

SOCIOLOGY 298.20: Sociology of Health
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY, Winter 2018
Dr. Riley Chisholm

Office: Annex 110C

E-mail: rchishol@stfx.ca

Office Hours:

Mondays 9-11 and 12:30-2

Tuesdays 11-2

Wednesday: No office hours

Thursdays 9:30-12:30

Friday: No office hours

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

Classroom: KC 2020

In this class, students will approach the study of human health from a critical sociological perspective that emphasizes 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 justice and equity.

Required Reading:

1. Germov, J. and J. Hornosty. 2013. *Second Opinion: An introduction to health sociology*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press.
2. Resources available on reserve through the StFX library (see citations throughout the syllabus)
3. Some online links are made available in this outline.

Evaluation:

- A. Paper Assignment: 30% Due March 1st
- B. Outreach Assignment: 30% Due March 22nd
- C. Final Exam: 40%

Long Description of Assignments:

- A. Paper Assignment: Due March 1st (30%):** To meet the criteria for the paper, students will produce a well-written, critically-oriented sociological paper in which at least 5 good academic resources are used well, in order to support a central argument. Resources must be appropriately sourced in your document, using a

recognisable formatting system. It is the student's responsibility to select the very best academic articles in order to substantiate any claims being made in the paper. Suggested length: 8-10 pages, double-spaced.

Please also consider the following:

1. Be clear about what theory is being used and be able to explain, why? (See Chapter 2 of your textbook for help with selecting a theoretical approach).
2. Provide a creative, critical, interesting and engaging overview of the topic. Perhaps this means providing some historical or political background. The goal is to give a concise understanding of the unfolding details of the health problem you seek to describe and importantly, to get us engaged and interested!
3. Provide key terms and define these clearly.
4. Ensure your paper is organised and presented with clarity and coherence and that you have grammar-checked and edited all of your written material.

Possible topics:

1. Indigenous peoples and water wars
2. Gender and anorexia nervosa
3. Food and health
4. Occupational health (For example, Westray)
5. Walkerton
6. Farming and health
7. Childhood and health
8. Health and privatization
9. Midwifery and health
10. PTSD
11. Planned Parenthood and women's health
12. Environmental health and illness
13. ADHD
14. Obesity

B. Outreach Assignment Due March 22nd (30%): For this assignment, students will meaningfully engage in a topic of their interest, in order to create a means of doing 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 in doing so.

The goal of this assignment is to *effectively* communicate information about a significant health issue, engaging people beyond the boundaries of the classroom. You may use the topic you investigated in your paper. However, if you wish to look at yet a new topic, here are some possible ways in which you can deliver your analysis:

1. Co-authoring a letter to the editor of the Chronicle Herald outlining the issue, establishing an argument and defending that position using academic resources.

2. Creating a short film that critically explores a topic.
3. Produce an art installation that garners attention from passer-bys.
4. Produce a health zine organised around a certain topic and have individuals write articles/produce graphics that invite an enthusiastic readership.
5. 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...)
6. Write a letter to your local MLA.
7. Write a radio talk and present it on the campus radio.
8. Offer to collaborate on one edition of the StFX Student Newspaper.
9. Embark on a campaign, for instance to work with local grocery store to move toward bag-less shopping, or to get local leaflet and flyer delivery reduced or eliminated.
10. Work with student radio to promote programming directed at fostering human and environmental health, social justice and democracy.

Criteria for assessing the outreach project includes:

- a. Clarity, criticality and sincerity of message
- b. Significance of topic and rigor brought to politicizing the health issue
- c. Quality and precision of the project, (the evident level of effort and effectiveness)
- d. Level of creativity, theoretical substance and innovation
- e. Impact of the project (size of audience as well as effect)
- f. Evidence of academic grounding (Does it actually well-inform people about an issue or is it more, entertainment?)
- g. Grammar, spelling and other markers of a careful edit
- h. Level of professionalism (Are you proud of your final product?)
- i. Integrity and sophistication of the project, overall

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, recent studies suggest that the use of personal computers and other electronic devices can be detrimental to students' learning. See:

<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, I ask that students NOT use devices in class. Of course, people who have difficulty taking handwritten notes may require the use of a computer. I reserve the right to ask students to leave the class should they not respect the culture of the classroom. Cellular phones should be turned off and away, while class is being held.

