, are relevant aspects of the resources used in class.
3. Do you feel you understand the issue clearly? If so, comment on whether this issue is new to you, or if some aspect of it is new? If you do not fully understand the issue, what aspect is unclear? Please be careful to respond to this question in a deep way—casual or seemingly superficial reflections will not garner positive results. More specifically, simply saying you don't understand something is not useful here if you have not demonstrated effort in working with an idea or topic.
4. Include any further questions, frustrations, thoughts or comments you have about the topic.

Note: Spelling, grammar, word choice, *depth of contemplation* and tone matter are very important in my assessment of your submission. Do not simply provide superficial comments, for these will only result in a marginal score. Be thoughtful, careful and consider the topics and ideas rigorously. The goal of this assignment is to engage meaningfully, and richly with a complex, multifaceted social justice issue. Formal sourcing of resources is unnecessary-however students must be clear about where they are getting their support from. Students can do this by simply indicating the title of the resource, or refer to a lecture, discussion etc..

- A. Outreach Assignment: Hard copy due March 5th (30%) followed by presentations on March 24th and 26th (sign up for presentations will happen later in the term):** For this assignment, students will meaningfully engage in a topic of their interest, in order to conduct 'health outreach'. Students may work in pairs, larger groups, or on their own, however, please note that I do not police group member interactions and do not have the capacity to intervene should group members not contribute equally, for whatever reason. Accordingly, if you commit to working with others, you do so with the understanding that there is some risk (and opportunity) in doing so. **Please note that presentations cannot exceed 10 minutes.**

The goal of this assignment is to *effectively* communicate information about a significant health issue, engaging people beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Once you have selected your topic, here are some possible ways in which you can deliver your analysis:

1. Creating a short film that critically explores a topic.
2. Produce an art installation that garners attention from passer-bys.
3. Produce a zine organised around a certain topic and have individuals write articles/produce graphics that invite an enthusiastic readership.

4. Host an event relevant to your topic. A potluck, or host a community kitchen event, if you are talking about local food, or a panel discussion, or...)
5. Write a radio talk and present it on the campus radio.
6. Offer to collaborate on one edition of the StFX Student Newspaper.
7. Embark on a campaign

NOTE: You are not permitted to interview or otherwise gather information from people for use in your outreach project, without completing a Research Ethics Board application. Failure to do so will eliminate your project from evaluation. I am pleased to help those who wish to submit a Research Ethics application.

Criteria for assessing the outreach project includes:

- a. Selecting a good topic that is both relevant and manageable
- b. Clarity, criticality, creativity and sincerity of message
- c. Significance of topic is well-expressed and there is obvious rigor brought to politicizing the health issue. (Do you know what this means? If not, ask!)
- d. Quality and precision of the project, (the evident level of effort and effectiveness)
- e. Level of creativity, theoretical substance and innovation
- f. Impact of the project (size of audience as well as effect)
- g. Evidence of academic grounding (Does it actually well-inform people about an issue or is it more, entertainment?)
- h. Grammar, spelling and other markers of a careful edit
- i. Level of professionalism (Are you proud of your final product? Do you want others to see it?)
- j. Integrity and sophistication of the project, overall
- k. If relevant, adherence to research ethics guidelines. See here for forms: https://sites.stfx.ca/research_ethics_board/forms_templates.html

Schedule of Weekly Readings, Tests and Assignments

Week 1: Jan. 7th and 9th

Approaching Health Problems as Social Issues

Chapter 1: “Imagining health problems as social issues”

- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2190/HS.39.3.a>

Week 2: Jan 14th and 16th

Canadian Health Care

- Canadian Dimension article on birth of Canadian medicare: <https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/the-birth-of-medicare>
- Schafer, A. “Waiting for Romanow: Canadian Values Under Fire”. Available at: https://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/departments/philosophy/ethics/media/Waiting_for_Romanow.pdf

Week 3: Jan 21st and 23rd

Neoliberal models of health?: Current US debates

- Chapter 2: “Theorizing health: Major theoretical perspectives in sociology”

- [Bernie Sanders video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYOf6hXGx6M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYOf6hXGx6M) (6 minutes)

Week 4: Jan 28th and 30th

What do we mean by, the Social Determinants of Health ?

- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2190/HS.39.3.a>

Week 5: Feb 4th and Feb 6th

Climate change

- <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2016/02/28/climate-change-is-wreaking-havoc-on-our-mental-health-experts.html>
- DemocracyNow! Report on suicide and climate change: [https://www.democracynow.org/2018/7/25/as heat wave sweeps the globe#transcript](https://www.democracynow.org/2018/7/25/as_heat_wave_sweeps_the_globe#transcript)
- https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-018-0092-2.epdf?author_access_token=UJYcNlw0zZieuYACw3AJQtRgN0jAjWel9jnR3ZoTv0MZ8cLxe72VDW0esMFb0zEFM26k9KCriCPa-wqxJcwmMgcIei5y7ci3SN_gtpLunMy-I9r_Qst3A5V3rz96ScHSGy2dP3IB1DKK9qNem8yIrw%3D%3D

Week 6: Feb 11th and 13th

Health and links to the environment

- Guest speaker: Dr. Daniela Kempkens
- Living safely in a toxic world, available at: [http://inthesetimes.com/article/1491/the myth of living safely in a toxic world](http://inthesetimes.com/article/1491/the_myth_of_living_safely_in_a_toxic_world)
- Chapter 8: “Environmental links to health”

February 13th: Reflection Journal Due (30% of grade)

NO CLASSES WEEK OF FEB 18th

Week 7: Feb. 25th and 27th

Medicine and its limits

- McKinlay, J. and McKinlay, S. “The questionable contribution of medical measures to the decline of mortality” Available at: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/fa77/37e295648d6fc5a1b2ad31a98a2341ffeb91.pdf?_ga=2.66638189.237107707.1531580520-437511925.1531580520
- Chapter 14: “The pharmaceutical industry and Health Canada: Values in conflict?”

Week 8: Mar 3rd and 5th: Health Industries

- Brym, R. “The social bases of cancer” <http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/brym/ch5.pdf>

Film: *Pink Ribbon, Inc.*

March 5th: Outreach assignment due to me in hard copy (sign up for presentation schedule for March 24th and 26th)

Week 9: Mar. 10th and 12th

Environmental and health racism

- <https://globalnews.ca/news/5746565/theres-something-in-the-water-documentary-tiff/>Chapter 7: 'Canada's Aboriginal people and health: The perpetuation of inequalities
- Czyzewski, K. (2011). Colonialism as a Broader Social Determinant of Health. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 2(1) . Available at: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=iipj>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UGxcPTV1J0>

Week 10: Mar 17th and 19st

Farm Tour Week *

****This week, class will be held at the Acadian Forest and Farm School. Transportation will be through carpooling. Class this week will only be offered once, for three hours. In class, we will together determine which day in this week we will hold the class.**

- <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/sep/23/farmer-wants-a-revolution-how-is-this-not-genocide>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdGS9cxbNt0>
- <https://pages.stolaf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/421/2014/08/Berry-BodyEarth-1.pdf>

Week 11: Mar 24th and 26th

Outreach presentations all this week

Week 12: Mar 31st and Apr 2nd

Spill-over and Final Exam preparation