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.

Schedule of Weekly Readings, Tests and Assignments

Week 1: Jan. 4th
Introduction

Week 2: Jan 9th and 11th
The dominant vs. sociological approach

- Chapter 1: "Imagining health problems as social issues"

Week 3: Jan 16th and 18th
The body and its limits

- Chapter 4: Susan Wendell's The Rejected Body ON RESERVE
- **Wednesday January 17th: Mandatory attendance at: Cassandra Yonder, "Home funerals", 7 PM, Schwartz Room 152**
- Thursday January 18th: Guest speaker: Cassandra Yonder

Week 4: Jan 23rd and 25th
Medicine and its limits

- McKinlay, J. and McKinlay, S. "The questionable contribution of medical measures to the decline of mortality" ON RESERVE
- Chapter 12: Medicine, medical dominance and public health"

Please be prepared to bring and discuss your paper topic in class next week.

Week 5: Jan 30 and Feb 1st

Sociological theories of health and illness and a 'privilege journey'

- Chapter 2: "Theorizing health: Major theoretical perspectives in sociology"
- Paper topic discussion

During this week, please consider what theory you will use for your paper which is due, March 1st.

Week 6: Feb 6th and 8th

Militarism and human health

- William H. Wiist , Kathy Barker , Neil Arya , Jon Rohde , Pauline Lubens (2014). *The Role of Public Health in the Prevention of War: Rationale and Competencies*, American Journal of Public Health ([AJPH](#)). PDF available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4062030/pdf/AJPH.2013.301778.pdf>
- Film: *Where should the birds fly?* (2013)

Week 7: Feb 13th and 15th

Race

- February 13th: Guest speaker, Sara Avmaat
- Goodman, A. 2000. "Why genes don't count (for racial differences in health)", *American Journal of Public Health*. 90: 1699–1702. ON RESERVE

NO CLASSES WEEK OF FEB 19th

Week 8: Feb 27th and Mar 1st

Genocide

- Chapter 7: 'Canada's Aboriginal people and health: The perpetuation of inequalities
 - Short, D. (2010). "Cultural genocide and indigenous peoples: a sociological approach", *The International Journal of Human Rights* 14, (6), 831–846 . (Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Damien_Short/publication/232897265_Cultural_genocide_and_indigenous_peoples_A_sociological_approach/links/00b4952834467c7b13000000/Cultural-genocide-and-indigenous-peoples-A-sociological-approach.pdf).
- **Paper Assignment due Mar 1st (25%)**

Week 9: Mar. 6th and 8th

Women's health

- Chapter 5: "Women's health in context".

- <http://www.michaelkaufman.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Kaufman-1987-The-Construction-of-Masculinity-and-the-Triad-of-Mens-Violence-in-Michael-Kaufman-ed.-Beyond-Patriarchy-Essays-by-Men-on-Pleasure-Power-and-....pdf>

Week 10: Mar 13th and 15th

Health Industries

- Brym, R. "The social bases of cancer"
<http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/brym/ch5.pdf>
- Film: *Pink Ribbon, Inc.*

Week 11: Mar 20th and 22nd

Big Pharma

- Chapter 14: "The pharmaceutical industry and Health Canada: Values in conflict?"
- **Outreach Assignment Due Mar 22nd**

Week 12: Mar 27th and 29th

Health and the environment

- Living safely in a toxic world, available at:
http://inthesetimes.com/article/1491/the_myth_of_living_safely_in_a_toxic_world
- <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2016/02/28/climate-change-is-wreaking-havoc-on-our-mental-health-experts.html>
- Chapter 8: "Environmental links to health"

Week 13: Apr 3rd

Final exam preparation